

ORAL MEMOIRS
OF
Charles F. Winkelspecht Jr.
An interview conducted on
December 9th, 2022

Interviewer: Dr. Allison Huntley

Angelo State University

West Texas Collection

“William and Don Griffis Vietnam War Oral History Archive”

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HUNTLEY: All right, this is, um, Dr. Allison Huntley here with, um, Charles and Susan Winkelspecht. Um, and it is December 9th, at 1:46 P.M. All right, so, as I was saying that we have three sep- [sic] types of questions, so questions about your background and then questions about your service, and then questions about, um, after your service. So, we'll just start at the beginning, if you'll just give us your name?

WINKELSPECHT: Uh, Charles Winkelspecht Jr.

HUNTLEY: Okay, and then, when and where were you born?

WINKELSPECHT: Uh, I was born in Riverside, New Jersey. My- my parents lived across the- across the river in Delanco, New Jersey. Uh, in January 19th, 1951.

HUNTLEY: And then where did you grow up?

WINKELSPECHT: Uh, I spent the first twenty-one years of my life in that house.

HUNTLEY: [laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: Same- same house that they bought right before my first birthday and, uh, lived there until I went in the Army in April of- end of April '72 and [sighs].

HUNTLEY: [laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: Been back to visit at various times, any time we were within range there. But, uh, including after we moved down- after I came down here, but-

HUNTLEY: Okay. And then how long have you been in Texas?

WINKELSPECHT: Since June, no, July of '87.

HUNTLEY: Okay, all right.

WINKELSPECHT: That's when the Army sent me here and been here ever since.

HUNTLEY: Here to San Angelo?

WINKELSPECHT: Mhm-hm.

HUNTLEY: Okay, you caught the San Angelo bug?

WINKELSPECHT: I was- I was- I was- I was sent here to teach at Goodfellow.

HUNTLEY: Okay.

WINKELSPECHT: And, uh, then I retired and stayed here and-

HUNTLEY: [laughs] Didn't look back.

WINKELSPECHT: Still here. Still here. Brought Susan out here with me after we got together and got married and—

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: Kids were in school and didn't want to leave.

HUNTLEY: Oh.

WINKELSPECHT: That's it. Our daughter said, uh, when I retired she was about to go into her senior year. Yeah. And she said if I had to go somewhere else to find a job or— or whatever like that, that she would live with one of her friends here to finish out high school. She wasn't— she wasn't moving again after we had moved a few times there over the years.

HUNTLEY: Fair enough. She laid down the law.

WINKELSPECHT: Bounce— bouncing back and forth across the Atlantic.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: So—

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: And then she's the one that left and went to Japan. [laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: Yeah and then she— and then after getting married she gets— she— her husband went in the Air Force and— and they went to— they spent five years in Misawa, Japan.

HUNTLEY: Oh. [laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: Where both of their kids were born.

HUNTLEY: Oh, wow.

WINKELSPECHT: She was born in Berlin, Germany.

HUNTLEY: [laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: West Berlin at the time 'cause it was still an occupied city.

HUNTLEY: Yeah.

WINKELSPECHT: Then and, uh, and then our son was born in, uh, at Fort Hood.

HUNTLEY: Okay.

WINKELSPECHT: During the long year that I was there. [laughs]

HUNTLEY: Well, we're gonna, um, back up just a little bit—

WINKELSPECHT: Okay.

HUNTLEY: -and ask you when and where you entered the Armed Forces.

WINKELSPECHT: Okay. I— I entered, uh, I think it was April 27th was the actual date, of 1972. And, uh, the— what they called the AFEES, as opposed to the AAFES, there's— it can be confusing. One is the— AAFES in the exchange system.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: 'Cause it's A-A-F-E-S, Army Air Force Exchange Service. AFEES is the Armed Forces Entrance and Examination Station.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: And that's where they bring everybody in, they conduct the testing to see, you know, what you're suited for, give you the physicals, give you any shots or whatever that you might need or something.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: And, eventually, then they pack you off to whatever training center you're going to for basic training in whatever service.

HUNTLEY: Okay, and then where was that?

WINKELSPECHT: That was in Philadelphia.

HUNTLEY: In Philadelphia, okay.

WINKELSPECHT: Yeah, right— right across the river from where I lived.

HUNTLEY: Oh, okay.

WINKELSPECHT: Pretty much.

HUNTLEY: [laughs] Um, and then which branch did you serve in.

WINKELSPECHT: In the Army.

HUNTLEY: In the Army. Okay, and then, your years of service, you said you went in in '72 and then you— and then you— until '87?

WINELESPECHT: From A– no, from April, uh, it was April 27th of ‘72 until May 1st, I think is what it counted as, of 1992. Twenty-

HUNTLEY: Okay.

WINKELSPECHT: Twenty years.

HUNTLEY: Okay. Um, and then which military conflicts did you serve during?

WINKELSPECHT: Um, conflicts? Let’s see. [laughs]

HUNTLEY: [laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: It– it’s one of those– like– I’m– I’m considered a Vietnam Era Veteran.

HUNTLEY: Okay.

WINKELSPECHT: But I never had anything to do– closest I ever came to Vietnam was the West Coast of the US.

HUNTLEY: Oh.

WINKELSPECHT: Uh, I was also in during, uh, when they sent troops into Grenada in I think like ‘89.

HUNTLEY: Okay.

WINKELSPECHT: Something like that it was. Um, some of the things that happened during that time, the, uh, Gulf War I was right before I retired.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: ‘Cause that was ‘91, I think. But, uh, for variety, most of the time it was because, as a German linguist-

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: -I spent all the time in Germany when I wasn’t around here. Now, that didn’t keep, wouldn’t– might not have kept me from going, say to, uh, Gulf War I, Desert Storm.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: There, because, uh, when people who had the job that I did are supporting– are in what they call a tactical unit, supporting combat arms out on the battlefield it doesn’t– doesn't matter what-

HUNTLEY: [laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: You know, they send you and— and worry about it afterwards.

HUNTLEY: Yeah.

WINKELSPECHT: Uh, well I never had to— during— during that time like I— in '89 I was here, you know, teaching.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: You know, so, they didn't pull any of us there that I realized. But, uh-

HUNTLEY: And then, so you were in the military for, um, twenty years, so-

WINKELSPECHT: Mhm-hm.

HUNTLEY: -but the question is asking about what unit or units did you serve in?

WINKELSPECHT: [sighs] I got— well— it's, uh, [clears throat] when I first, uh, my main assignments were at Field Station Berlin.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: Uh, then the 375th ASA Company at Fort Hood.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: And then Head Quarters comp- HHC 302nd ASA Battalion in Frankfurt. And then, um, [clears throat] I'm trying to think of what it was called then. It wasn't TCNS anymore. But I was— I was, uh, at Fort Devens, which used to be called, uh, Army Security Agency Training Center and School but by then there was no more ASA. [laughs]

HUNTLEY: [laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: So I— and I can't remember what exactly it was called, but I was part of the 98G task force there. Um, which dealt primarily with, um, either writing the skill qualification test for various MOS's.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: Uh, in the— in the 98G task force it was— we were all GOLFS and just very— different languages and each one worked on their own specific language SQT there. Um, but then after that it was back to Germany again and I was in, uh, originally, well, Charlie Company 511th MI battalion and 502nd MI company, uh, first one in Augsburg and Ludwigsburg and then

the 502nd was in Nürnberg. And then, I came here from Nürnberg and was at the, uh, 344th MI battalion is the unit here at Goodfellow.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: So, and I was an instructor and course developer out there.

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: MI being Military Intelligence.

WINKELSPECHT: Yes.

HUNTLEY: Okay. That's a good memory. [laughs] Twenty years of-

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: Lovely supplies.

WINKELSPECHT: And yet there's things I can't remember about yesterday.

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: [laughs]

HUNTLEY: You remember the important stuff. [laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: And it- and it- and it will- [laughs]

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: Listening to him rattle all this off, that's a lot of initials and numbers to remember.

WINKELSPECHT: And you're- and she's thinking and he can't remember what-

[All Laugh]

WINKELSPECHT: That's just the way it works.

HUNTLEY: So, sticking with that. Um, so why did you enlist and what was your training like?

WINKELSPECHT: Um, I enlisted because I had tried college twice. I went to Virginia Tech. I was gonna study engineering all that but, uh, and I was gonna be a cadet.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: So I got down there, I got issued all my uniforms and everything and went through cadet basic training and was there for about- that took about three weeks. And the day classes started, I said, I'm out of here. This military stuff is not for me.

HUNTLEY: [laughs]

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: [laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: So the following year, I went back as a civilian student.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: Spent a year there, unfortunately, decided too often that I would rather stay in the dorm and play bridge than go to certain classes. Uh, I did well in engineering graphics, chem lab, some other things like that even though I had done well in a calculus type course in high— my senior year in high school, um, I— sitting through calculus lecture how ever many days a week, along with chem lecture, and english, and none of that— it was like, no, no. So, at the end of the year it was like, well, you can repeat it, you can go to summer school, whatever, so I just [makes psh noise], and that was it after two tries. And I went back to work in a place that I had been working before going to school and everything. And somewhere along the line decided that, ‘cause, well, my sister had met a guy who was in the Army. He was stationed at the Lakehurst Naval Air Station there but he was— it was Army Aviation from Fort Dix was there. And, uh, so I was thinking, well, maybe I should try— give the Army a try somehow so I was looking at some things and I said, I think maybe I might like to fly helicopters. You know, this was 19— late 71 early 72 and we were still in Vietnam and all and so, uh, I went, I’m trying to— I’m trying to think who it was that told me, it might have been, ‘cause— ‘cause my brother— now brother-in-law, Mike, took me in and when we went to see is who he went to see to reenlist, you know, the career counselor. And I think he was the one who basically said, first of all, you’re in the wrong place ‘cause this is for him, not for you. Uh, and also, y’know, back before I had my cat— recent cataracts surgery fairly recent, you know, I walked in there and got my glasses on and everything there and he said, um, you can forget about flying, said if it was, you know, a few years ago when helicopters were dropping out of the sky left and right over there you would have gotten a waiver, but not now. Things are winding down, we just don’t need that many people anymore, so I said okay, alright, I’ll look around, try and find something else maybe. And I thought, well, maybe I would like to be a tanker. God knows why.

HUNTLEY & MRS. WINKELSPECHT: [laugh]

WINKELSPECHT: You know, so I go and talk to uh, to a recruiter there and— and you know, they bring me in they give you all the stuff there and said, okay, he says, no commitments on either side, you know, I’ll take you over the AFEEES station there and take the test and see what you qualify for. Um, I think that's what they call, or one time called ASVAB.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery.

HUNTLEY: Mhm.

WINKELSPECHT: You know, see if you’re better for mechanical or— or you know, whatever. So I go over there and take that and they look at it and said, take your pick, you can have anything you want.

HUNTLEY: [laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: So, I'm walking along there and— and, you know, it was kinda like a big room and they had, you know, little cubicles here and there with the dividers here around them and such. And it was almost like the old cartoon where you're walking down a hallway and then all of a sudden an arm comes out of the doorway and grabs somebody and yanks them in.

HUNTLEY: [laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: That's kind of the memory of, you know, sort of how this happened, you know, walking along, and there's this cubicle for the ASA representative, Army Security Agency, and it was like, such a deal have I got for you.

HUNTLEY & MRS. WINKELSPECHT: [laugh]

WINKELSPECHT: So, he told me about ASA and stuff like that and I was thinking eh, but, uh, so it was— it came down to, uh, if you enlisted for four years, 'cause I— I think there they gave me an idea of what the, you know, what different MOS's, Military Occupational Specialities, uh, you know, what kind of ones that they had involved there, you know, and what you did as much as they could tell you in some cases. Um, and all and I said— said, yeah, okay I'll sign— enlist for ASA four years instead of three, um, and then, whatever, so I do that and after going and coming back the day I was supposed to start all this you come back through there, you go through all the processing there and everything, paperwork, and physicals, and— and such. And then it's, you know, they— they— they put you on like the subway out of Philly over to the train and take the train to Trenton, and then from Trenton, you get on a bus and you go out to Fort Dix. And there I am going through Basic Training and all the stuff. While you're there, one of the things that they do is, okay these people fall out over here and turn that all us that enlisted, however many there were, and then enlisted for ASA, so we go over— we get marched over to, uh, this little office. It was the PPNP detachment, I think. Personnel Processing and Procurement or something along those lines. You get over there, they throw— they throw this big binder in front of you that has all this, uh, occupational specialty information in it, you know. What— uh, what it's called and what they do as much as they can tell you in most cases. You know, and stuff like that, and I'm going through that and I decided, okay, I'm gonna be in the Army for four years, I need to learn something that I can use on the outside. And, uh, so I, you know, you put you— you put together your wishlist out of that. You know, which of these courses would you like and I think the first two or three. You put down five and I think the first two that I put down were maintenance courses. Yeah, electronics maintenance. Uh, and then my third choice was language school. And if you put down language school you had to put down three language choices. Well, I had taken one year of German in high school. And so I said, okay, let me— let me see what ones we got here and I think the order that put them in, um, I'm not sure. I remember the three languages but not necessarily the order. I think the order was— it was either Polish and Japanese or Japanese and Polish and then German.

HUNTLEY: [Laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: And then, the last two were I– I– I didn't know if they had to do with Morse Code or if it was more maintenance or what. So when the orders finally come through was when we're getting ready to finish up Basic Training, and, uh, I'm going to language school and in the meantime my first wife and I were planning our wedding. And, so, okay we'll get married, in between Basic Training and then going to whatever training afterwards. 'Cause the odds are that I'm going to Fort Devens or somewhere here on the East Coast afterwards. Because the uh– all the– except for the language school all the other courses were at Fort Devens, Massachusetts, right outside Boston. And language school, I said I'm here at Fort Dix on the East Coast, you know, if I– if they get me– if they get me language school I'll go to DLI East Coast, Defense Language Institute East Coast. Which is at, uh, Anacostia annex to Fort Myer in the D.C. area. I get my orders, you're going to– you're going to learn German at DLI West Coast.

HUNTLEY: Oh. [Laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: Presidio of Monterey, California.

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: A hardship post. [Laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: Yes, that's a hard placement. That's a tough assignment to take there.

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: Gorgeous. It's beautiful.

HUNTLEY: Is it really classified as a hardship?

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: No. [laughs]

HUNTLEY: Oh. [laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: You sit– you sit– you sit– The Presidio basically runs down the side of a hill here. And at the top of the hill is where our barracks were. You're looking out over Monterey Bay.

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: [Laughs] Beautiful Weather.

WINKELSPECHT: So, uh.

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: He took me up there once and we drove out.

WINKELSPECHT: Yeah, we went– we went– we were going there and we went out and after we did what we had to do, basically in Southern California, there we drove up the coast and she had fun on Highway 1 there. Driving through Big Sur, Oh no! But, uh, yeah, so they sent me out there and uh-

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: Where would you rather winter: Massachusetts or California?

[Laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: Yeah, because the course ran from like August, I don't– yeah, probably August to March. So [Laughs] spending– spending that in Massachusetts or– or Monterey, California, eh.

HUNTLEY: [Laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: But, uh, so-

HUNTLEY: Alright, then. Yeah. [Laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: Anyways, that's– that's– that's all– all that started and, uh, but after language school then they send you someplace else so that you, usually so that you, uh, unless you already know how you're gonna use it, you know, they send you, in my case they send you here so that they can teach you how to use that language to do what they need you to do.

HUNTLEY: Okay.

WINKELSPECHT: So, and– go ahead.

HUNTLEY: No– no no.

WINKELSPECHT: [Laughs] That's– that's how I became what they call a signals intelligence voice interceptor.

HUNTLEY: Oh. [Laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: The MOS designation at the time and they change constantly and I know it's different now, uh, was 98 Golf- 98 G.

HUNTLEY: Okay.

WINKELSPECHT: With the GM for German and you know you get– if you have a language and you– you get that appended to it there, so.

HUNTLEY: Picturing like headphones on all the time. [laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: Yeah, you come– you come here, you know, they teach you sitting there and– and, you know, listen to– what you're listening to here tapes of radio broadcasts.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: So that you're learning there, but, uh, you know, it's– it's– it's– it's kinda– it's kinda like when you're in the car with the old– you– you may be too young to remember that but, uh, CB radios.

HUNTLEY: Oh, yeah.

WINKELSPECHT: Or such, you know where, you can— you can talk on it or you can just listen and, so. But that's what they teach— what we taught them— what they taught me and then what we taught them later on, you know, it's how to— how to pick up that kind of stuff and— and what to do with it.

HUNTLEY: Okay, um, so, the next question is about your con- um, what conception did you have of the United States at the time of your enlistment and, so going off that what did America symbolize to you, what do you think it stood for?

WINKELSPECHT: I don't know. That's tough to think. It's definitely— I would— I would probably— not much different from what I feel now. It's always-

HUNTLEY: Yeah.

WINKELSPECHT: Always been the same, you know, it wasn't during, yeah, during that time, yeah, there were a lot of people who had their own thoughts of— and, you know, about the country and— and everything else. The war going on— that never bothered me. I didn't see it as being, I don't know. It was, um, you know, I definitely wasn't anti-war but I wouldn't say I supported it either. It's just kinda there.

HUNTLEY: Yeah. It sounds like you had a very level-head about going into the military.

WINKELSPECHT: Yeah, and since— and since— and you know— and since when I went in I was now, I mean, ASA was in Vietnam and especially if I'd gotten something other than, um. Some other language, you know, if I had gotten Vietnamese or— or something like that, then I could've wound up there too.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: And I believe one of the first ones to have died in Vietnam, uh, back in the early sixties may have been somebody from ASA.

HUNTLEY: Mhm.

WINKELSPECHT: But if not the first one, they were pretty early on.

HUNTLEY: Yeah.

WINKELSPECHT: You know, and that happened all the way through, so. I was— wound up being thankful for that, but.

HUNTLEY: Um, so let's see, so you said that, so the next question asks you, um since your time in the military has your conception of the US changed and you said it's pretty much?

WINKELSPECHT: Yeah, mostly, um.

HUNTLEY: [Laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: The, um, depending on the Administration and such and time there are some times that things get a bit, you know, and there's— there's times, you know, I mean, the country does stuff. It— things happen and you hope everybody's trying to do the best they can or so.

HUNTLEY: Mhm. Um, so you said that you were deployed overseas. Um, do you want— so you were deployed to Germany a number of times.

WINKELSPECHT: I— I was— I was— I was assigned to, uh, because— because of being a German linguist, that was basically all I did was bounce back and forth, uh, across the Atlantic.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: You know, my first assignment was three years and three months because they extended people for an extra three months, uh, in West Berlin.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: Germany. Uh, Field Station Berlin. The, uh, then I came back to the states in a tactical unit, trucks and— and stuff like that there, uh Fort Hood. Uh, spent a year there went back to Germany, spent three— three years minus a month because I got there in January, and instead of leaving in January because of the holidays— they were sending people back a little early if you were supposed to go, um, rotate right after Christmas so they sent— send you back early. So it was 35 months in— in Frankfurt. Uh, I came back to Fort Devens and spent three years there all of '81, '82, and '83. Um, the end of that time was when my first wife and I split up, so I went back to Germany, uh, she and the kids stayed there. Things happened and all and— and the kids wound up coming over to live with me, uh, and we were in Augsburg for roughly a year and a half. Uh, Ludwigsburg which is right in the Stuttgart area for six— about six months. And then, Nürnberg for a year and a half. And we came back here and was here for almost five years until I retired.

HUNTLEY: Um, so, while you were overseas did you reflect much on your unit's mission and how much you believed in it?

WINKELSPECHT: I definitely believed in it no matter what we were doing. There were— They were all di— it was— it had kind of a different— Well it depended on where you were at. In Berlin it was a strategic mission.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: So you know, we worked in a big building there. If you ever google Field Station Berlin you can get a picture of it. It's there on our— on the group's facebook page to— for people that were assigned there. Um, you know, that was— that was all, as Army Security Agency, you're the— one of the service specific branches that feeds the National Security Agency, or NSA.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: They're a civilian agency although there's a lot of military people there and everything. Then each service has their own one that feeds that Army Security Agency, what used to be Air Force Security Service and now they're like Intelligent– I don't know what they're called now. The Air Force has changed it. The Army got rid of ASA and just merged it all into military intelligence.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: Um, the Air Force– or uh, the Navy has the Naval Security Group which to some extent also includes– you know the Marines have their stuff. And, so. But that was you know– that was what we did there when I was at Fort Hood. When I was in Frankfurt, um, it was– they were both tactical units in different ways and our job was supporting troops out in the field.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: You know, so, what we were doing primarily there was practicing what we– our actual job was as best we could.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: Given that you're sitting in the middle of Texas so there's only so much you can do.

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: [LAUGHS]

WINKELSPECHT: As a voice interceptor with a language other than English.

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: Although, there is a German community [Laughs] in the Hill Country.

WINKELSPECHT: Yeah, but they don't get on the radio and talk much.

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: Yeah, and– and we don't need to spy on them. [Laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: But, uh. I hope not. After what happened in Germany over these last couple of days, you never know. But, uh

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: Yeah.

HUNTLEY: Um, let's see-

WINKELSPECHT: And then– and then in the end there, like I said, at– at Fort Deven– it was that way in Nürnberg and Augsburg too it was tactical support but the– on either side of that at Fort Devens and, you know, here it was all a schoolhouse atmosphere and you're working on

stuff, you're in an office everyday and you're doing– at Devens, it was working on, like I said, the Skill Qualification Test. Um, we were writing– trying to write lesson plans for teaching pieces of equipment, how to operate them and– and such. Here it was the basic: how to be a voice interceptor in any given language. That's what everybody here did, so.

HUNTLEY: Um, so when you were deployed overseas what did you think of local inhabitants that you encountered. [Laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: I was a German linguist with a German last name and I– I spent ten out of twenty years in Germany.

HUNTLEY: Yeah.

WINKELSPECHT: I– I [Laughs]

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: Could've met family and not even known it.

WINKELSPECHT: It was– it was– it was– except that, like I said, that one– when you left over there, because you were in– if you lived in government quarters, you know, it was just an apartment there, and usually when you left, uh, the best way to do, get the apartment ready to pass inspection and be allowed to leave was to hire a cleaning team.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: And the one that we had in Frankfurt I think, uh, it was a woman that worked on that who loved to trace ancestry back in the days before everybody was doing it.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: And so she was fascinated by our name and the fact– and when I said, I have no idea where, basically, it came from. So, she did all kinds of– and couldn't find a thing.

HUNTLEY: [Laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: You know, we're from one of the– I– I'm convinced that it was either, and– and I think it was like in East Prussia.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: In that Germany, Poland kinda thing, somewhere. Um, just like nothing happens with France and Italy or with France and Germany.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: They kinda mix together and all.

HUNTLEY: Yeah.

WINKELSPECHT: But uh. But yeah, I mean, I would've spent the whole twenty years over there. I– I loved it, so.

HUNTLEY: Um, so when you– when you interacted with local inhabitants–

WINKELSPECHT: Mhm-hm.

HUNTLEY: Um, what do you think their conceptions were of the United States and did you ever engage in conversations about America with them?

WINKELSPECHT: Uh, probably not in any conversations about America.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: Like that. You know, most of them were familiar with Americans from all they, you know, they– they knew some of the ones that were like, yeah. They– they had the– they had the almost the ugly American kind of thing but there the ones that were. And then there were those of us who got along great and we did the same stuff and.

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: But they couldn't understand Americans drinking cold beer.

WINKELSPECHT: No. They-

MRS. WINKELSPECHT:[Laughs]

HUNTLEY: [Laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: One of the things that I got involved in while I was– while I was in Frankfurt and then, uh, Augsburg and Nürnberg was Volksmarching.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: And, so we're the– most– most of the American installations over there also had a club of their own, uh, that was involved in it. I was in a– a member of a German club but uh– they would sponsor these walks and all now, if it was sponsored by one of the American units they'd have GIs out there working at what they called the control point. Uh, you know, stamping your– your card to show that you came through there and all and then selling drinks and– and stuff to eat and– and whatever like that. And I was out at Mainz and come up to the control point there and there was a guy sitting there, you know, and he's stamping the cards there and– and he had stuff there and he had this like a washtub full of beer and ice. And German guy come up here and said he wanted a beer. And the guy– you know GI was ready to reach in and pull one out of the ice. And the German said, no, no, no, no, no, no just the ones in the case covered by, you know, a little something or other to keep them out of the direct sun or whatever, you know. And the guy looked at him like he was crazy 'cause he just wanted this– this beer. He

didn't want an ice cold beer, he wanted one of those. I could appreciate that, 'cause one of the things that almost anybody who's been in Germany will tell you, you can have beer delivered to your— wherever you live. You know, the truck will come around and they'll haul them up the stairs and leave them in the area. I mean, you know, we used to get a case of, you know, twenty half-liter bottles of beer and you could get, you know, a liter, two-liter, whatever, bottles of soda too. And things like that, but uh, so I'd get one and stick it in the kitchen and most of the time I'd pull one out of the case there and didn't bother to put them in the fridge or anything.

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: He has-

WINKELSPECHT: I do that sometimes now. I just take one, you know.

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: He has a beautiful collection of beer steins from his time in Germany.

HUNTLEY: Oh, that's cool.

WINKELSPECHT: Oh, god.

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: Yeah. [Laughs]

HUNTLEY: [Laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: Between the steins, and the plates, and the medals, and— I did a lot of walking.

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: Yeah.

WINKELSPECHT: Over there.

HUNTLEY: Well, on that note, did you receive any special medals or recognitions for your service, such as Purple Heart and if so, could you explain the circumstances.

WINKELSPECHT: No.

HUNTLEY: [Laughs]

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: [Laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: I did not. Not that I won't. I did not.

HUNTLEY: Okay. Well, so what are the— you said between the?

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: Walking.

WINKELSPECHT: Those things are just— you know just for the— for the walking.

HUNTLEY: Oh.

WINKELSPECHT: You know, they– they set up a route and you– and they have, uh, you pay your fee there and at the end of it, depending on how far you walked, some, there were usually, like, uh, it was usually ten– ten or twenty kilometers, sometimes it was ten, twenty, thirty–

[The audio cuts and there is a ~12-minute break in the recording due to technical difficulties.]

HUNTLEY: Alright, so we're at part two, um, here with, uh, Charles Winkelspecht and, uh, his wife Susan. Um, let's see, so, 2:35 PM on December 9th, 2022. Uh, so to make sure that we didn't miss anything, um, we're gonna go back one question and just ask you about the special medals or recognitions for your service.

WINKELSPECHT: No.

HUNTLEY: Okay, alright. [Laughter]

WINKELSPECHT: Did not happen.

HUNTLEY: [Laughs] Um, so what kind of technology did you use in the service.

WINKELSPECHT: Um, most–

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: Old-fashioned. [Laughs]

HUNTLEY: [Laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: Yeah. For now, old-fashioned, yeah, because it was you know radio receivers and radios in general. Um, there's one, in some– in some assignments, you were dealing with– strictly with receivers and, uh, recording media whether it be reel, you know, reel to reel, tape-decks in the old days, or, uh, digital later on. Um, in other assignments, you know, you were dealing with the– with radios, uh, that you would use both for transmitting and receiving but, uh.

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: You used computers in teaching, didn't you?

WINKELSPECHT: Yeah, later on, here at the– once I got back here, uh, and even that wasn't in the beginning when I first got back here it was still the old, reel to reel decks and stuff. But, uh, right after that they– they, uh, computerized it all and it's probably much more so now, even, over thirty years later, but, uh, and now they go from sitting there with a headset on and– and turning dials and trying to tune in signals and– and then recording them on a tape recorder here. And to, uh, to sitting in front of a– in front of the monitor working your keyboard, so.

HUNTLEY: What about, um, like when it comes to like language acquisition, what types of training, or what types of technology did you use with language acquisition? It was listening to radio programs and things?

WINKELSPECHT: You mean, once I, in, once— once I had been through language school and what I was doing out in the field, like that?

HUNTLEY: Actually in language school. So what type of technology did you use?

WINKELSPECHT: In language school? [Laughs]

HUNTLEY: Yeah. [Laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: In language school, this was '72-'73.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: When you first got there as part of your in-processing they would issue you a stack— you know, your stack of books that had in the course in there. They would issue you a tape recorder.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: And a whole pile of, I think they were six-inch reels. The ones about that big.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: Maybe. You know, guys can't judge length.

HUNTLEY: [Laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: But, uh, the uh, and you take all that back home, you know and you'd have— and then you'd study, you'd have to learn dialogues and you're memorizing stuff and then we would talk about it in class. And nowadays it's— there's different ways of doing that. It's probably the same theory, at least.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: You just— the media you're using is totally different.

HUNTLEY: Okay, um. Let's see. What were race or gender relations like in your unit?

WINKELSPECHT: Wasn't a whole lot-

HUNTLEY: [Laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: Eh, it wasn't as bad— I don't— I mean, from my point of view, as a white guy, you know, saying, well, things all seemed pretty good.

HUNTLEY: [Laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: I don't doubt there were— there were some— when I first got to Berlin, there were no women in the field station. Some of the other, uh, ones, like uh, in the— in the personnel offices, or some, you know, things like that there were women assigned. There were no women assigned to anything other than that, the field station. Uh, there may not have been any there at all in the beginning. But the, uh, later on the women start to come in and it's like anybody else, you know. Some— some were— some were good at what they were doing, some weren't, it was just like anybody else.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: There weren't a whole lot of black soldiers assigned there. I don't— you know know, whether that was a, I don't— I don't know, but I don't think— I'm trying to remember from the students I had coming through here. That there weren't a lot of black linguistics.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: And who's responsible for something like that, whether there was a reason, you know, um a viable reason for that or if it was something that there was no excuse for, or I don't know. Um, you see— you would find more, in— like in, uh, jobs where you're intercepting something other than a language.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: Uh, whether it be morse code or dealing with, what they called non-communications, which is like radars and— and things like that. Um, you know, or in— or in maintenance even. I think. But, uh, as far as, uh, on the social side, you know, how everybody got along, like I said, as a white guy, especially somebody who didn't live in the barracks very much.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: You know, I was— I was in— in uh family quarters there so we didn't much, uh, association other than at work with a lot of the other people, so.

HUNTLEY: Yeah, that's fair.

WINKELSPECHT: Yeah, I mean it's— it's uh— it's uh— in I think, at least on the— on the— on the um sex side of it, you know, male/female there, I think it was better in the— most of— like the, uh, the units like ours that required a higher intelligence level.

HUNTLEY: Mhm.

WINKELSPECHT: Because the way women were viewed was different than they might be in— in like say, some— some other unit that didn't require as much, um, in the way of intelligence, or such, for— to do what they had to do.

HUNTLEY: Yeah, it's like in highly specialized fields, it would be a little bit different.

WINKELSPECHT: Yeah.

HUNTLEY: Um.

WINKELSPECHT: Because I mean, because we could— I had— I would— we were at Fort Polk there for a— for an exercise one time from Fort Hood. And the team that I had there were three of us, there was two guys and a girl and we were fine out in the field by ourselves.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: And out there you know, we're all the same. That might not have been the case in— in— it obviously wasn't in some, uh some units.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: So.

HUNTLEY: Uh, let's see. So what are your most vivid memories from your time in service? [Laughs] If you could give a vivid memory, since we did have to have that detour where I had to get another recorder. [Laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: I— I, yeah, it's like, I don't know, as far as vivid memories, I guess. It's like what Susan was saying says, go all the way back twenty years. And that was— that, you know, covered twenty years and that started fifty years ago.

HUNTLEY: Ah, yeah.

WINKELSPECHT: You know, they come— ah you know, through there uh, there's probably something, you know I'm trying to remember, there's certain things that I— probably pop into my head all the time and now, of course, I can't remember any of them but, uh. I can't think of any, but there was there's— there's— there's probably— [tapping]

HUNTLEY: Well, maybe this will jog your memory. So what did you like or not like about your overall experience in the service?

WINKELSPECHT: I— no, that doesn't help jog anything.

HUNTLEY: [Laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: I mean, I stayed around for twenty years and probably if they hadn't said, no, this is it, you gotta get out now, would probably have stayed for longer. But, uh, you know, I- I- I enjoyed the time there, um, they paid me well to stay there. Which was part of the reason why I did. Um, it was, what I did in general was- it's usually, with something like that you know, when you're trained, especially when your first assignment is strategic and you're sitting and you're going in everyday and actually using what you were trained to do: the language, the- the technical stuff, and everything. And you see how that feeds- that can feed into the overall national picture, um, you know, you- you really get charged up and then tell you okay, now you're going to go to Fort Hood, and take care of your truck, and go out into a field occasionally and listen to English, and it's like you know, and a lot of people say, [makes sound of disgust], they don't want anything to do with, I- I kind of adapted enough to I could- I could do this- do this and do- do other stuff too, especially being in Germany, I was- I was fine there. I didn't have to-

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: So.

HUNTLEY: Um. Were you going to say something?

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: No.

HUNTLEY: Okay, I was just making sure.

WINKELSPECHT: She'll wait till she gets- [Laughs]

HUNTLEY: Um, let's see. Ok so the next set of questions ask you about after service. So, um, did you expect to face any challenges when you returned to civilian life, and if yes, what challenges were you expecting?

WINKELSPECHT: Um, the challenges that I expected after- after twenty years in the Army, was what am I going to do now? And uh, like I said, when I first enlisted I was thinking of I'll stay in the Army for four years, I'll have- go to a- I'll- I'll go to a school and learn something that I can put to use on the outside. I was hoping for electronics maintenance at the time. I said, you know, if you can fix something, you can always get a job.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: And, so after not doing that, and twenty years later, it's like, okay, what have I done and what have I learned that I can put to work now on the outside. Um, you can't- if all you- if all you can say is, well, I learned to speak German, that doesn't necessarily, you know translate. Maybe, maybe it does translate, but, um, you know, trying to- trying to take that and make something of it, you know, of course there's all the other things that you pick up over the years. You say, well, you- you've learned how to be in charge of people, how to do various other things, you know, that- that can- you can get a job doing something like that to pay the bills afterwards.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: Um, the, uh, when I did retire, you know. I wound up, um, I went ahead during the time here, uh, my son had gone into Boy Scouts. And one of the things that they did, was they worked for the concessionaire at the colosseum uh during various events like the rodeo and the circuses when they came in. And they would uh be the ones that went around in the stands, and sold popcorn or sold cokes, cotton candy. And our scout troop provided, they were the ones, the boys were the ones that did that, you know.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: They were out there selling stuff, the adults were supplying that, you know, feeding them, you know, what they needed to go do that and running the concession stands. Or at least one stand, and, uh, so having gotten an in sort of with that, having been familiar with all that, it just happened at the time, that they had gotten a new concessionaire, they were going—going out and so they were looking for somebody to run it. So, I wound up doing that for most of a year.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: Uh, then that kinda went away as they— the city redid their— their thinking on who was going to run it and everything. And I wound up out of work for six months or so, something like that, uh, and so I got into the post office and— and started working there.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: But, uh, so that's the, you know, that was the only thing for me. There wasn't any, uh, acceptance or anything like that. Some people came back and talked about how they were ignored or the way they were treated or anything like that.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: I was well past all that.

HUNTLEY: Yeah.

WINKELSPECHT: Mostly too. 'cause that was immediate post-Vietnam, you know, during and after.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: Right there was, I didn't— didn't run into anything for— for any of that since I was, I don't know.

HUNTLEY: Yeah, by '92.

WINKELSPECHT: Yeah.

HUNTLEY: Yeah.

WINKELSPECHT: Yeah.

HUNTLEY: Um, let's see. So, how did your service influence or affect your family?

WINKELSPECHT: Well the kids have- [Laughs]

HUNTLEY: [Laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: Um, you know, our- our- our- our daughter wound up, uh, like I said, she married a guy that was a year ahead of her here in Central.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: And he went in the Air Force and- and- and they spent five years in Misawa, Japan and both of their kids were born there and when they came back, they- he was at Luke Air Force Base right on the west side of Phoenix.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: And she still lives out there even though they're not married anymore. She- she and her second husband, uh, have lived there ever since. They came back in '99. I think it was, late '99. So, uh, you know, and so she's had- she had that- you know she was born in Berlin and- and it was- all that bouncing back and forth, living in different places and- and all that. Her best friend to this day, she met the last time we were in Germany there, uh, they lived down the, I think they lived down the other end of our building. I don't think it was the next building down. But, uh, you know, they- you know

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: Katie loved the time in Germany.

WINKELSPECHT: Yeah, she- and I'm pretty sure Charles did too.

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: He just doesn't talk about it like she does.

WINKELSPECHT: Yeah, well, she- he was two years younger so. Some of it was still, you know, he was- he was born here in Fort Hood.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: And then, his was the bouncing back and forth but you, you know, you've got the living in the different places. You got the constant movement, you know, you're in this school for a while then you're gone and then you're back you know. And some of that started-

you know, that started for them at different times, of course, because of the two-year gap. Um, he– he’s retired now after twenty years in the Air Force himself, so.

HUNTLEY: Oh, wow. [Laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: The military lifestyle and everything did not, uh.

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: Didn’t sour him.

HUNTLEY: [Laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: Yeah, I mean, he went in initially because he had been working at various places, y’know, he was like assistant manager at Subway. He was– what was he doing at– at?

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: He was a manager at-

WINKELSPECHT: Was he managing there?

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: Cotton Patch, yeah.

WINKELSPECHT: Yeah. Which is where he met his first wife. Uh, you know the– so [pause] I forgot what I was going to say. [Laughs] But he, y’know, he– he went in because of, y’know, he had two kids by then and working stuff like that wasn’t the benefits weren’t– weren’t there when you got kids, you know?

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: And the hours stunk.

WINKELSPECHT: Things you had, yeah, but, I mean, the other stuff– you can adjust to certain things but when all of it seems bad [Laughs] It’s like, I need something else. So he wound up going in and spent twenty years in and he’s retired now. Will soon be married again, maybe. [Laughs]

HUNTLEY: Wow. No, that’s– that’s– yeah. Um, uh, let’s see, so how do you think, uh, communities in West Texas or other communities you encountered treated returning veterans.

WINKELSPECHT: Yeah, see I don’t– I don’t know in terms of returning veterans like that. ‘Cause I didn’t see any of that here.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: Um, uh, there have been ones, you know, ‘cause in my case, you know, I was well past all that by the time I came here. Um, they have, uh, for anybody like the most recent ones from Iraq and Afghanistan.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: Um, I'm fairly certain that people around here will do anything they can for 'em.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: Um, so like right now, we've got this hunting weekend going on they've had that for I don't know how many years. They bring in, uh, guys, some of whom are disabled and, uh, at least some of them. And, uh, you know, they give 'em everything they need and take 'em out on these hunting trips there. It's kind of a, you know, showing their appreciation and, uh, but, uh, I don't know, but they you know it's— here, at least, they— you know— they— they treat everybody fairly well, pretty well like that. Uh, now if you were talking some other places that don't have as much of— as strong of a military connection and all, I don't know.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: But, uh-

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: When you were here for the first time, in the early seventies, did you notice anything in the community about how they treated veterans?

WINKELSPECHT: First of all, wasn't here very long.

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: No.

WINKELSPECHT: I was here for two months.

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: Yeah, didn't know how much you get out-

WINKELSPECHT: Yeah, it was an eight-

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: -and about.

WINKELSPECHT: it was an eight-week course. I was here about ten months— er— ten weeks probably.

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: Yeah.

WINKELSPECHT: And, I— I don't know. I didn't have a whole lot of— you know, I went over to school and— and came back home.

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: and home. [Laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: You know, I-

HUNTLEY: That's fair. [Laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: I was– I was– yeah, we had an apartment over on– just off of Garfield there. And– and yeah, I was going to school and– and come back home and that’s– that’s about– that was about it for–

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: -ten weeks. Something like, from mid– basically Mid-April to Mid-June.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: And, uh.

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: I wonder if–

WINKELSPECHT: All–

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: -you’ll see a difference–

WINKELSPECHT: -all I–

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: -in the research between people that came home immediately and then people that retired military.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm. Yeah.

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: And just blame it– it to a community.

WINKELSPECHT: Now– now, you know, you could see that there. You know, some of the– even people that gra– retired around when I did, you know, if they were– came in when I did and had gone to Vietnam.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: And then, how they treat army even if they stayed in all the way through. How they went through that return–

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: -period.

HUNTLEY: Yeah.

WINKELSPECHT: And I don’t– I don’t doubt that in places like this, and in most places, I think, were the– they’ve had the military around all the time.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: It's— it's totally different than some of the places that have no connection basically with the military and the-

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: Yeah, that's what I was going to say. 'Cause my impression of San Angelo that it's very welcoming to military and retirees.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: Yeah, and it's not just [Laughs] because of what they do for the economy, you know. It's a-

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: Yeah, just good people.

WINKELSPECHT: Yeah, exactly.

HUNTLEY: Yeah. Um, well also, like, in a military town where people would have friends and relatives who had been in the military.

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: Mhm-hm.

HUNTLEY: So, uh, there's that compassion.

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: Yeah.

WINKELSPECHT: Yeah, there's been a lot of, you know, you find people all over that one way or another either have been in, you know, some of them were in for a couple of years. You know, others have been, you know, stayed in for a career.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm. Yeah, um, let's see, so, you kind of have spoken to this. But just to add on to it. Um, what long term impacts— what long term impact do you believe veterans, such as yourself, have had on communities in West Texas.

WINKELSPECHT: I don't know— I've always— I've always— I haven't worried that much about, you know, West Texas and everything. Uh, but I know the— one of the things that had— that had bothered me over the years was, uh, when you start getting into government the more people in it that have that experience and know, yeah, have— can appreciate where we fit in the world and all that. Um, and what it takes sometimes, the sacrifices that people have had to make, um, you know, when you've got, you know, there— there was a probably, you know, right after World War II you had, you know, most of Congress probably was— was— was veterans in one way or another. And over the years, you know, for whatever reasons that has gotten down or in some cases you have a hard time finding one. Um, and I think most of the ones who have had that experience, um, are better for the country.

HUNTLEY: Um, well, uh, so how do you feel about your military service looking back?
[Laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: I was perfectly happy most of the time. [Laughs] Maybe– maybe not when I was– when I was out in the field at Fort Hood or something. [Laughs]

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: Spying on your American neighbors.

WINKELSPECHT: Hoping something– hoping something- hoping something didn't crawl into my sleeping bag. [Laughs]

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: [Laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: Let's see where can I sleep to make sure that I wake up. 'Cause you hear all kinds of stories.

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: [Laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: People waking up in your sleeping bag with a sn– rattlesnake-

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: Oh!

WINKELSPECHT: -curled up somewhere or whatever. Or finding a scorpion in the wrong place.

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: Uh.

WINKELSPECHT: You know, that's kinda.

HUNTLEY: [Laughs]

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: No, thank you. [Laughs]

HUNTLEY: On that note, do you have any advice for any young, uh, men and women who are entering– who are just entering the service?

WINKELSPECHT: Um, uh, other than– other than a–advice, well that's hard to, [pause] yeah, try to– try to accept whatever comes along, um, you know, every– every– everything you run into in there is, um, can have a positive outcome, I think.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: Uh, if you can figure out how to get there. And, uh, you know. I think it's a good experience for everybody, uh, back in the days when there was a draft, you know, almost everybody had– had at least a little bit of military experience and whenever they got out of that, some of 'em, you know, would stay with it, and– and make a career even if you didn't, you know, you still had that association, you got the– you know, work with people from– from who knows where, you know, some people otherwise they never would leave their– their little town

or— or city or s— and— and— and never know what people from around the country are like. You get an exposure to a lot of that, uh, I think— I thought— I always thought that was a good part, the draft itself, eh, that's another story.

HUNTLEY: [Laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: And— and because that has gone away. There's you know, some of that exposure has gone with it. And now that it's all volunteer, you get some people who should have been exposed to various things that don't— that— that, you know, aren't exposed to it and— and so they're— they're way of looking at things is— is, doesn't get that expansion.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm. Um, do you have any items, objects, or correspondence that you would like to share with the project? It's fine if the answer is no.

WINKELSPECHT: I don't think— I don't— I— I can't think of anything really, uh, at the moment.

HUNTLEY: Um, and then, would-

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: You don't want to share a picture of Field Station Berlin?

WINKELSPECHT: She'll see when— if she googles it.

HUNTLEY: Yeah, if you have anything that you want to— any photographs or anything that you want to— to send or any links that's, feel free to email me.

WINKELSPECHT: I have, uh, [Laughs] Somewhere, I have a picture of the field station that I took from down the slope a ways out beyond the signs that say no photographing.

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: [Laughs]

HUNTLEY: Those are the best pictures.

WINKELSPECHT: But on— but on— but on— but on the facebook page there's an— there's an aerial photograph of, uh, the field station-

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: -there. And I'm not sure what era it's from, if you're familiar with— with it from a particular era you can tell what when certain things were added and— and all like that. But, uh, it's, uh, some— there's— there— some of the older pictures from when it was-

HUNTLEY: Okay. That's the one— that's in— that's the one you're talking about.

WINKELSPECHT: Yes.

HUNTLEY: Okay.

WINKELSPECHT: Yes, that's it.

HUNTLEY: Okay.

WINKELSPECHT: You can imagine some of the [Laughs].

HUNTLEY: And that's where you worked?

WINKELSPECHT: That's where I worked.

HUNTLEY: Oh, wow. That-

WINKELSPECHT: For three years and three months. On the third floor of that building.

HUNTLEY: When you said field station, I was like picturing like a brick building like on a street.

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: [Laughs]

HUNTLEY: You know what I mean? Like in a spy movie.

WINKELSPECHT: Oh, it's a- well, it's a- it's a big build- I mean, that's a-

HUNTLEY: Yeah.

WINKELSPECHT: The blue part is three stories.

HUNTLEY: Yeah.

WINKELSPECHT: Here. The one in the back, not the- the one in the front was the brick building.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: The British units. 'Cause it was actually- this was actually in the British Sector of the city.

HUNTLEY: Okay.

WINKELSPECHT: At the time when it was occupied and divide- you know, technically divided although in the three Western sectors, you could go wherever you wanted. And the wall was between the Russian sector.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: And the three Western sectors.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: But, uh, this was actually in the Brit sector here and that was their building there in the front. Uh, the guard shack where you went in and got your badge and everything was here and you— you would go up the side and cross between the two. And if you turned one way, you went into the Brit building, if you turned the other way, you went back into ours. And, uh, there were three stories there and then these two ray domes were on top there and then the central column there and that's where all the antennas—

HUNTLEY: In that central hall?

WINKELSPECHT: —Were.

HUNTLEY: Okay.

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: There's this show called Mysteries of the Abandoned that he watches and they did one on Field Station Berlin and he could see those gigantic antennas.

HUNTLEY: Uh-huh.

WINKELSPECHT: Because— because by now I mean, the place was abandoned mid-nineties or so, 'cause '91 or '92 was Germany reunification after the wall came down in '89.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: And, you know, it's all one Germany now and the Russians all pulled out and— and went back home after that and had their own problems all there. And so, this was like, well we don't need a— 'cause at the time say this was sitting in the middle of East Germany.

HUNTLEY: Yeah.

WINKELSPECHT: So you're surrounded by-

HUNTLEY: [Laughs]

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: [Laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: Five or six Russian armies.

HUNTLEY: Yeah.

WINKELSPECHT: Plus the East Germans, and, I mean, when you're-

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: During the Cold War.

WINKELSPECHT: When you're job is to— is to listen to communications. There's a lot of that going around— flying around out there-

HUNTLEY: Yeah.

WINKELSPECHT: -when you're in the middle of it. When all of a sudden, you know, they're all. [Laughs]

HUNTLEY: [Laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: 'Cause they not only pulled out of Germany, they pulled out of Poland, they pulled out of, yeah, the whole Warsaw Pact thing. All of the Eastern European countries and went back home to Russia.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: And, uh, so it's like-

HUNTLEY: [Laughs] Okay.

WINKELSPECHT: But, uh, so anyways.

HUNTLEY: Um, and so, if you're transcribing this, we were looking at a picture of the Berlin Field Station, a photograph of it. So, awesome. Um, and then would you like to share anything else about your service or-? Thank you for pulling that up for us.

[All Laugh]

HUNTLEY: Is there anything else you would like to share with us?

WINKELSPECHT: If that's not the picture that's on face— the facebook page, but it's-

HUNTLEY: It's from a different angle?

WINKELSPECHT: But it's— yeah, it's a little different angle and it might be a different— I'm not— it might be a different era.

HUNTLEY: Okay.

WINKELSPECHT: Like I said, because, uh, as they added things to it.

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: What's your group? I can probably at least pull up the cover page.

WINKELSPECHT: It's Field Station Berlin, I think.

[Typing on Phone]

WINKELSPECHT: And anyways, uh, yeah, 'cause the— after the war, I mean, there was not, Berlin was like rubble everywhere.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: From the bombings and everything. And so in cleaning all that out so they could rebuild, you had to have a place to put all that stuff.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: All the— So, out here they were trying— the Germans had been trying to build a technical academy of some kind. And, they [coughs] I don't know if it was their construction practices or what but, you know, the Allies couldn't get rid of it. So they wind up taking all this debris and just dumping it on top of and they formed Teufelsberg or T-berg and T-berg Jr. [Laughs] Was what they— what we called it.

HUNTLEY: Oh. [Laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: There were— there were— there were two hills out there one had trees and they built a field station— they put the field station on top of it. Back— it started out with just trucks and working out of the huts on the back of 'em and then they put some quonset huts in there and they gradually expanded and expanded and expanded till, basically it looked like that. Uh, and then, it was a ski run down the side of it. Uh, and then, the other one there was no trees, whatsoever.

HUNTLEY: Huh. By design?

WINKELSPECHT: And— I have no idea why it was like that. Why they were all on this one and none on this one. But that's the one the Germans went up on to and flew their radio control gliders all the time.

HUNTLEY: Hmm.

WINKELSPECHT: [Laughs] But uh yeah but it— like I said the field station, as the field station grew from just, uh, some little tactical unit parking their trucks up there, and— and putting the antennas up and everything up too, something like that. And then, after reunification, it was just, okay we don't need this anymore, we're done. And then [makes SHFT noise]. Packed up everything and left and just left the building there and right now it's, if it's a— if it's a solid wall somewhere it's covered in graffiti and if it's-

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: It was sad seeing that.

WINKELSPECHT: If— if it's uh, you know, the ray domes, like that, they're basically just canvas and they're in, just all in taters.

HUNTLEY: Mhm.

WINKELSPECHT: There, and, uh.

HUNTLEY: So, yeah.

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: But it at least gave me some perspective on where he worked-

HUNTLEY: Yeah.

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: -during those years.

WINKELSPECHT: Yeah, rode a bus out there or drove out there once. Rode the bus when I was, um, [pause] living in the barracks and then after we moved into, uh, an apartment, later on, the economy or in quarters basically you just drove out there. But, uh, just go to work, go home, go to work, go home.

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: [Laughs]

HUNTLEY: Yeah.

WINKELSPECHT: Working- working a rotating six and two.

HUNTLEY: Yeah.

WINKELSPECHT: Six, yeah, and, um, yeah, it was- so it was like six days, two days off, six swings, two days off, six mids, two days off, and because of the way that they were laid out, it was basically six days, 72 hours off, six days, 72 hours off, and six days, 48 hours off.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: 'Cause between swings and mids, you got off at midnight, started midnight, say you were- you're two days was twenty- was forty-eight hours. Whereas the other ones, you get off at like 4:30 on one day and you were off the rest of that day and then two full days and then came back to work at 4:30 on that day. And the- to work till midnight so that you had a seventy-two hour period.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: In there. And some people went and there were other people that were straight- straight days, straight mids, straight something there, but [pause] it was- it was interesting. Some people hated it. It didn't bother me as much, but then as a German a lot of the times they didn't there were two of us assigned and they didn't need two.

HUNTLEY: Mhm-hm.

WINKELSPECHT: So there were times when it was, you know, the guy that I– the other German that– that was assigned there was like, do you want the first three or the last three?

HUNTLEY: [Laughs]

MRS. WINKELSPECHT: [Laughs]

WINKELSPECHT: To work. Work three then be off for three and then two more like that or something or, but there were times when you had to work all six. [Laughs]

HUNTLEY: Well, um, let me ask you one question before I, um, before we wrap up. So you said that you did, uh, two tries at college, at Virginia Tech the first time. Was it Virginia Tech the second time?

WINKELSPECHT: Yes.

HUNTLEY: Okay. I wanted to– to make sure about that. Alright, well, thank you guys, it's been awesome.

WINKELSPECHT: [Laughs]

HUNTLEY: Um, and I appreciate your guys' patience while I had to– while having technical difficulties. Um, so we're gonna go ahead and wrap up now, so it's 3:13 PM, um. December 9th 2022, um, yeah, so thank you guys.

WINKELSPECHT: Yay, done. [Laughs]