

Interviewer:

Okay, today is April - I almost said September - April 2, 2014. Weâ€™re here at the home of Buddy Bucha, or Paul Bucha, and delighted to have the second installment of his interview weâ€™re doing. We did the first one three years ago. You donâ€™t look a day older, so weâ€™re happy to -

Paul Bucha:

Remember, itâ€™s not the model, itâ€™s the mileage.

Interviewer:

Weâ€™re happy to continue where we left off, and actually what Iâ€™d like to start with - actually, Iâ€™m going to go off the plan and start where we just were before the cameras were turned on, â€™cause I think it was very interesting what you were saying. You are a Medal of Honor recipient, and I think itâ€™s in the first installment of the interview you talk about the difference between winning and recipient, and the notion that itâ€™s not just an honor for you, yourself, but for the men who accompanied you.

Paul Bucha:

Correct. None of us do this in isolation of the men in our command, and the people to whom we report. So up and down are there with you during the time, and youâ€™re never in isolation of your family, either, and also never in isolation of the ghosts that went before, and may come after, who are not recognized for lack of witnesses, for example. So thereâ€™s a burden that comes with the medal to make sure that you comport yourself in such a way that you represent all of those people.

Interviewer:

But you also talked about this notion that you refer to it very modestly as a trinket, but there was a philosophy behind your saying that. Can you explain what you meant?

Paul Bucha:

Trinket, or a thing - itâ€™s an item, and it comes from the experience of, in our society, how often we focus on the celebrity, the evidence of celebrity. The Oscar in making movies, not necessarily the quality in making movies. And in sports, the gold medalist, not the bronze medalist.

The gold medalist, and not the participant. There was a young girl 14 years old during the Los Angeles Olympics on the United States Olympic Team, gymnast. Gabrielle, I think, Moceanu, or something like that, was her name - I forget exactly - but she made the Olympic team at the age of 14. Stop. Thatâ€™s enough. That is an accomplishment that is just difficult to imagine. Yet when she was competing, the commentator, who was then this man John Tesh, who Iâ€™ve said subsequently doesnâ€™t know a difference between a pommel horse and a quarter horse.

But she went out to the floor exercise, and they were hoping she would medal, and that they thought would be the basis for winning the team championship, and she came in fifth, I believe it was. And he said, â€œShe let the nation down.â€ And I said, â€œFor Godâ€™s sakes, sheâ€™s 14. She came in fifth in the world. What do you mean she let -â€ â€™cause she didnâ€™t get the trinket. They went on to win the team championship anyway, but it was so out of place.

And we count the medals at the Olympics, rather than cheering for the participants. In my case, I look at the wearing of the Medal of Honor is more something you put around your neck. It doesnâ€™t make you a better person. It doesnâ€™t disparage a person. But people when youâ€™re wearing it say, â€œWow.â€ Take it off, and they pass you anonymously.

So itâ€™s not the person, itâ€™s this trinket that allows people to say, â€œOh, I will recognize that person.â€ And today, for all the soldiers who wear the trinket of a uniform, for example - itâ€™s a wrapping - people walk up and say, â€œThank you for your service,â€ and then rush on. I had to laugh at this Budweiser ad that shows soldiers walking into an airport, everybody stands up and claps for 13 minutes. Why? On the 14th minute, they sit back down and start reading the newspaper again. No one goes up and

says, "Where are you from?"

No one asks them, "What have you done? Are you married?" No one takes the time to do that, because they did the acknowledgement of the trinket, if you will, the camouflage B.D.U.s, the fatigues, and had no interest in the substance. And it's a very important characteristic to be aware of in our society.

Interviewer:

Oh, and describe that scene you just described to me before we turned the camera on about Bobby Jones coming into the room.

Paul Bucha:

Yes. My classmate, Bobby Jones, a man who I honor and I respect and I admire for all that he went through as a five-year prisoner of war in the Hanoi Hilton, during the Vietnam War. So I walk in the room and I'm wearing my medal. Everybody, "Hi, thank you for your service. My name's Joe Smith." He walks in with me. There is no medal for being a P.O.W.

So when I was asked to give a few remarks, I decided to draw the distinction between the Medal of Honor that receives all this adulation - has nothing to do with the person, but I'm saying the device, the trinket gets admired and people want to see it and touch it. And here comes a person who for 5 years, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, endured untold torture and pain and suffering, and no one said, "Hi, Bobby. God, what an honor it is to meet you."

So when I introduced him, I said, "Just think of this: he came in here anonymously, but he is so very special. It's important to me that I stand up and reintroduce him to you, and you acknowledge his presence," and the room just went nuts. Well, there's an example. We needed someone to show us which ones to cheer for, right?

And oftentimes it's reduced to the symbol, and -

Interviewer:

Well, we look for shortcuts, right? We want to find ways of sort of that's the public's way of -

Paul Bucha:

It's evidence of celebrity.

Interviewer:

Yeah, exactly.

Paul Bucha:

And in my - when I teach leadership to soldiers, I tell them, "When you're meeting a person, you're looking at the decorations that they are wearing, and you can see a chest full of 'I've been there.' All the hot spots that the military has been involved in, yet there's not one medal for valor. There's Legions of Merit, and Bronze Stars for Service, for competence, and then for location and participation.

And you say, "My gosh, what a young person to be a Major," or "a young person to be a Captain." Stop. You may be looking at leadership perfection personified, because most valor stems from something that didn't quite go to plan. You underestimated the enemy, or you crossed the river and found out you're cut off, or a person gets cut off from you and left behind; you have to go rescue them.

Or you come up and your lead element, in my case, is facing a withering of fire from a position we didn't know was there. I'm not sure how we would've known, but we should've known. And so therefore you act. Well, if someone reports each and every time, and they're given a mission to accomplish, "Mission accomplished, sir, next one, please," that may be leadership perfection personified.

And people have to be aware of that. As opposed to getting distracted by the celebrity indicators.

Interviewer:

Very good. Let's go back to where we were at the end of the first installment of this interview. We'd just gone through the story of your experience in Vietnam, and I'd

asked you what you thought about the wisdom of the war in Vietnam, of our participation in it. And I asked you again before we turned the cameras on if we could speak a little bit about your notion of what may have been a confused mission. And you said, "Objective." Let's look at the distinction between those two, and what you felt about them.

Paul Bucha:

Well, objective is every organization, regardless of military, civilian, sports, business, charity - excuse me. Oh, they fell off. Excuse me. Certainly.

Interviewer:

Let me ask you to keep your eye contact on me, too, when you're -

Paul Bucha:

This is -

Interviewer:

I know there are three people in the room -

Paul Bucha:

He was waving in the background. Shows you that this is real-time - that's why we -

Interviewer:

Exactly, yeah.

Paul Bucha:

Okay. In every organization - sports, military, business, for-profit, tax exempt, doesn't matter - needs an objective to focus everybody's energy towards the accomplishment of. There was a paper written in the Harvard Business Review by two people who worked for McNamara called Hitch and McKean. It was back in the -

Interviewer:

McNamara was then the Secretary of Defense.

Paul Bucha:

Secretary of Defense, and these were among his whiz kids.

Interviewer:

Right, sure - well known for his brilliance and for his -

Paul Bucha:

And their brilliance - these were the best and the brightest. They wrote a paper called "The Definition of a Meaningful Objective." And I was teaching at West Point at the time, and I read this article, and I said, "My God."

Interviewer:

So this was when - what year are we talking about?

Paul Bucha:

In the '70s - '71, '72. And the article gave three characteristics of an objective. One, it had to be finite. Second, it had to have a tool of measurement. And third, it had to have a suggested course of action that were you to follow it would lead to at least the successful accomplishment of that challenges in front of you. Now, that's difficult, to set those things. And the point was that's the principle responsibility of the boss. Of the CEO. It's not the responsibility of a committee. And for a nation to embark on something, there has to be an objective set by the highest levels of this land. Not set by the military, because the military is the one that you're asking to accomplish it, and you're giving this objective to the military. And the military then has a right to look at it, and if it has all those things, the next question the setter of the objective would ask for is what do you think it's going to cost? Can it be done?

How many troops will be involved? That was never done for Vietnam. We were talking about stopping Communism. And you think about it - that's not finite. It goes on forever. And then we get into terrorism. We're killing the bad guys. In Vietnam, I'm sure our Commanding Officer probably was reporting into Washington, and someone said, "How's it going?" and he said, "At what?" Right? "How many Communists?" "Oh, we're stopping a lot of Communists." And then they say, "How many?" Out of it comes a body count.

Interviewer:

Well, yeah, thatâ€™s the body count notion, right, which is how one -

Paul Bucha:

Which was a suggestion of a metric for an ill-defined objective. You say, â€œWell, whatâ€™s next?â€ â€œOkay, well, I killed 20 people.â€ â€œThatâ€™s all?â€ â€œWell, there mightâ€™ve been more that were carried away.â€ â€œSo thereâ€™s 20 and a possible 100?â€ â€œOh yes, that would be good. And we captured two tons of rice.â€ â€œOh wow, thatâ€™s great.â€ And the cynicism that set into the troops who were aware of that is one of the really funny memories of the war.

Where R.T.O.s, Radio Telephone Operators, would be rendering the after-action statistics each night to some unknown person who was collecting it, and I heard my man do it, my R.T.O., who was my right arm. And I asked him why - and I heard others doing it - he would go through this list of accomplishments. And then he would say, â€œAnd a Diet Coke bottle.â€

Yes, a Diet Coke bottle.â€ Obviously, a discussion went on. â€œWas it glass? Was it a can?â€ And I would say, â€œWhat Diet Coke bottle?â€ He says, â€œOh, someone back there is just going nuts. Heâ€™s just having a ball.â€ And that was where the kids who were controlling this saw the silliness of this attention to these metrics. No oneâ€™s saying, â€œDid you accomplish the objective?â€ because the next question weâ€™d say, â€œWell, what was the objective?â€

And it wasnâ€™t like, â€œCapture Hill 415.â€ They were all chance meetings, you know, where you would move around, and the idea is youâ€™d confront the enemy unexpectedly, and the two of you would battle it out. Then youâ€™d part ways, only to do it again.

Interviewer:

It wasnâ€™t like World War I, where you had battles drawn, you mean, sort of thing.

Paul Bucha:

Going to the next trench.

Interviewer:

Yeah, exactly.

Paul Bucha:

And it was you moved around until we tell you to come out. I mean - and my men, who were notorious, not famous, because of their backgrounds, and many of them coming out of stockades and things like that - we were sent on all kinds of kind of unusual objectives. â€œPlease go to this spot and move around.â€ And Iâ€™d say, â€œWell, what do you want me to do there?â€ â€œOh, maybe have some ambushes.â€ â€œOkay. Do we have any intelligence?â€ And it was always, â€œWe think,â€ not â€œWe know.â€

And so we -

Interviewer:

Even the story you tell in the first - you know, the one for which you received the Medal of Honor - you were to remain in contact, right, with -

Paul Bucha:

Thatâ€™s right.

Interviewer:

Then a V.A. unit - make contact.

Paul Bucha:

Identify, make contact with the enemy, and remain so. To what end? We were 89 people, and as long as we were in touch of a Platoon of 30 or 40, it was rather amusing. It was fun, it was exciting, it was duh. But when we grab the proverbial bus, if you will, when all of a sudden, it went to a Battalion, the question was now what do we do? And what you do is you battle as best you can to survive the evening.

And to see how much damage you could inflict on that group. That was what we were about, and if someone said, â€œWell, what was the purpose of the war?â€ I always say,

“No, what was the objective?” Purpose can be ill-defined, but objective must be finite, must have a tool of measurement, and we didn’t have that. And by the way, I’d suggest to you that other than George Bush the First, since that time, we haven’t had an objective, either.

All of these others now are stopping terrorists. That’s very similar to stopping Communists, and we move around. We do these things. We try to come across the Taliban, and when we come across, we try to kill them. And we then report we’re doing operations in these areas. But to what end? To what end do we do these things?

Interviewer:

Well, it becomes kind of an endless war, then, doesn’t it?

Paul Bucha:

Yes.

Interviewer:

Because there’s no way of declaring victory.

Paul Bucha:

And victory doesn’t seem to be part of it - it’s not losing. Don’t go with your tail between your legs and run away.

Interviewer:

Right.

Paul Bucha:

And that’s the mistake, and it’s just money, and lives, and nobody wants to cost it, ‘cause legacy costs are beyond anything anyone imagines.

Interviewer:

Yeah. Well, I want to come to that a little bit later, too, about the costs of these particular wars right now, where the deployments are multiple, as opposed to back then. But to come back to the question of Vietnam, what happens to the fighting man when he is fighting under those circumstances? You said cynicism.

Paul Bucha:

Cynicism with the higher-ups. You become bound to the person in your unit.

Interviewer:

But if you don’t feel you’re fighting for an objective, or you can’t define an objective -

Paul Bucha:

You’re fighting to get through the year, and it’s difficult, ‘cause when the young men would arrive, the replacements, they would look around and say, “Who’s been here 11 months and 22 days?” Meaning someone who’s made it through the year. Usually none, ‘cause they manage to wrangle themselves to at least get off the front line. They’d say, “Well, who’s been here nine months?” Usually none. And then all of a sudden, something sets in and they say, “What happens to them?” Many of them get wounded and off they go - that’s the ticket home. And that kind of jargon or expression was very frequent in Vietnam. “What’s that? Oh, you’ve got a ticket home wound. You get to go home, back to the country.” And if you look at the memories of that war, it’s the love in the most pure form that exists between the participants and among the participants.

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It's not the pride of having accomplished some great overall objective that the nation was behind.

Interviewer:

Well, of course, the history of war is filled with that, too. I mean it's the guy next to you in the foxhole is the cliché, but a cliché because it is so common, right, that you're fighting for the guys that you love around you.

Paul Bucha:

Well, that's the most fundamental. But in many wars - and I would submit to you successful wars - they also understand, "We're fighting to make the Huns surrender. No conditions offered. Just absolute, unconditional surrender. We're doing that to get the Japanese to surrender. We're going to go and bomb Tokyo if we have to do it." In other words, there's a progress. "We're landing at Normandy, and we're going towards Berlin."

And people understood that. In Vietnam, like I said, "Where we going?" "You're going north, south, east, west."

Interviewer:

Well, and as you said, there's no defined battles in a traditional sense. There are insurgents who are serving you lunch in the middle of the day and then shooting you at night, right? I mean so the battlefield actually is everywhere and nowhere at once.

Paul Bucha:

Correct.

Interviewer:

So there's a sort of pervasive sense of vagueness to everything - to the objective, to where the fight is fought, who are your friends, who are your enemies. Must've been one of the most difficult conditions under which to fight.

Paul Bucha:

I think so. I've read a lot of history of the old wars that were fought, and they were wars of attrition. And I think we thought we were getting into that. But the fallacy of that is that this day, today, in modern times, the number of opponents - not just enemy, but the opponents - is infinite.

If you're going to keep fighting for 10, 12, 13, 14, 15 years, then these people are being born, and when they're 15, 16, they take to the battlefield underway, and it just keeps going. And here we are, a relatively small nation when it comes to population, compared to our enemies that we found at the time, and we would put -

Interviewer:

If you include China, you mean, and -

Paul Bucha:

You put 900,000 Americans there, that's nothing compared to the local population, and as a result, where's the attrition going to come from? They fought a war of attrition against us measuring attrition not by could we muster the number of soldiers, could we muster the ammunition and all the resources - could we demonstrate the staying power that they could? And since it wasn't our fight.

Interviewer:

Right. For them, it was the family business, right?

Paul Bucha:

It's difficult - yeah.

Interviewer:

And not only the family business in the moment that we were fighting, but they'd been fighting the French before that.

Paul Bucha:

That's right.

Interviewer: I mean it goes back generations.

Paul Bucha:

Correct.

Interviewer:

Already they were onto the point where the new generations were being born to the fight.

Paul Bucha:

Yeah, and there were ways in history - you know Genghis Khan fought these things where he would take over a country, and he said, "My objective is simple: absolute surrender. And if you don't surrender, I'll just kill you." And the ruthlessness with which - I mean he'd have this black tent, red tent, white tent. The white tent was you could surrender now and we'll just kill the soldiers. Red tent, surrender now, we'll kill all the men, soldiers and otherwise.

Black tent, what it is now, we're going to kill men, women, and children - everybody.

That was it. There were three choices, and then he went on, and that was the way he was victorious. We don't fight that way. We don't have that within our moral fiber to do that, and oftentimes we forget that that is in the culture of those we were fighting against.

Interviewer:

Do you feel - I mean you watched friends die for a war that many consider to have been a mistake. Are you bitter?

Paul Bucha:

Not at all.

Interviewer:

Not bitter towards the political leadership that made the decision to do that?

Paul Bucha:

No. It's a funny poll that's been taken. The Vietnam veterans as a group, over 90% have said that knowing everything we know today, if we were asked to go again, we would go, and we'd go not because of the person making the decision. We'd go because we know our friends are going to have to go, so we're going with them. As a West Point graduate, you went because you were trained to go.

And I fervently believe that the men under my command had a better chance at coming home alive than were I to give that over to another person. So that's why I'm not bitter. I went over with men. I went over with a camaraderie that's rare. One of the most exciting periods of my life was during the Vietnam War.

One of the most overwhelmingly challenging and exciting experiences was actually fighting in the war in Vietnam. The humility that comes about seeing people who others had said were worthless prove to be winners in that hostile environment is something that

lâ€™ll never forget. And you put all those things together, and itâ€™s an indelible experience.

And itâ€™s not all negative. When I visit the Wall, Iâ€™m saddened by the fact that no one took the time to define what the objective was, so that we knew how to achieve that objective. And it very well might have been - someone said, â€œThe objective was to just seek retribution.â€ Couldâ€™ve done that with technology.

But Iâ€™m not sure. I mean I donâ€™t know if it was retribution. It obviously wasnâ€™t to defeat an enemy. I mean it was I guess to bring peace, however you do that. And thatâ€™s the sad part, and Iâ€™m not bitter, but I know families who are bitter, and they have a right because something was taken from them. For me, my youth was taken.

I came home much older than I went, by decades. And maybe my unbridled patriotism was diminished in a major way. Not that Iâ€™m not patriotic, but the idea that there was this all-trusting patriotism - I became much more reserved in my judgment.

Interviewer:

But it also sounds like youâ€™re feeling as though we didnâ€™t learn from the mistake.

Paul Bucha:

We keep doing it again. Iâ€™ve asked before, whatâ€™s the objective in the current wars weâ€™re fighting? One was retribution. When we first went into Afghanistan after 9/11, that was retribution, and thatâ€™s a perfectly acceptable objective, if you think in your strategic planning that it will accomplish something. Weâ€™re there to seek retribution, and weâ€™re going to do that by bombing the country into a parking lot, perhaps.

Fine, okay. We know how to do that. You donâ€™t need a lot of Infantrymen to do that. And if youâ€™ll feel better about it and it brings peace, then itâ€™s worth the money and energy spent. But if youâ€™re just going to do that for three weeks and then try something else, no. And if you think about it, Linda Bilmes and Stiglitz are now writing a book or paper on I think itâ€™s the \$7 trillion war.

\$7 trillion, and then the wounded, the dead, the families destroyed and disrupted, which canâ€™t be quantified, and as a result, thatâ€™s above the 7 trillion.

Interviewer:

Are we talking about the wars going from September 11 onward -

Paul Bucha:

9/11 - yeah.

Interviewer:

Including both Iraq and Afghanistan? And the cost, which we canâ€™t measure yet, in disruption to the psyche and the lives of those who participated, right, and the multiple deployments.

Well, itâ€™s not only multiple deployments, and thatâ€™s one. We learned in Vietnam that P.T.S. - not P.T.S.D. P.T.S.D. is a word for a clinical diagnosis, that if you havenâ€™t diagnosed someone, youâ€™re not allowed to use the D, in my opinion. So stop with the D - itâ€™s a generic thing that weâ€™re talking about, and that is living your life after a traumatic experience. Thatâ€™s what post-traumatic stress is.

And since everybody who goes to war - doesnâ€™t matter whether youâ€™re in the rear, or the front, or where. And in this war, everybody was sort of in the front - thatâ€™s traumatic, because you know there are people dying around you. So therefore, everyone who goes to this war has to live after that traumatic experience - therefore, they have P.T.S. And because thatâ€™s so difficult to convince - it is so difficult to convince people to go and seek counseling - we donâ€™t really know when the manifestations of the disorder aspect will appear.

Interviewer:

The suicide rate is -

Paul Bucha:

Well, the suicide rate - hereâ€™s whatâ€™s interesting. The suicide rate, which is everybody, 22 to 23 veterans a day committing suicide. Well, the problem with that is most people donâ€™t realize that 70% are over the age of 50. This isnâ€™t just the young

people of this war. This is other veterans.

And many of them who came back tried to make the best of their life, adjusted, got a job, maybe in manufacturing, and then we go into this recession, and largely, for us weâ€™re spending all this money fighting these wars. They lose their jobs in a prolonged recession, and that type of job isnâ€™t coming back. Theyâ€™ve been caring for their family their whole life. All of a sudden, they find they canâ€™t.

They have a life insurance policy, and they talk to their buddies, and they know people who left, and the families adjust and go on, yet they benefit from the insurance policies that theyâ€™re given. You get together and you talk, and you say, â€œIâ€™ve got the guts. Iâ€™ve got the courage to help my family.â€ Pop. Thatâ€™s not something that the youth of America would do - itâ€™s a little older, when you have the burdens, because the youth is -

Interviewer:

You donâ€™t think itâ€™s related still to the combat stress? Itâ€™s almost as if itâ€™s still a reaction to it, isnâ€™t it?

Paul Bucha:

Oh, it is. It is a manifestation of P.T.S. I mean excessive drinking, volatility - all of these are part of it, and in the extremis, itâ€™s inexplicable - the way we describe it thereâ€™s three things: inexplicable acts of violence within the combat theater. Whatâ€™s going on there, they shot some innocents. Well, you know, itâ€™s terrible, but stop and think about why. Well, theyâ€™re on their third tour. Well, this is a manifestation of P.T.S.

Second is inexplicable acts of violence outside of the combat theater, and then the third, inexplicable acts of violence against oneâ€™s self. All three are manifestations, and they increase in severity, and we just donâ€™t know when the manifestationâ€™s going to occur. And the problem with that is we get these clinical psychologists and psychiatrists, â€œAll thatâ€™s a third rate of incidence, itâ€™s 30%.â€ Thatâ€™s today. That has nothing to do with 40 years from now. For me, it took me 42 years to seek counseling.

Interviewer:

Really.

Paul Bucha:

And now Iâ€™ve been doing P.S.A.s, I went walking around, I tell everybody. The first time I went public with it was I was giving the keynote speech at the Iraq Afghanistan Veterans of America, first national convention. They say, â€œSay somethingâ€ - that was their instructions to me. â€œYouâ€™re going to introduce Tammy, but when youâ€™re doing that, talk about us. Say something that resonates.â€ So I said, â€œIâ€™ve just completed my fourth month of P.T.S. counseling.

And let me tell you about it, blah, blah, blah. You ought to do this and all, and hereâ€™s some of the things Iâ€™ve learned,â€ and I was sharing it. Well, the room went whoosh - quiet. I couldnâ€™t hear a fork clinking on a plate or anything. And when I got done and I sat down, everybody gives Tammy Duckworth a standing ovation. And as I went back to where my wife was sitting, people got up from their tables, and they lined up, and were saying, â€œIâ€™m so sorry. Iâ€™m so sorry.â€ And I said, â€œWait a minute, wait a minute - about what?â€

And they said, â€œOh, that you have P.T.S.â€ I said, â€œThatâ€™s nothing to be pitied. Itâ€™s a badge of honor. I got that and I have that because Iâ€™ve been there and Iâ€™ve done that. Iâ€™ve been to the gates of hell, and Iâ€™ve come back.â€

Interviewer:

But did you wait 42 years to do it because you had the same attitude they had about it initially?

Paul Bucha:

No, no.

Interviewer:

Were you fearful of -

Paul Bucha:

All of these manifestations, I assumed, were normal.

Interviewer:

What manifestations did you have?

Paul Bucha:

Well, I drank too much, not meaning I was an alcoholic. It was that I would go out and I would have a drink - I had four drinks. Someone would say something to me, and I would snap at them. Other times, I would be very calm, very relaxed, but volatility in my emotions. I found that I would get angry over the telephone with someone I'd never met, who didn't do what I wanted. Sometimes I wouldn't be angry, but I would. And so there was this volatility in the way I reacted to things.

Interviewer:

But you didn't put the two points together.

Paul Bucha:

No. I said, "After all, look, drinking too much, that's what we did in Vietnam.

That's what men do," right? Getting mad, "That's what men do," right? So you rationalize these things.

Interviewer:

But did you look upon anybody who was seeking counseling as being weak?

Paul Bucha:

No.

Interviewer:

You didn't.

Paul Bucha:

No.

Interviewer:

That's unusual, because an awful lot of men in the service -

Paul Bucha:

As we've made counseling a cornerstone of the war experience - not the aftermath, because we're asking people to seek counseling now - all of a sudden, it has taken on a stigma of mental health. And in that, in the society at large, not unlike my original comments about looking for the gold medal, you look for the gold medal person. Look, Johnny and Susie went to school, and everything's right. Sammy is seeing a psychologist.

Gasp - oh my gosh, don't tell anybody, right? There's a stigma. Well, in my case, I was at my daughter's wedding in France, and there were 40 young people in Provence, and it was just spectacular, it was a five-day affair. And the first day I got there, this guy came up and put two fists in my back from behind and hit me, and says, "Get out of my way," and every four-letter word he could think of.

And he had a patch, and I turned around, I said to my wife, "He's going to get another patch if he keeps that up." Well, he kept it up. Over four days he kept pushing me and cussing me, get out of his way and all that.

Interviewer:

You in particular, or -

Paul Bucha:

Me in particular - me in particular. And I'm getting angrier and angrier, and finally, the night of the wedding we had an hors d'oeuvre thing out on the hillside there of Provence - as the sun was setting, you could have foie gras. And while I was eating the foie gras, bang, he hit me and went off. I said, "What are you doing?" And he walked away.

Then when it came my turn to dance with the bride, my daughter, he decided to dance. I said, "You don't do this. This is my dance." He said, "I'll dance any damn time I want," and cuss, cuss, cuss.

Interviewer:

Who was he?

Paul Bucha:

He was a guest, this was all that was important. And then later on, it happened again. And so I was standing in the dining room, this magnificent dining hall where weâ€™ had all the people at the wedding at one table, and there were three doors, and Iâ€™ standing in the corner where there wasnâ€™t a door. So thereâ€™s no reason to go there if youâ€™re passing through, and the only thing that was going on in that was that I was standing there. He came in, he walked over to me, and I said, â€œExcuse me. Do I know you?â€ He said, â€œNo.â€ I said, â€œDo I know your mother, your father, or someone in your family?â€ â€œNo.â€ I said, â€œHave I ever done anything that hurt someone that you love and feel care about?â€ â€œNo.â€ I said, â€œThen why are you talking to me like this, and why are you doing this?â€ And he cussed me out. And I looked at him and I said, â€œNot tonight,â€ and I grabbed him by the shirt and I slammed his head on the table. Unfortunately, it had those little votive candles and caught his hair on fire, and my son comes and grabs me and says, â€œDad, stop, stop, stop.â€

My daughter comes in, and my wife comes in, and the focus was he was okay, but I was at fault. Well, I was furious, and I said, â€œOkay, Iâ€™m leaving.â€ So I headed back to the hotel, which is seven miles away, forgetting that the last four are uphill. Iâ€™m jogging through the countryside of Provence in my wedding attire, singing, â€œAirborne Rangers,â€ and I made it up the hill. I wouldâ€™ve died before - my wifeâ€™s in the car following. My sonâ€™s in a car following.

And I would not have failed to make it up the hill. When I got up the hill, the guard at the hotel said, â€œWell, Mr. Bucha, I hope it was a beautiful wedding.â€ I said, â€œIt was wonderful.â€ Went, took a shower, changed. My wife came over and said, â€œIâ€™m so sorry. I thought maybe it was drinking.â€ I said, â€œNo. I was the father of the bride. I had speeches to give and things, and I didnâ€™t drink anything.â€ And I was calm and relaxed, and I said, â€œLeave me alone. Iâ€™ll be fine.â€ So she went back, and my daughter whoâ€™d got married said, â€œWill you come see me?

Matt and I would like to talk to you.â€ Thatâ€™s her husband. So I said, â€œIâ€™m not dressed.â€ She said, â€œIt doesnâ€™t matter. Come on.â€ I went into her room. She told everybody to leave except for the youngest daughter and her husband, new husband, and she said, â€œDad, itâ€™s kind of cool how my father took care of the obnoxious guy.â€ I says, â€œItâ€™s not cool. No, itâ€™s not. Iâ€™m an adult. I donâ€™t do that.

My God - no, itâ€™s not cool at all. Iâ€™ve been trained not to do that.â€ In came my eldest daughter, and said, â€œWould you go see someone?â€ I said, â€œWhat?â€ She said, â€œWould you see someone?â€ I said, â€œWell, yes.â€ Sheâ€™s, â€œWell, hereâ€™s his name.â€ So she had obviously for months noticed something, and had found this psychologist, psychiatrist in Westport, Connecticut, who had been treating veterans of the Vietnam War since 1963 at the West Haven Veterans Center.

From the very beginning of that war. A very famous psychiatrist, psychologist for many of the well-to-do in the Westport Area, but he never gave up counseling veterans. And she had his name and his number and everything.

Interviewer:

But who was the guest?

Paul Bucha:

Oh, he was a designer, the jewelry designer.

Interviewer:

Why was he so rude? Was that, had it been set up so they could -

Paul Bucha:

No.

Interviewer:

No?

Paul Bucha:

No. My other daughter's then-fiance said, "He's just obnoxious. He must be off his meds. It was our problem - we should've locked him up. When you weren't here, he was violent to other people, but why he picked on you - maybe it was because he saw you everybody else was treating nicely, you and your wife, because you're our hosts."

Interviewer:

But he ruined your daughter's wedding.

Paul Bucha:

Yeah. Well, interesting enough, he didn't ruin it. I did.

Interviewer:

Well, gosh - I mean -

Paul Bucha:

"Cause the difference is I should have said - in hindsight - to the young guys who were there, all these big guys -

Interviewer:

Take care of him -

Paul Bucha:

"Hey, take care of this guy. There's something wrong. Get him to a place, to a psychiatrist, put him on a plane and send him home, or lock him in the room. Do whatever it is, but keep him away from me and the other guests."

Interviewer:

But in the end it was a gift, because you ended up -

Paul Bucha:

Yes, it was.

Interviewer:

Getting something.

Paul Bucha:

As my daughter said to me just last week, "Maybe some good came from that." But the point being it took 42 years. When I went into the psychologist's office, psychiatrist's office, he says, "So what the hell took you so long? Think you're different?" And he walked me through all the things that I had been doing. He says, "What do you think, this is genetic?" And I said, "Well no, it can't be genetic, 'cause I'm the only one that does it." He says, "Well, guess what - I want to welcome you to the fact that you have P.T.S., and I want to welcome you to the fact that you got to work on it."

Interviewer:

Are you still seeing him?

Paul Bucha:

I see him now not as - I went -

Interviewer:

Not as often.

Paul Bucha:

Three times a week for a four-month period - six-month period - and then backed off. The difference is he took the time to educate me so that I'm sensitive when things are happening. And one of the things he told me, among his many, many, many jewels of wisdom and all, was, "One thing you're going to learn is to say I'm sorry very quickly. When you catch yourself snapping at someone, say you're sorry. When you all of a sudden lose it on the phone, tell that person, "I'm so sorry. I have P.T.S. I didn't mean it."

Get over the fact that that's a stigma. It's not. It's perfectly normal." So as a result I spend a lot of my time now battling with psychiatrists and psychologists to get rid of the D, because it represents a stigma. You're not going to find our all-star Non-Commissioned Officers and Command Sergeant Majors and the Generals going to counseling, unless the head person goes to counseling, and they're not going to go.

Interviewer:

Do you think itâ€™s a permanent condition, or do you think it -

Paul Bucha:

Yeah, youâ€™ve got to live the rest of your life after a traumatic experience. And by the way, that experience might be a divorce, or a suicide in the family. It has nothing to do with war, but we have learned now, and the people who think itâ€™s a sign of weakness donâ€™t understand. Itâ€™s just the opposite. You survived it. Therefore, youâ€™re stronger. When youâ€™re checking out of Iraq, they say - or Afghanistan - â€œHave you been to counseling?â€ You say, â€œYes,â€ they send you back, â€œGo get some more counseling.â€ If you say, â€œNo,â€ they say, â€œKk.â€

Well, no - send the person home who says, â€œYes, Iâ€™m going to counseling. Iâ€™m in fine control of this.â€ The person whoâ€™s never had counseling, â€œYou go back and get some counseling.â€ It should be a mandatory requirement for everybody, just like physical training and physical conditioning. This is psychological conditioning, and you learn to live with it.

Interviewer:

Letâ€™s come back to your personal story, because after Vietnam - well, first of all, you come back and you teach at West Point.

Paul Bucha:

Yes.

Interviewer: What did you teach, and what was the Academy like - and this is early â€™70s - what was it like then?

Paul Bucha:

It was â€™69 when I arrived. I arrived, in fact, the day I arrived in Highland Falls with my family was the day Woodstock was starting.

Interviewer:

Is that right.

Paul Bucha:

And the reason was I saw all these kids with backpacks walking in the highways as I was driving on the local 6, where once the highway stops, 84 stops, you go local. And I saw all these kids walking across the street, and I said, â€œI wonder whatâ€™s going on? This is weird. Iâ€™ve never seen so many kids walking in the same direction.â€ And we got back, and nothing.

And then four days later, I saw on the television that the Woodstock Festival, and I went and got the map, and by God, I was within a quarter-mile of the farm, so. But that was the spirit of the times, if you will, and -

Interviewer:

What department did you teach in?

Paul Bucha:

Department of Social Sciences - it was then Social Sciences and History.

Interviewer:

Right - they were together, right? Yeah, then they split off.

Paul Bucha:

Yeah, and Colonel Roger Nye was the head of the History Department, and he had been a mentor of mine during my time as a Cadet, and I was proud to be called what they now refer to as Nye men, of all the men on whom he left his mark. Much to my pride, itâ€™s a very distinguished group. It seems Iâ€™m sort of a low man in a great group in this particular one. But he said, â€œIâ€™m going to let you teach U.S. History.â€ And my boss was now-General Ray Bell, who is also my father-in-law now. But he coached me through it. He said, â€œYou know, the idea here is to teach. Itâ€™s not to prove how smart you are. Itâ€™s not to prove how deep your American History is. Itâ€™s to teach American History. And so you know a lot about it already.â€ And so he helped me, and then that was my first thing, â€œcause they had a hole in that place, and I was told I

wasn't going back to Vietnam.

And they recommended that I try to find a job. They said, "Wherever you go in the military right now would be boring for you. You've had this larger-than-a-Company - sort of two-thirds of the size of a Battalion, or half of a Battalion - and you've had that in combat. You're not going to get that if you go to an Army base. You're a young Captain. You're going to get another Company in training. You've been in all the staff jobs normally that Majors have, and you had them in combat, so you're not going to get those.

And you've gone to graduate school - that was your decision, not ours. Logically, you would go to West Point and teach, but you have a business degree - that was your decision as well, and I don't know what - So they basically said, "Do your best to find a job." So I called up to West Point to see if they had a slot, and they said, "Yes, we have one." And then I went from that to Economics. We called it Managerial Economics, but it was a course that taught cost accounting and financial accounting to the Cadets.

Interviewer:

Was Economics under the Social Sciences, or was it -

Paul Bucha:

In Social Sciences, yeah. And that was what I taught.

Interviewer:

And you did that for two years?

Paul Bucha:

Three.

Interviewer:

Three. And then you left the Army.

Paul Bucha:

Yes, I did.

Interviewer:

Why?

Paul Bucha:

During that time at West Point - which is again the time of Woodstock, which is "He ain't heavy, he's my brother," and all this stuff - you got caught up in the racial issues, and the economic issues of the times.

Interviewer:

At West Point you saw this, or just the broader culture was showing this?

Paul Bucha:

Just the broader culture. And you saw yourself as a young leader, and you could make a difference. And I because of the medal was sent out on all these speaking engagements - about one a week. I was out in the community, and I saw places where you could make a difference. And I started - for example, my next door neighbor's son ODeD from drugs on my lawn, and so I got into it and found out that many of his friends -

Interviewer:

This is at West Point?

Paul Bucha:

It was out in the community outside - and many of his friends were doing drugs, and they happened to be dependents from West Point. And I got into that. And then I realized that became a story, and became a thing that the returning veterans were called "dope addicts" and "alcoholics." And I was asked to get involved in the Council on Foreign Relations, and then I was asked -

Interviewer:

Apology for a second - had you seen a lot of drugs in Vietnam when you were there?

Paul Bucha:

No. No.

Interviewer:

This had come sort of after you left there?

Paul Bucha:

Yes. That's when you -

Interviewer:

Was it part and parcel of the cynicism, and the sort of decay of morale there?

Paul Bucha:

Well, no. Here's what's interesting. A study was done by a doctor, whose name I can't recall, at Letterman Hospital in San Francisco - military doctor - who gathered all the data from high schools and public hospitals around the nation. And his point was to try to find out what the incidence of drug use and drug abuse was in the society at large for the peers of those serving in Vietnam.

He was just curious. What are the facts of those from whom we draw our soldiers? And the draft wasn't - we can only pick the best. The draft was - you got a number, you're going, right? So it was truly an arbitrary sample, which would be reflecting whatever was there. And then he took the sampling we had of soldiers, and they were exactly the same. So it was the problems of society at large manifesting themselves among the soldiers where we were examining it.

And one of the other problems is the drugs that they were abusing, and in the States had done it in a casual way, not addicted but had a dependency, the problem was in Vietnam it was a much more severe drug. If you couldn't find marijuana, what the people were selling some of these kids was tobacco laced with heroin or opium. Some of the pills that they were abusing, they were taking the little pellet out of the middle of a Darvon pill and eating them like jelly beans.

Which you couldn't do that in the States - cause that's a very expensive drug. So the statistics said these kids are now your soldiers, and they have what they had before.

Well, I got into that, and I said, - We can't just shove it under the rug. We've got to treat that. And I got local kids, who had long hair and were hippies and all this -

This is around Highland Falls.

Highland Falls - I got them jobs at West Point in the summer. They cut the grass. And I actually got involved with some of the officers who said, - I think my son or daughter is having a problem. Can you talk to them? So I'd gotten involved within that, and I was involved in the issues, not of the military, per se, but of society. That distracts you. And having been raised in a military family my father was quite emphatic when he came to West Point near the end of my time there.

And he said to me before he was leaving, he said, - Can I talk to you for a second? I said, - Yeah. He said, - What do you do? I said, - What do you mean what do I do? - What are you? I said, - I'm an Army Officer. He says, - Oh yeah? What branch? I said, - United States Army, Airborne Ranger and Jumpmaster, Infantry. And he says, - Really? I've been here a week. I haven't heard you mention troops once. And that's an essential for any leader of men in the United States Army, in my Army.

And he said, - Somewhere along the way, you've lost that. He said, - Get the hell out of my Army and let a better man take your place, and phft, out the door, out the door.

Interviewer:

Your own father says this to you.

Paul Bucha:

I was crushed, not because of what he said, because I realized he was right. Here I'd been working the last six months at West Point knowing I was going to do something else. I was going to go to law school. For God sakes, I'm supposed to go out and command troops. So I applied to law school - I was going to take a sabbatical, and I'd rationalize that this was all going to be part of the military.

Interviewer:

What had happened? Had you lost your enthusiasm for the Army? Were you disenchanted yourself with the Army?

Paul Bucha:

I was a young guy at West Point teaching academic subjects, part of which you could not get away from that had to do with politics of the war. And so you're head - and I was in a very heady experience, where old people would call me, this young kid with no experience. I would pontificate and express my views, and they would cheer. And you get into this, and you say, "I'm making a difference." I remember going to Newburgh, a city that was dying, and I said, "Wouldn't it be great to be the city manager of Newburgh?"

What? And my father sensed this, that I had gone from my focus of leading soldiers, especially soldiers no one else wanted, which is a consuming passion, and all of a sudden I was worrying about kids taking drugs, the unemployed, the blacks not getting admitted to colleges - issues.

Interviewer:

But this was the spirit of the times, really.

Paul Bucha:

Yes.

Interviewer:

The culture itself was awakening to see it.

Paul Bucha:

And I was a product of the times. And mainly because I had the opportunity through this medal to go out and meet people, far more than my contemporaries would have the privilege of doing. And -

Interviewer:

But this was a sign to you that your time in the Army should end.

Paul Bucha: Yeah. And I gave a quote to a famous reporter who came to see us, and he had discovered the My Lai massacre, so he came to -

Interviewer:

Oh yeah - Seymour Hersh?

Paul Bucha:

Yeah, Sy Hersh - I was not going to mention - but anyway, he came to meet with the so-called distinguished Officers who had decided to leave the service, many of whom came from the Department of Social Sciences, and many of whom were well-decorated, right? But we all had degrees from Stanford, Harvard, and places like that, and he was saying, "Wow, this is the best and the brightest." And he asked me a question. He said, "Why are you getting out?" I said, "You know, if you want to stay in the Army as a Captain, your aspiration has to be to be the best damned Battalion Commander ever. Not General - that's your next step. Not Company Commander - you've done that. Battalion Commander. And I don't have that." He wrote it, changed it, and he told me, "Well, I took a little license. I am the best Battalion Commander ever." Well, that caused a little ruckus in the news, and it was front page in the New York Times, and I got called by the P.I.O., and says, "What's going on here?"

And I said, "Okay, what can I do?" And the Superintendent at the time -

Interviewer:

Who was the Superintendent then?

Paul Bucha:

Bill Knowlton, who is David Petraeus's father-in-law, and was my mentor. He said, "You know I feel very hurt by this." I said, "Sir, he took license. I told him there was nothing wrong with the Army. It was something wrong with me." He said, "Well, I appreciate that. That's what I thought." And he tried to counsel me that there was ways of doing this in the Army, you know, and I admired the fact and really loved the fact he took the time to care.

Interviewer:

Had to be very tough for him, because a lot of his best and brightest are outing their -
Paul Bucha:

He might not - he was doing it because he was the Superintendent and he cared about all his men, I believe, right? I never have put myself in that category. But I would say the one with one of the more newsworthy trinkets or status symbols, again. And I told him, I said, "I would love to go on television and clarify that." So they arranged for me to be on CBS in the morning with John Hart, and he said, "Why are you leaving the service?" I said, "I want to make it crystal clear - it's nothing about what's wrong with the Army. It's about what's wrong with me. I've lost this. And I want to continue to serve the military, but I don't think serving while you're distracted with all these other things is a good idea. The men you command and lead deserve more."

Interviewer:

Well, you really thought it was something wrong with you, or you just thought -

Paul Bucha:

Missing.

Interviewer:

Uh-huh - that fire was lost that you had at one time, but you transferred it over to something else, clearly, right?

Paul Bucha:

I try. I try.

Interviewer:

You don't think you succeeded at that?

Paul Bucha:

I'm not the judge of that. I try to spend a day a week with veterans and soldiers, and sometimes it's four days in one week, but on average.

Interviewer:

You're talking about now you do.

Paul Bucha:

Now. And when I left, except when I moved to Iran. Even in Iran, I was very much involved with the military and the State Department and things like that. And all since my employees with Ross Perot were veterans, because that's what he hired, so I was helping veterans in the job they had. And I don't know that it will truly make a long-term difference. I mean it's easy to go out and do something, and you get feedback of the moment that you had an impact. And I try to focus my remarks on things that are supportive of the military.

I try to tell young people of the privilege of serving in the military. I try to reinforce for the young kids in the military what they are, and what they mean to me. And I try to make sure they understand that there is a bigger purpose, and it's sometimes difficult to see. And also, don't be misled by the superficial "Thank you for your service." I sense in the military that it's almost a pejorative term, because people say it so easily, but don't hang around.

Interviewer:

It's a cliché now, right?

Paul Bucha:

Yes, and instead - and I keep telling when I talk to civilians about these soldiers. I say, "Don't do that." The greatest gift any of us have to give another person is our time. Money, it's not finite. Who knows how much money you'll ever have? Our stuff, it's not finite. So you're going to give them a car, you're going to give them a sweater, that's not - but your time is truly finite, and often more finite than any of us would have. And therefore if you take some of that time for another person, what a wonderful gift.

And I point out to them, for example, you see a soldier standing there looking at the thing, and you walk up and say, "Thank you for your service," and walk on. Maybe if you

had stopped and said, "How's it going, son? Where are you from?" He would say, "I'm from Ducktown, Tennessee, and I don't see it up there. Never been in an airport before. How do I get to Ducktown, Tennessee? Who knows?" And he says well, he's got a ticket, flight number 415, right? Sometimes it doesn't say "Nashville," right, and he doesn't understand, "cause he's never been there before. If you'd say, "Well, let me help you," man, he would say, "Oh my God, that's easy. I can go to Nashville. I know how to do it," right? And then if you just find out a little bit, "How you going there? You got an hour and a half - you going to go get something to eat?" Well, he might say, "I don't have any money - I'm not going to do that. I'm not paid that much." You might be able to say, "Look, let me buy you lunch." Why not?

Interviewer:

Engage him, have a human contact with him, yeah.

Paul Bucha:

Give him something.

Interviewer:

Yes, sure.

Paul Bucha:

Share something, not take. "Thank you for your service," you're taking, you're not giving him anything, because you're not hanging around, so.

Interviewer:

Let's come back to your time in the mid-70s, then, after leaving the service. You went up then - I guess meeting Ross Perot, is that how you -

Paul Bucha:

What happened was I had applied - I was going to go to law school, and I accepted an offer of admission to Harvard Law School, bought a house, and we were prepared. I talked to the National Guard, could I be in the National Guard, and they said, "Yes, we can assign you to Armory duty in the evening so it's compatible with studying." So I was going to go to school. I'd figured it out how to earn as much money as I was earning in the Army as a students. So I was set. And then Ross read the article in the New York Times that Sy Hersh wrote.

And he called me.

Interviewer:

You never met him before.

Paul Bucha:

I never knew him from anybody. I mean I'd read about him or something. And this voice says, "Hi, this is Ross Perot. Surely there's something other than "Buddy." And I thought, "This is my friend Lloyd Briggs," who taught in the Social Science Department as well, and had gone to Harvard Business School, and my classmate. And I said, "Can't you call at a more civilized hour?" and hung up. It was 9:00 in the morning.

And I then called Lloyd's house and his wife answered. I said, "Kitty, where's Lloyd?" He didn't get me. She said, "What do you mean?" I said, "Well, he didn't get me." She said, "Well, Lloyd's in London - don't you know that?" I said, "Huh?" She said, "Yeah, he's over there on a military thing." I said, "What do you mean - he's in London?" She said, "Yeah. What are you talking about?" I said, "Well, he just called me." She says, "No, he didn't call you." And I thought, "Oh my God - that might've been Ross Perot." 11:00, phone rings, "Hi, I hope this is more civilized."

And then he said, "I'd like to talk to you." I said, "Well, that's fine. Where?" He says, "Dallas." I said, "I can't afford to go to Dallas." He said, "Well, I'll pay you to come to Dallas." I said, "Okay, when is it?" and he told me when. It happened to be the day after the weekend my sister was swimming in the Olympic trials, so I said, "Here's my deal. If you'll pay my way to Chicago,

where the Olympic trials are going to be, and then to Dallas, I'll come, 'cause my sister is going to be in the Olympic trials.

He said, 'I'll do that.' And I got to Dallas, I met him, and -

Interviewer:

What were your impressions of Ross Perot the first time through here?

Paul Bucha:

You know, he's a fascinating guy, and his wife is unbelievable.

Interviewer:

Yeah, we've interviewed him for the Center. He's been through West Point.

Paul Bucha:

Yes. And his wife hinted to me to be careful. 'Don't get a snow job,' she said.

And she said, 'You've heard all these statistics,' and she just kind of took each statistic and dismembered it, destroyed it, so that I wasn't gullible. And she said,

'Remember, Ross is a peddler, an extraordinarily gifted salesman, and don't get caught up in the sales thing. Look for the substance.' And I thought, 'What a

wonderful lady to say something like that, and what a wonderful couple.'

And then I decided, 'Okay, I'll try this for a year. Why not?'

Interviewer:

What was this - what was he asking you to do?

Paul Bucha:

Work for him in the brokerage industry in New York, and so I did, and I worked directly for him. And he and I shared this cubicle. When he was in town he'd be in this cubicle.

Well, when he wasn't there, I got to use the cubicle. And then eventually I crossed over to E.D.S., 'cause he was buying another brokerage firm and I was a part of the three first-person negotiating team, and I couldn't do that if I was with one of the brokerage firms.

And then after that was all over, I was running the branch system, and he said, 'What do you think?' and I said, 'This is one of the dumbest jobs I've ever had. I spend

\$500.00 trying to find out why someone spent \$300.00.' I said, 'I think I'm going back to law school,' 'cause Harvard had said, 'You want to get one year

deferment?' And he said, 'Well, what would you do if I gave you a choice of your life?'

I said, 'I'd take E.D.S. overseas.' He said, 'Really?' I said, 'Yes. I would take E.D.S. to the Middle East.'

Interviewer:

Now for the viewers, explain what E.D.S., what kind of company -

Paul Bucha:

Economic Data Systems.

Interviewer:

But what kind of company it was.

Paul Bucha:

It was a computer company, data processing company, using mainframe computers to handle massive systems - Medicare, Medicaid, health insurance was its specialty, but it also did insurance companies, it did banks, it did all kinds of things where there were massive numbers of transactions, requiring huge computers to do them.

Interviewer:

It was privately held by - it was Ross Perot's company.

Paul Bucha:

It was a publicly -

Interviewer:

It was public, okay.

Paul Bucha:

And he became a billionaire, so he was famous for that. And I was working for him, for example, when he said, 'Do state and local governments in addition,' so I did state and local governments. I was in charge of trying to take over Medicaid from New York City

by the State of New York, so I would be with Ross Perot and Nelson Rockefeller, who was the Governor. And it was all heady stuff, right?

Interviewer:

Yeah, absolutely.

Paul Bucha:

And you know, I would show up at the Senate, 'cause I knew Senators up there from Highland Falls, New York, and stuff, and they would sponsor me on the Floor of the Senate. But it never amounted to something, in my opinion. It wasn't what I wanted to do. And he said, "Okay, you'll be Director of International Operations." And I said, "Wow - how many countries do we have?" He said, "None - just the United States." I said, "Well, how many employees?" He said, "One." I said, "Well, that's it?" And he said, "That's it. Good luck. Don't buy any tickets without calling me."

And I literally sold a contract in New York City in Iran, and required 12 -

Interviewer:

Now, this is late '70s, the Shah's still in power?

Paul Bucha: '72, '73.

Interviewer:

Oh, well, this is earlier on than I thought.

Paul Bucha:

Yeah, '73.

Interviewer:

So this is the Shah at his peak, really.

Paul Bucha:

The Shah was there - yeah. And it required 12 people. I sold them for \$1 million each. They produced -

Interviewer:

Providing services of data services.

Paul Bucha:

Doing microfiche for the Iranian Navy, and we would do a joint venture over there, and then go, take it from there. And they were in Dallas trying to pick who's going to run it, and I said, "Well, how about me? I sold it." And he says, "You'd move to Iran?" I said, "Yes." And then, "Well, we don't think you should. You're not experienced enough," and all this. And I said, "Look, I sold it. I want to do it." And Ross said, "Okay - you go." And I mean it was \$12 million.

For 12 people, for 1 year, 50% in advance - and in advance, when I went over to Iran to pick up the check and sign the contract, they gave me a check payable to Paul William Bucha on the Bank of *Meli*, the Central Bank of Iran. And I said, "I've got the check." Ross said, "Oh, wonderful. Send it there." I said, "It won't work that way 'cause I have to sign it." He laughed. He said, "We got \$12 million," and I said, "Yes, we have \$12 million." Then we recruited a team, brought them all over, and then from there we grew.

And after I finally left E.D.S. in 1979, and by then we had thousands of employees, and we were in like 15 countries, and Ross -

Interviewer:

So you were there when the revolution happened?

Paul Bucha:

Correct.

Interviewer:

So let's walk through that.

I'd lived in - I'd gone to Paris in '78, and the revolution came after that. But I was spending - 'cause I had countries. I had London, France, Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Iran, Turkey, even Nigeria. We'd started all these things. There was a thing going on in Taiwan, and we were growing very fast. And I had a team of salesmen that

were based originally in Iran and Saudi Arabia, and I moved them to Paris.

Interviewer:

You were in Paris when the Embassy was seized, then, is that right?

Paul Bucha:

Yes.

Interviewer:

But before that happens, am I right - do I have my chronology correct - there's an attempt to get the employees of E.D.S. out of -

Paul Bucha:

Yeah. Well, what happened was I was in Iran, and things were falling apart and you could see that. And you didn't know whether it was going to be the Shah was going to just put this stuff down, or what kind of support he would get from the Federal government. And I'll never forget in the summer - I was in Monte Carlo, where you had to go. All the Persians were there. I was sitting on the Hermitage Hotel, watching the fireworks with our Persian partner, and he picked up his chair and moved it against the wall, having just taken a phone call.

And he called me over and he said, "Get me three fingers of Scotch," and he didn't drink. I said, "Really?" and he said, "Yes." And I got it for him and I brought that. He said, "My country's finished." And he then related to me how the Carter Administration had intervened in the selection of the successor Prime Ministers, and had a Persian who was a U.S.-trained technocrat become the Prime Minister, rather than Hushang Ansari, who was ready to be. Well -

Interviewer:

This was Banisadr, or this was - I'm trying to remember exactly. Was it Bazargan?

Paul Bucha:

No, no, no, they weren't -

Interviewer:

That's later.

Paul Bucha:

I'll think of his name. But anyway, he came in, and first thing he did, he said, "Stop the Mullahs from receiving money - separation church and state. Collect taxes - which is a contract we had - from the bazaaris." And I remember thinking, "Those two groups hate each other, but this is going to make them together. How do you - and it was not logical, 'cause we had not been collecting taxes from the bazaaris.

2,000 years, they never paid taxes, but they never were a burden, either. They didn't need - they were a country almost unto themselves in the bazaar. And the Mullahs - across the street from my home was one of the leading Mullahs in the entire country, and they lived a very nice life, and they were calm. They were wonderful people. And I said, "You take that money away and tell them to go beg, you've just changed the attitude and the demographic to something that doesn't exist, and that is a person begging for alms from the society." These guys lived with Mercedes Benz and chauffeurs, the number one Mullahs.

And that led me to believe this thing was going to come unwound quickly. And then one of the guys said, "You -

Interviewer:

Do you remember roughly what year?

Paul Bucha:

It was '79.

Interviewer:

So it was right before takeover.

Paul Bucha:

The end of '79. And he said - one of the men came into the office and said, "You know, you're on the blacklist." And I said, "Yeah, I probably am." And I had a

cynicism as to the dangers of Iran as well, and I took our driver, the guy that ran all the driving named Bakhtiar, I said, "Let's go down - by the way, the Prime Minister was Jamshid Amouzegar, that's his name, okay. Amir," I said, "let's go down to where they're firing the AK-47s."

He said, "Why?" I said, "There's something not right. It doesn't sound right." And there was this Embassy where the guards are shooting them, and we went down there, and I said, "Do you see? It's popping. There's no following sound. It's just like a dead sound." And he said, "No, I don't catch that." I said, "Well, I do - let's go down." And it reminded me of Vietnam. And lo and behold, when we got down the guys were firing their weapons. Amir stood on the side.

I said, "Amir, pick up some of the brass - look at it." They were all crimped. They were blanks. They were firing blanks. All the American news people went, "Firing weapons" - no, they were firing blanks. And when we picked them up, the guard started laughing. They were having fun. They had never had a chance to have fun in years, right? And Amir was just laughing his tail off. He just said, "This is so funny." I mean it was. I said, "So this kind of puts it in perspective."

Now, I called the Embassy, and I said, "Look, I have to leave tomorrow. Two guys are staying behind. I'm taking their passports and giving it to the U.S. Consul, and that means you can't do anything to them. People will come to them looking for me," because that was the rule in Iran. If you don't have a passport, you can't arrest them, this is kind of interesting. I said, "Give me your passports." And I go to the airport, and there on the list, they guys says, and he looks at my thing and it says, "Paul William Bucha," and he looks and he says, "I have Bucha Paul."

I said, "Well, that's not me." And he showed me. I said, "That's not me. That's funny, isn't it? Someone's last name is my first name, Mr. Paul. I'm Mr. Bucha." And the guys laughed, and he says, "Yeah, very close." Stamp went in. I went to the pay phone, called my friend, Rich Gallagher, outside, I said, "I made it." I told him about it, and he laughed and said, "That's hilarious." Well, when I get on the plane, Air France asked me, "Is everything okay?" I said, "Yes, it's okay." She says, "Well, they called out here just a minute ago to see if there was a Mr. Paul on the plane." I said, "Oh," and we told them, "No. There's a Mr. Bucha on the plane," and they said, "Okay." And just as they were setting to button it up, out came Rrr, and the guards came. They opened the door, and they had, "Passports, everybody."

And he gets to my passport and he says, "These are the names, but they're not in the right order." I said, "Well, if they're not in the right order, it's not me." And the guard laughed and says, "Very close, though, very close." I said, "No, it isn't." And he got off. Well, the French flight attendants had been laughing, because they just saw this interaction, and we took off. And I called back when I got to Paris. I said, "Not good news. Make sure no one gets their passports."

The idiot at the U.S. Embassy, which was indicative of what was going on including at the Council level, and also at the Ambassador level, calls me, and they said, "Well, we've turned the passports over to the Prosecutor." I said, "Why?" He says, "Well, you must've done something wrong." And I heard that they arrested my guys. I called Stanley Resor, who was Secretary of State, and I said, "I'm Bud Bucha, Medal of Honor recipient," and he had been Secretary of the Army, says, "Yes, I know who you are."

I said, "I work for Ross Perot, and I need some help." He said, "Well, we're not going to help you. You would not have two guys taken under arrest if you had not done something wrong." And that was the attitude. So we set about trying to -

Interviewer:

Let me pause you here. I mean so they were that naive about what was happening in the revolution in Iran that they -

Paul Bucha:

They didn't understand that Carter's decisions had precipitated this. I mean he said, "What harm is there in letting a country preacher from the suburbs of Paris come back to Iran?" talking about Khomeini. And everybody said, "What do you mean? You can't do this." They had also had the 1976 Corrupt Practices Act that had come out of the Federal government. We were supposed to get our partners to sign. "I won't steal. I won't bribe. I won't beat my wife," kind of a thing. I said, "No one's going to sign that."

And I was really a young guy, and they said, "You're our test case. Go to all your partners." And my partners just tore up the piece of paper. One in Saudi Arabia said, "Signed it. Now I'm going to cancel all the payments under your contract until they rescind this piece of paper." I said, "Please don't do that."

Interviewer:

And you were on the list for what - I mean what would they have done if they'd identified you correctly?

My partner was the Shah's closest friend, and therefore I was part of that, you know, and they were anti-American.

Interviewer:

And the Shah at this point was in New York, receiving -

Paul Bucha:

No, no, no, no - he was still -

Interviewer:

He was still there.

Paul Bucha: Yeah, he was there, and then he left.

Interviewer:

But the Ayatollah had already returned, and -

Paul Bucha:

No, the Ayatollah came in after he had left. These were the decisions they had made and you could hear it coming, and what we -

Interviewer:

I see. So this is the rumbling of the end, essentially.

Paul Bucha:

The revolution is coming, and that's when I had to go 'cause I had other things to do, and I had these three guys, Lloyd Briggs being one, the guys who I thought - and he was working for me, and Lloyd was in charge. And he said, "Look, it's getting dangerous here," and I said, "Well, leave." And he got a plane and left. Paul and Bill were arrested, but they weren't abused or anything like that. And then, long story short, it's not important, Ross just decided he might try a raid.

Which was a wonderful story, because this was a guy prepared to do the ludicrous for his people.

Interviewer:

Perot.

Paul Bucha:

Perot.

Interviewer:

Yeah. And partly because the State Department wouldn't help him.

Paul Bucha:

Correct.

Interviewer:

Yeah.

Paul Bucha:

And I mean I was sent to Rome, I met with Italians, I had Admiral Moore give me advice trying to -

Interviewer:

You were going to try to steal them out of Iran - that's essentially what it was, right?

Paul Bucha:

Well, he came up with that idea, and I said -

Interviewer:

Tell me how it all unfolded - it's interesting.

Paul Bucha:

I was asked to come back to Dallas and go to the Marina Hotel and knock twice, so I got a little note, "Go to room 103, knock twice. I did, and which, under the note comes a note, "Go to room 1502," or whatever it was, "Knock for times." Bump, bump, bump, note comes under, "I'm going to another room. Then finally Merv Stauffer opens the door, and there's Bull Simon sitting there, and I say, "What's this about?" Bull says, "I'm going to prepare for a raid." I said, "You're going to get someone killed."

Interviewer:

And who was Bull Simon, from your perspective?

Paul Bucha:

Bull Simon from my perspective was the - Ross thought he was the number one raid guy in history. Well, that was Charging Charlie Beckwith, who eventually crashed in the desert. That was the brave man. Bull Simon was the Special Forces raid guy who went to the Son Tay prison long after the American prisoners were taken out, and got some people killed. He was introduced at the Army-Navy game and got booed. So I mean that's what I knew about Bull Simon. And I said, "You did it before. You're going to do it again. These are not soldiers, although they're vets. The City of Tehran is much more complex. What are you going to do if you walk in in the middle of the night and you come to a jube? What are you going to do?" He said, "What's a jube?" I said, "That's exactly what I'm talking about. It's three feet wide, four feet deep, and it runs from the top of the mountain down to the lowest thing, and it's on both sides of every street. And you're walking at night and you don't know those things are there, you're going to fall into that concrete pit and you're not going to be sneaking anywhere." And I was really angry that he would be encouraging this kind of thing. And he said, "Well, will you help me?" And I said, "Look, if it comes to a raid, I'll be there, but there's no raid needed. You're not going to do a raid."

Interviewer:

How did you think you were going to get them out?

Paul Bucha:

I thought they would eventually just be turned over, because Iran is a - when you got to know Iran - and I was trying to swap me for them, which Gallagher and I, and I said, "Rich, I'll be out of there in a day," and he said, "Won't take a day." I mean and Rich used to go down and have drinks with the guards at the prison. And at the end of the day, what happened was the cries were mounting - the guards let the prisoners out. And Bill and Paul, who were going, they knew where they were supposed to go. As they told me, the guards drove by in a taxi cab, saying, "Good luck. Good luck, Mr. Paul, Mr. Bill." And they went to the Adin Hotel. I'm on the phone with Rich Gallagher, supposed to talk to Dallas. Rich says, "Just a minute, someone's knocking on the door," and he says, "Oh my God, they're here." I said, "Who's there?" He said, "Bill and Paul." I said, "Great. Let's get them out of the country." Turned around, I called Dallas and I said, "They're out. They're ready to go. The team can now take them out of the country the way all the Persians went." They go to Turkey. And that's what happened.

No one bribed anybody. No one - I mean it wasn't - unfortunately, that didn't make a nice story, because Bull died shortly thereafter of a malady had nothing to do with it, and Ross wrote the book, wanted the book written as a eulogy to this guy, who had served Ross so well. And I understood that, because the real story was this story about a C.E.O. willing to do the ridiculous for his people, and that to me was a much more important story.

But itâ€™s not Errol Flynn and derring-do. It wasnâ€™t that. It was this wonderful C.E.O. who put his people far above his company and his own reputation, and was willing to do anything - even that which was totally ridiculous.

Interviewer:

And you feel that way to this day.

Paul Bucha:

Oh, yeah.

Interviewer:

Still a lot of admiration for him.

Paul Bucha:

Well, we fell apart on the Presidential campaign, â€™cause I was supporting George Bush. And I didnâ€™t think he should be President. I believe no civilian should be elevated to the role of President or Governor and all that kind, without first passing through an office of public policy, so you and we understand how they handle power.

Weâ€™ve had enough evidence in our history of our land, in the short brief period it is, when we get people in public power positions who abuse that power, McCarthy being the most obvious one. And I was just saying, â€™Ross, you got to go prove. You got to get your street creds.â€™ And thatâ€™s what I thought. I said I didnâ€™t think he was qualified to be President for that reason. Unfortunately, that quote was used, â€™is not qualified to be President,â€™ without any of the caveats and back-up stuff.

Interviewer:

Had enormous impact in that election, though, in â€™92, obviously, right?

Paul Bucha:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

Yeah. Re-elected Bill Clinton, essentially.

Paul Bucha:

Right.

Interviewer:

Yeah. So what did you go off to do after that, then?

Paul Bucha:

I left E.D.S., formed my own company to do the same kind of thing, moved back to New York, and then became very active in veterans affairs and political things where I could help people. Tried to build my own kind of business. I became a real estate developer. My friends, General Raymond Bell, his wifeâ€™s family had become the founders of Natural Resources Defense Counsel.

And I wanted to build in accordance with all the environmental rules and regulations, prove it can be done, and I did that at Port Liberty.

Interviewer:

Thatâ€™s in Jersey City, right?

Paul Bucha:

In Jersey City, and it became a victim, then, of the savings and loan - I had 15 thrifts in my financing group, and overnight, 8 of them were declared insolvent, and they owned 51% of the project, so 51% went elsewhere. And then I was confronted with the decision, what do I do? I had all these homeowners who were living there based on the vision I had sold them, so I decided to stand up on their defense.

Not one of the smartest decisions Iâ€™ve ever made.

Interviewer:

Explain a little bit about the project, so we understand a little of what -

Paul Bucha:

It was going to be 2,200 units with 4-1/2 miles of canals. My partners were from Europe - Prince Bismarck of Germany, Francois Spoerry of Paris.

Interviewer:

The French architect.

Paul Bucha:

The French architect. And we had done 468 units in the first phase, and weâ€™d taken an old, abandoned rail yard that had wild dogs and dead people in it, and converted it to where we were selling million-dollar houses, right looking at Manhattan, past the Statue of Liberty - glorious place, you know. But when the banks went under, I said, â€œLook, Iâ€™m going to put it in bankruptcy and not let the government take it over.â€

R.T.C. was taking things over. The judge, the bankruptcy judge, says, â€œYou know Iâ€™m going to have to limit your income to \$400.00 a week, cash.â€ And I said, â€œWhoa,â€ and he said, â€œAnd weâ€™re going to go to court, and weâ€™re going to have to figure out what we do next. Are you sure you want to do it?â€ And I said, â€œYes.â€ And the three-year battle of my life went on then, and we were victorious. And all I wanted was the homeowners to control their own destiny.

And then after -

Interviewer:

Is the project finished?

Paul Bucha:

The project, then we sold it. It had to sold, â€˜cause the bank said, â€œWell, we get to sell not the old part that you did, weâ€™ll sell the new part,â€ and they did.

Interviewer:

It was finished by others, or is it -

Paul Bucha:

Yeah, itâ€™s finished. And then I wanted - and thereâ€™s still a sign that we arranged. Itâ€™s the only private development with a sign on the New Jersey Turnpike. And then I did another one in Croton-Harmon. Itâ€™s now called Half Moon Bay. I did - and then I was on a board for the holding company Wheeling-Pittsburgh Steel, and they asked me would I be willing to be chairman of Wheeling-Pittsburgh Steel and see if we could prolong the life. Because the trade sanctions and everything were going on in those days, and this idea of free trade.

But ended up being unfair trade, where Americans were the victims. And I got into that, so Iâ€™ve been very active in the trade debates. Created a couple joint ventures with Koreans and Japanese and Americans, and those are still operating, those companies. And then went back into the real estate business, and now Iâ€™m focused on building two projects in Bermuda, and if I do that, then thatâ€™ll be a fun stamp on a life well lived, so.

Interviewer:

Well, youâ€™ve had many lives, it seems - many different ventures, and a very exciting life.

Paul Bucha:

Well, the most important thing right now is that Iâ€™ve gotten closer to West Point, largely because of the Cadetsâ€™ invitations. And Iâ€™ve taken on this mantle of trying to - besides P.T.S., which Iâ€™m doing, besides finding jobs for vets - is trying to create a vision of leadership thatâ€™s a synopsis, without having to get into prolonged and excessive numbers of characteristics and elements.

I came up with five elements -

Interviewer:

Right - we had that in the first interview, yeah.

Paul Bucha:

At a speech. Now I have a sixth, which I never thought I would add, and the others, you know, I have -

Interviewer:

What is the sixth?

Paul Bucha:

I have the one honor, I have competence, I have confidence, I have compassion, and I have humility. I never thought I would have to have an undying and unquenchable thirst for

responsibility and accountability. But after two years of watching our government leadership, where everybody says the problem is they don't get along. No one says the problem is, it's not leading. No one says, it's responsible. You take a Lieutenant and you say, "That's your Platoon," he or she says, "I'm in charge. I'm responsible. Give me a chance to fail, if I will, but I'm going to work my butt off not to." I never thought that would be needed in a definition of leadership, but having seen the President, the Congress, the Senate, all of them -

Interviewer:

And he's a President who you supported, too.

Paul Bucha:

Oh, yeah, yeah, and I've been public on him. I mean one of the Cadets will say, "What do you think of the President?" I can't go up there and dodge that and muff. I said, "Look, very blunt, no - he's become Washingtonian, and that is everybody else is wrong, but not you. Everybody else is failing, but not you." And I said, "I've tried to explain. I've explained to people on the staff." I said, "For God sakes, in this ship called the United States of America, he's not the Social Director. He's the Captain. He sets the course. He knows the destination. He says, "This is when we're leaving," and we get on or get off. But he doesn't say, "Why don't you two get together?" And that, if you think about it, has been the excuse. We can't get things done 'cause Republicans and Democrats don't get together. I was wondering, what would Lyndon Johnson have done? I could see him calling *the gentlemen* and just saying, "It's been nice knowing you. I'm sad to tell you you're going to be out of Washington forever, unless - 'cause that's the way he did it."

Interviewer:

There's that famous picture with Johnson towering over I forget which Senator it is, but just basically pointing his finger at him, and saying, "If you don't do this -"

Paul Bucha:

That's right.

Interviewer:

"You don't get that, and you don't want that to happen, so you'd better do it."

Paul Bucha:

Eisenhower did it.

Interviewer:

At the time, but absolutely, yeah.

Paul Bucha:

Kennedy did it, and they all have done it. That was what the old Presidents did. Of late, it's been, "Let's all work -" and the reason, I think, has to do with those who have stood up in the recent history and said, "I'm responsible," have lost. They've been blamed and then vilified.

Interviewer: Including Johnson himself.

Paul Bucha:

Yeah, and George Bush the First, so.

Interviewer:

Well, thank you very much for your time. I really appreciate it.

Paul Bucha:

Thank you. We'll do it again and get other ones, if I survive much longer.

Interviewer:

I'm sure you will.

Paul Bucha:

Okay. Thank you.

Interviewer:

Thanks.