

TAPE #48--SIDE A
DICK MEADOWS--NOVEMBER 18, 1981

KF OK, so he would buy these old engines and put some machinery?

DM That is right. Motors, and he would get motors that were faulty. He would tear it apart and rebuild it. I think that is what he got his greatest kicks out of. I never have known of him going hunting. Although I have invited him to go hunting from time to time. In Panama I was a big hunter in Panama and sometimes he would say he would go but he never would. There were times we would go out at night with spotlights and pickup lobsters in knee-deep water. Lobsters would come out of the deep and crawl out on the coral and you can go through there on a good night and pick these things up like picking up potatoes. Great, nice two- and three-pound lobsters. Throw them in a sack and go back and cook them up. We would take lobsters to him as a courtesy to him in trying to lure him out. He would say, "Yah, I'll go with you. The next good night give me a call." But the next good night we would give him a call and he wouldn't. I had been fishing with him one time, not with him, but my son went over to do some fishing and he and Harry came down to show us how it was done. He liked to fish with a flyrod with (popping bug?). A lot of skill in how you deliver that (popping bug?). I guess I am a little more greedy because I go with a spinning outfit, and with the bait that I know they will bite on. Anyway, that day he and Harry were in the same boat. My son and I caught about 16 very nice bass. He had strikes but didn't catch any. It is the only time I think that I have ever seen him angry. Everytime I would catch a fish, or hook one, or Mark would hook one, we would whistle. And he would look over there and that damn cigar would be propped up. After about an hour he gave up and went back. I didn't dare to rub it in because I was afraid he would punch me in the nose. I think anything that he had like that would be working with gadgets, working with machinery. He met a friend down in Panama. A guy by the name of Jack Burns. This guy

DM was either active Navy or retired Navy, enlisted type. But these two Cont. guys talked alike, acted alike and were the greatest companions. They could sit together for hours and talk about somethings that I would think were insignificant and would get bored in 30 minutes and leave. They could talk for hours on this, weapons, reloading, and reconditioning the weapons. The great thing that he enjoyed. You go to his house, see all weapons hanging all over his house. The walls, he really treasured. To me they are just a useless piece of iron. I like something practical. If you are get a rifle, the rifle has got to kill something, whatever that something is has got to be the right boar and I don't care how neat it is and all the engraving is, who made it, is insignificant to me. To him, he studies all of that. He gets all the details of that and has a greater appreciation of all that.

KF Did he ever say anything to you about a woman in Laos?

DM A woman in Laos? No, I don't know anything about a woman.

KF He dropped hints to one or two people, about there had been a women in Laos. A women in his life who was the daughter of one of the chiefs of these tribes. He never dropped any hints of that kind to you? He never told anybody the whole story.

DM I can't believe that he would get involved with any woman other than his wife. And especially a Laosian. I couldn't see that. I couldn't see that at all. I have know him to play around. Of course, a commander would never get caught anyway. If something like that went on, he would be so clever about it, nobody would know anything about it. The reason I say "NO" is because it is just against his principal. He didn't object to other soldiers, because he realized that a young soldier in stressful situations, when he has some relaxation, is going to find a release. He acknowledged that and didn't condemned it at all. As a matter of fact, he condoned it. We use to go back into those hills two months at a time, and there among us were beautiful Mao girls. Absolute beautiful, slender, and all the beauty that a young

DM oriental could have. But it was hands off. We knew that. Not his rule, Cont. it was a tribal rule, no messing around with the women. We knew that. The little girls would giggle, would carry on, and maybe were interested but they too would not commit themselves. I have only known of one person ever marrying into a tribe and this was a CIA guy that spent seven years with (BangPow) and his forces. Because he had know their language, customs, and had helped them so much. I don't know how this occurred, but he ended up marrying one of the girls in the tribal ways of marrying. He lived with the girl. This happened only after years and years...after he had been over there years and years. (BangPow) more or less gave her to him but they had to get married, more or less a promise that he would take her back to the states and treat her as his wife. But he blew it when he didn't. The guy had the world sitting right there in his hands if he had done that, or had not done that, either way. If he had married her and kept her, he would be right there in Montana never having a worry in his life. Or better yet, not marrying her and not having an affair he could have been up there in Montana having a great life. But he did, but he didn't follow through with it and that man is mud. He is mud. That little girl is sitting up there right now in Montana with (BangPow). So knowing that little bit about the tribes I would say no. I know this battalion commander that I was training, was a Mao, he had a wife in (VinJoh) but he was servicing all the little girls that he felt needed to be serviced there. But he never did offer one to us, and he thought I was a great guy. I don't think that he ever would. He did make mention that if I felt the need for one, he would have one imported. A Laorian, somebody out of the city. These things are brought up. It depends upon how you handle it as to whether it is brought up again. This is one time type thing and it is quickly denied and he said no. The end result is that we would have kind of a rotation basis every couple of months we would go down to (VienJan) and let it hang out for three or four days and then go back to work. During this period, the Bull was down there, and as far as I know he didn't object to any of that. He understands the needs of a young man. But him getting involved, I just see no change on that. I

DM couldn't see the purpose in it. It couldn't be lust, there in the city,
Cont. in Bang Kok you can get sophisticated young women but to get
involved with a tribal. . .

KF The story is that it had something to do with winning the allegiance
and the trust of one of these tribes and it may have even been a form
of formality a ceremony which actual meant nothing. It was just a
ceremony like blood brothers or something like that. You never heard
anything like that?

DM No. For him it wouldn't be necessary. I think those people through
(BangPow) recognized rank. I will tell you another incident. Colonel
Simons was not involved, but to give you a description of these tribes
and (BangPow). Shortly after I got there, BangPow had a party, a
party is not like anything you can imagine. In this camp, with thrash
type roofs made out of banana leafs and the likes, dirt floors, and
little partitions for rooms. . . We were living across the creek upon
the hill in the same situation, sleeping quarters sometimes under
parachutes that were unusable. We would put a pole up throught the
center and stretch it out and build a platform under it and put a
poncho underneath there to get us some shelter from the rain and the
parachute from the sun and that sort of thing. And BangPow and his
mighty headquarters was living no better than that, yet he had a
party and they prepared all this food and killed some of these water
buffalo. There was a Lt. Colonel named John Little? who was being
releaved by Bull at the time, and he came up for his going away
party, this party was for him. And BangPow was bursting at the
seams with money in gold and anything that he wanted he got. He
gave this guy a beautiful heavy gold bracelet that he had
purchased somewhere. The homemade whiskey was something like
turbintine, it was about 150 proof. The little girls have trays and
bring it out, in small cups, you would take one and dunk it down and
change it with the other; both in same strength. Anyway, we got
pretty high, and at the end of the party, everybody had gone home
but being one of the chiefs I had stayed there with the Colonel and

DM Major, BangPow and his officer. At the end of this thing, BangPow in
Cont. honor of this guy going home invited him to the opium dens. There is
a situation there you just don't know how to handle it. You don't want
to participate, you don't want to get involved. But here is an honored
thing, how do you do it. They got up to leave to go to these dens
and they were sleeping on the side of the hill, another little shelter on
a shelf with an enclosure. I can't even smoke a cigarette, to smoke
opium would be impossible. I bowed out quickly and started back over
to my house and that was the end of that. You are put into situations
like that where you just don't know how to handle it. You don't want
to insult the guy, there are other tribal habits where the honored
guest gets the chicken head and a chicken foot to open up the
dinner. Some chiefs, like myself, would get a little pighead that would
be sometimes half cooked. With the hair on it, cut the head off, and
cut this thing, you would have to gnaw on it and give it to your
buddy and he would have to gnaw on it and give it his buddy. It
would be spaced one American, one Tai, one Mao, one whatever. The
chiefs would sit up, and the honored guest would get this chicken
head and chicken foot. He would take a bite off the head and a bite
off the foot and that would open up the ceremony. A lot of people just
flatass can't do that. My boss, then this Major Johnson, was a very
squirmish type guy, and we didn't think he would be able to do it,
but the son-of-a-gun did. And that made us. And that sort of thing.
Had he had turned it down, there would have been a chill between
us. I don't like pork in the best sense. But I had to eat half-ass
cooked pork. If you don't do those things, you were mud. But when it
comes to women, there is a definite line drawn. I know tribes like that
all over. The (Sand?) Indians down off the coast of Panama, they are
very much the same. They are very family oriented, tribal oriented. I
don't think so.

KF OK. Do you every think or speculate about what was driving Colonel
Simons? What his motivation was? He was a man, when he was in the
Army he was somewhat of a perfectionist, very meticulous. Even when
he retired he just didn't sit down and look out the window, he was

KF doing things. Or if he was sitting there, he was thinking. Did you
Cont. ask yourself why did he do this? What is he looking for in life? What
did he want out of life?

DM Yes, I have. Partly in analyzing myself. I think we are kind of alike
like that because at the end of retirement we were fixed well enough
that we really don't have to do a damn thing. Just live, comfortably.
Do what every retired person wants to do. In duty we would strike
out there to get the most dangerous thing done. I often wonder why
in the hell am I doing this. Why am I risking this. I have all these
things in front of me, I don't have to do it. I think I can answer in
the sense that he just likes to do meaningful things. The sense of
accomplishment. Some of it is exciting. I don't think he tried or
wanted to change the direction of the world. He had great pride in the
Red, White and Blue, the stars and stripes, this is America. Goddamn
nobody is going to push us around type stuff. He knows that what
little contributions he has to offer and involvement is not going to
change a lot but it is helping maintain something that he believes in so
strongly. Therefore, he would analyze the things that needed to be
done, and select the one most meaningful. And to do a good job so
that he would be recognized for a future one. Excitement. I think that
was necessary in a lot of ways. Fighting things other than combat or
exciting situations, he like to parachute. I shouldn't say he liked to
parachute, he would participate in parachuting. I don't think that he
would be angry if he didn't have to make it. In a parachute unit as a
commander, he has got to lead the way. You have to go out and get
involved in it. He would not get involved free-fall. He supported
free-fall parachute. The sports club that we had in Panama. The Halo
that I mentioned, the military application. The scubbadiving, for our
demolitions and this sort of thing. He would skindive, but he would
not tank dive. He would like to reach out and touch some of that
stuff, but sometimes either it wasn't necessary at that point of getting
that deeply involved in it or spend that much time away from his main
duty to learn those things. He liked to get out and mix it up in
combat. On the Son Tay raid, he went in and mistakenly landed about

400 meters short of the true target, the jumper lifted off and left him there. He look at it and realized that they were at the wrong place, and knew where he was at and the activity started in he building. He said, "I have nothing else do so let's assault." He said, "Let's get with it." All of the troups realigned in order and they started firing. They fired the any tank weapons into the building, (?) machine guns, shotguns, and anybody that appeared they would shoot them down. I guess in the excitement some of these people were heading for cover and there were little trenches out front which he was standing near. One of these cats came down and got in that trench and was running. He broke away from his element and changed this guy down the trench and shot him then came back. He likes that. He thinks that is just great. Finally, the jumper came back, picked them up, reinserted them at the right place. But by that time he knew that there was nobody there and the main effort was trying to get everybody wrapped up and back in the helicopters and back out without the loss of life.

KF Do you think he was a happy man?

DM Not completely. I don't think a person like Simons is ever completely happy. He wasn't happy that he retired. He wasn't happy by not being utilized more. I think he had a hell of a lot more, he knew he had a hell of a lot more to give than ever called upon to give. I think Ross put him through one of the greatest ventures of his life when he went into Iran and got those people out. That is the sort of thing that he really enjoys. And if he could do that continuously he would be happy. To bring him back, have a break, he would occupy his time with his gadgets, his pigs, and with his animals to keep from going insane. I think he was as happy as he could be with his wife there on that farm. If he had his druthers, he would be doing things I just mentioned. The Son Tay's the

KF Did he tell you why he retired when he did?

DM It was a mandatory retirement. He was a reserved officer. You got different categories, you got a regular army officer that can stay in until he is 65 if he maintains his progression of promotions which at 65 he is a Four-Star General. A reserved officer can stay in for 20 years, but Simons because he was a unique person that he was able to get extensions beyond 20 years and he went to 30 years and retired in 30 years.

KF They refused him another extension?

DM Yes. They refused him another extension.

KF So basically, they retired him?

DM They retired him, which surprised me.

KF How do you feel about that?

DM Too early. I think a man is effective as long as he wants to be effective and he wanted to be effective. We all felt that it was just great sadness that they didn't promote him to Brigadier General and give him another five years and say go at it. At the end of that give him another star and another five years. Of course, that is pretty much what he has done. He retired in his early 50s and died in his early 60s. So he had about 10 years span beyond the retirement of which he has done good things. We both talked about it, our big concern and one I was hoping to get started and was, but failed to do, was looking at these soldiers that were forced to retire and it is a damn piss poor system because you get an officer with a reserve commission and he goes through 20 years of service. He is 40, 42 at the oldest 45 what we think is in his prime. Knowledge, maturity, you know, skills. And if the guy still has the energy and still has the health and the willingness to go out there, he is a very effective very, important man, but they retire him. A lot of these guys that I know as Majors get out and do janitor work. Supervising, you know, a

DM bowling alley and rinkydink stuff like that. High skills that cost
Cont. hundreds of thousands of dollars to bring guys to that level. My
hopes were that if at all possible when you see these guys, give him a
job. Something meaningful, something equivalent to what they are
doing. But we don't do that. The end result is that we have got
people involved like these special forces guys working for (Kadophy?),
you know. What a terrible waste. What a terrible sin. Those guys will
never ever be accepted back here with their buddies ever again. They
got this thing, this burning thing inside of them. If nobody will hire
them, nobody put them to work, then they will go to rot. Colonel
Simons and I are pretty damn fortunate, you know. When I retired I
was asked to come back into Civil Service to help organization a
military force. They wanted ten years, I got involved in the Iranian
thing, at the end of the Iranian thing, I felt that my usefulness there
was finished and I went into something else. At that time Ross was
asking me to come out here and go to work for him. Ross didn't ask
me, Simons asked me. He called me up and asked when my contract
was ending. I said, "I really don't have a contract. I am on for as
long as I want to stay. They have expressed a tender ten year, but I
don't want to stay that long. I will stay until the unit is validated,
once it is validated then my mission is accomplished. I will probably
look for something else." He said, "Good. Ross has got something he
wants me to do for him and I have told him that I would do it if you
would be my operations officer. If you will help me do it." I told him,
"Hell, I will quit my job right now. Just tell me." He said, "No, you
continue what you are doing. Get that unit validated." He is the
consultant and advisor. He said, "What you are doing is very
important. Get that unit validated [that's in November] and about the
end of November I will have things pretty much the way I want.
Gonna take some courses and get some education because all of this is
brand new to me. You start looking around for some communicators
and some good weapon people, and entail people. We will get about a
25-man team together." That is just like a beautiful book. Get 25 good
people together. I think you can just about rule the world with 25

DM good people. I started looking around for retired people and retirable Cont. people, that still have the spunk.

KF When did Simons called you about this?

DM This is two weeks before he died. "You realize that I have just had a heart attack?" I said, "Yah, I heard you had one." He said, "I'm ok right now but they are going to operate on me Monday." This was on Friday that he was talking to me. He said, "Ross is getting the best doctors in the nation to do the work." He said, "There is one thing for sure, my boy, come close of business Monday it is going to be heads up or be down." I said, "Oh, bullshit, let's talk about November. I am interested. What should I do to prepare myself? He said, "What we are going to do is start a war against the drug blow into the state of Texas." I said, "You got yourself a man. I'll do it." Anyway, I told him I was going to Hawaii for a two week assignment and I wanted to keep in touch with him in case I could do anything for him after the operation. He gave me this 6000 number over here. I had one of my friends to call out here, and if anything had happened to call me in Hawaii and I would come back. I didn't get a call the whole two weeks. I returned back to Fayetteville, North Carolina late at night, about twelve o'clock, went to bed. Six o'clock got a call and this lady says, "Gee I am sorry to tell you, your main man died." I was thinking, at that time my father was very sick, and I thought he had died. I said, "There is not a whole lot of regret there, my dad is 80 years old and he has lived a damn good live." She said, "No, I am not talking about your dad, it is Colonel Simons." I said, "Holy Cow." There is a plane that you are to catch in Raleigh, North Carolina to go to Dallas. Ross wants you to come out for the memorial services. So I flew out and met with Ross that night, along with a lot of the other people, the ex-POWs and some of the raiders. They had brought a detachment of Special Forces to be the pallbearers. Ross talked to me that night and told me what he and Bull had talked about and had planned on doing. He asked if I would be interested. I said, "I don't know. Now that he is gone I don't know if I can be of help. I will look

DM at it. I will think about it." So this gave me about four, five, six
Cont. months until November in which we would validate the unit. The day
that we validated the unit, which was the 4th of November, was the
day that the Iranians took the Embassy. I was gonna quit my job on
the end of November, but I just kept getting more and more
involved. Seeing this thing out (could not understand), one way or
the other. Which I did. Ross kept calling me and I would meet with
him in Washington all the time. He was offering all the assistance he
could to the government to go and get those people out because he
and Bull had done that and they had good people. That had been on
the ground, understood the situation. Offered this tremendous
assistance, of which I don't any of it was taken.

KF I think Ross ruffled a few feathers up there in Washington in a way
that Simons might have done actually. I think he probably told them
that they were full of it.

DM Well, you are right. I think it was some of the comments that were
made at the end of his success, to say that they would try to get the
State Department to assist in their endeavors and had been show the
door. He expressed those feelings, and I think that started it.
Although he was well received. I went with him to some of the
meetings with the new military within the political world of defense and
national security, he was well received, warmly received, but . . . I
think he was a little hurt about that. But I was really looking forward
to working with Simons on this thing. We could have done so much
good.

KF Did it fall apart. You told me outside that you were no longer doing
it?

DM Yah. The plan was very solid, it still is very solid. It is still a very
good plan. I am still trying to get it done through another source.
Ross, I think, was willing to get the government approval to do it
because there is a need for US government approval. Because if we go

DM out of country and get involved in sometime, then we need somebody
Cont. to get us out of jail. But, I don't think that we have ever identified
that person that would have the courage to support it because it is a
very bold plan. It is a very, very bold plan. It is achievable, I
believe in it. I am working on it. I think I will get part of it
anyway. Hope that by the 15th of next month you'll read in the
newspaper of a great success. It is just a beauty. You might want to
consider writing about one day. Not me, I mean this incident, this
situation that is coming up.

KF I can't wait.

DM It is really gonna blow the lid off of a lot of things. This has been
working for four or five months, but I am just getting involved with it
recently. I have been monitoring it because I am entrusted with the
personnel that are operating and have been briefed quite a bit on it. I
am now involved in it. It is exciting.

KF Well, I can't wait. But I guess that I am going to have to.

DM Yes.

KF I think I have run out of questions.

DM I had a lot of notes I had sorted down to kind of put these things in
sequence that I used when I was talking to Bill Goldman who is writing
the movie script. I had them sent from Florida out here, but I didn't
get here until late last night and I didn't get down to the post office
to pick them up. Otherwise, I might have had some notes you would
be interested in.

KF Can you leave them for me.

DM Sure, I can leave them with Perot.

HOTFOOT #48-13

KF Yeah. Please.

DM You don't need them. It just kind of supports what we have talked about. Back to the dates, some of the things that I remember.

End of tape.