This is the Thank You,’ 72 podcast, brought to you by the Wisconsin Alumni Association. This podcast salutes outstanding Badgers from every one of Wisconsin’s 72 counties. Here’s your host, Tod Pritchard.

America is changing the way it deals with the rest of the world. We called Waupaca County native and former ambassador to Greece and Belarus, Daniel Speckhard, to get his unique perspective on the fast-changing events of the past few months, including the withdrawal of U.S. troops from northeastern Syria.

Yeah, well that was a real strategic mistake by the United States.

More of Speckhard’s insights are coming up, but first, let me introduce you to this amazing alum. Daniel earned his master’s degree from UW Madison’s La Follette School of Public Affairs, which opened the door to a distinguished diplomatic and policy career.

Mr. Speckhard’s resume is amazing. He served as ambassador to Greece and Belarus, deputy assistant secretary general of NATO, then director of the Iraqi Reconstruction Management office and deputy chief of mission at the U.S. embassy in Baghdad. Daniel now serves as president and CEO of Lutheran World Relief IMA World Health. It’s a humanitarian organization that seeks to break the cycle of poverty and promote healthier families throughout the world. Mr. Speckhard, welcome to the podcast.

Thanks for having me.

Also, joining me for the conversation is Laura Bunn. She’s a graduate student at La Follette’s master of international public affairs program. Laura, it’s so great to have you here. Thanks for joining us. You recently returned from an internship at our embassy in Lisbon, Portugal, right?
Laura Bunn: 01:40 Yes, that’s right. And thank you for having me. It’s really nice to be here.

Tod Pritchard: 01:44 Daniel, let’s start with you. You’re from Waupaca County. You were born in Clintonville, correct?

Daniel Speckhard 01:50 That’s right.

Tod Pritchard: 01:52 Tell me about your childhood, your family. What was it like growing up for you?

Daniel Speckhard 01:56 Well, it was pretty Wisconsin childhood in the sense that my mother was a stay-at-home mom during that period in the 1960s, and my dad started out as a pastor. My grandfather was the long-time pastor at Clintonville, and my dad went into the seminary. But then after being a pastor for a few years, he decided to be a high school teacher of German.

Daniel Speckhard 02:19 I got to live around the state as he moved a little bit. I started in Clintonville, but then lived in places like Muscoda and New Glarus, southeastern Wisconsin. Then we landed in Wausau for my formative middle school and high school years. So a Green Bay Packer, a fan through and through, and a cheese head.

Tod Pritchard: 02:36 That’s awesome that you’re still a cheese head. We appreciate that. That’s great. Did you graduate in Wausau? Is that where you graduated high school?

Daniel Speckhard 02:43 I did. I graduated from Wausau West High School. One of the formative things during my childhood though, I would add that — because it leads into what we’re going to be talking about in terms of international affairs — is my father was a Fulbright exchange teacher in Germany for a year when I was in fifth grade, and they just took us over there, and dumped me into a German school without any language training. I got a healthy dose of what it’s like to live in another culture, to learn a different language, and see the world from a different perspective. I think that was an imprint on me for the rest of my life. That ended up shaping what I did with my life.

Tod Pritchard: 03:18 That was definitely being thrown into the deep end of the pool, wasn’t it?

Daniel Speckhard 03:20 Yeah, it sure is. I don’t recommend it, but it’s a great way to learn a language.

Tod Pritchard: 03:25 Why did you decide to attend UW–Madison?
Daniel Speckhard 03:28 Well, it’s a fantastic school, great reputation internationally and nationally, but to be honest with you, I’m sure for a lot of the students coming to Wisconsin, it’s also the affordability. I have to say one of the great things about public universities is the ability to make it accessible to average people of average means. I know it’s getting tougher. The price of the universities go up. But for the quality that you get at the university of Wisconsin, compared to the price you pay, it’s just impossible to beat.

Tod Pritchard: 03:57 Yeah, that’s very true. Laura’s got a question here.

Laura Bunn: 03:59 Yeah. If someone told you your freshman year that you would have a career in international diplomacy and development, what would have been your reaction?

Daniel Speckhard 04:07 You know, I would have been excited to hear that, but I would have been skeptical. I started out a freshman in the engineering department, because in high school I had actually won a National Science Foundation fellowship and saw the hard sciences as a place to really change the world. But as I got more into it in the university, I started thinking about the softer sciences and how they also end up changing the world. I’ve always wanted to do something that made a big impact in the world, but I started opening my eyes to some of the different opportunities, which is a great thing about a university, that you get a chance to look at all the different possibilities and learn from different professors in different academic areas. I shifted from engineering to economics, which actually isn’t that big of a difference because there’s lots of math in both, and really started enjoying my economics training there at the University of Wisconsin, as an undergraduate. But I always, because of that experience of having lived overseas, had an interest in what was going on in the world.

05:07 One of the things I might highlight for folks coming into the university or folks that are there right now is, for me, I always was thinking about how do you get a job after you graduate? I wanted to make sure I had a hard skill that allowed me to do that. I loved international affairs, but it’s a little bit hard to go straight from an international relations degree into a great job unless you’re really, really talented and you can ace the Foreign Service exam, or do an internship, or a peace Corps volunteer, or something else overseas. For me, I was thinking about economics as a hard skill and hard science to be able to do something.
Laura Bunn: 05:45 What motivated you to enter grad school and public affairs, public policy?

Daniel Speckhard 05:50 Well, I felt that it was important to have a graduate degree to also make myself competitive. I don’t know if some of you other students are like this, but once you’re in the school mode it’s a little bit easier to, before you get other responsibilities, children, family, other kinds of things, to continue on the academic track. It made a lot of sense for me to do that.

06:10 I picked the La Follette, in part, because of what I felt I needed, which were some of these skills in turning the academic piece of my economics undergraduate degree. How do you make that practical in the public service sense? I think La Follette does a great job of that in the sense that they really … the Wisconsin Idea, this notion that academics is supposed to reinforce public policy and there’s supposed to be a back and forth between these two centers to ensure that we’re serving the state and the citizens, is something that I got excited about.

Daniel Speckhard 06:44 In school, I think the best part about it was you start graduate school. You start working on pragmatic, practical questions, and you can dig your teeth in and then understand how, instead of writing a long, 30-page paper for your grade, you’re actually more focused on what are the policy outcomes based on an evidence-based analysis or analytical rigor.

Laura Bunn: 07:08 Are there any specific moments that you would say your graduate school experiences and skills really helped you during your career?

Daniel Speckhard 07:11 One of my graduate teachers was a woman named Professor Penniman, a real great thinker and, I think in terms of professors in the field, a leader as a woman breaking through some barriers, very early years, 20th century. I was lucky to study under her. One of the things she told me was that if you really want to influence policy, follow the money. That led me during my career to go work at the White House at the Office of Management and Budget. I suspect budget doesn’t sound sexy to a lot of students, but the reality is the appropriations and budget processes at state, local, and federal level, if you don’t have dollars to support programs and initiatives, you’re going to have great ideas, but they’ll usually not be able to be implemented. She was right in terms of seeing how resources really impact public policy and how those two have to go together.
Laura Bunn: 08:05 Do you mind talking a little bit more about what originally sparked your interest in international policy, and what prompted you to have a career in the state department and in international development?

Daniel Speckhard 08:16 Sure. As I mentioned, I really started with economics as a base to try to have some hard skills to support me in the international area, but I was interested in it. I had lived overseas as a child. I knew I was attracted to the international challenges that are facing the world.

08:33 The big move for me, the first lucky break I got was, and it was the La Follette school that gave it to me by some smart professor put on the wall there a sign that said Presidential Management Fellow Program. This is a two-year program where the government gives you an executive-track training program to build you into the management track, and they give you a number of opportunities. I was successful, I think — the first Wisconsin students to be able to be in that program. There have been many since. It was only a few years old at the time I joined.

Daniel S.: 09:10 But that allowed me to try out some different things at the federal government. One of them was I was able to work there for six months, over at the U.S. Agency for International Development. As part of that program, I was able to go to Belize and look at how they can support small business development in their country. That got me really excited, and when I came back, that’s when I was able to move over to the budget side, OMB, at the White House. There, I was in the International Affairs division. I was essentially reviewing international foreign aid, the effectiveness of it, how to improve it, and how to allocate resources toward it. That got me hooked permanently on the international side. From there, I ended up going over to the State Department.

Laura Bunn: 09:53 That sounds like a really great program and opportunity. Could you talk a little bit more about your career progression from being a Presidential Management fellow to the State Department, and then to your job now?

Daniel Speckhard 10:05 One of the things that I got an opportunity that someone knew my work, I was doing and invited me to come over to the State Department to work for the Deputy Secretary’s office, where they coordinated all foreign assistance for the U.S. government. I went over there as an assistant in that office. Then after about a year and a half, the director of that office left. I was only 29 at the time. It as a senior executive position, but I convinced the
One of the things I’d like to highlight for your students here is these opportunities. You have to have some luck, obviously, as well, but it can be at any level. It doesn’t have to be at the deputy secretary of state level. It could be in a local government, state government, somewhere else. But I really encourage students, as early as they can, to get an opportunity to serve as a staff assistant to somebody very senior. Because when you get that chance, when you get to see the world from somebody who is much more senior, you start understanding how decisions are made and what kind of information you need at a more senior level and how you process information, in particular, that they can’t handle a 30-page paper that gives them the outline. How do you create executive-level kind of digestible, short, sharp, to the point, focused analytics and information? How do you evaluate all sorts of information coming from all sorts of different angles and interests, as executives have to do? If you can see that as an aid to an executive, it’ll help you then shape your career path in such a way that whether or not you want to aspire to those kinds of positions, you’ll still understand how to influence public policymaking and decision-making by preparing the right kind of materials and analysis, and in the right form.

Speaker 1: You’re listening to the Thank You, 72 podcast, brought to you by the Wisconsin Alumni Association. Now back to our conversation with Waupaca County native and UW alum, Daniel Speckhard. Once again, here’s your host, Tod Pritchard, along with La Follette School of Public Affairs graduate student Laura Bunn.

Tod Pritchard: Daniel, your resume reads like a list of the world’s most challenging situations over the past 30 years. You’ve been a deputy assistant secretary general and NATO ambassador at large for new states, including parts of the former Soviet Union. You served as a NATO deputy assistant secretary for political affairs, a director of an $18 billion Iraq relief and reconstruction fund. I mean, I could just keep going on. Belarus ambassador ...

Tod Pritchard: First of all, you should write a book. And then second of all, I’d like to talk to you about some of your more recent experiences. You just went to Iraq not too long ago. First time you’ve been there in about 12 years. You wrote an op ed piece for the Hill on what you observed, the changes you saw over those past 12 years. Could you talk a little bit about what you saw? What are
the differences there? Where does Iraq stand now, and what should the U.S. be doing to help that nation?

Daniel Speckhard 13:03

Well, I’m glad you raised it. The reason I wrote that article is because I think there is a real fatigue and an understandable fatigue in the United States for places like Iraq. But these challenges don’t go away quickly, and they have an effect that are much bigger than just their own countries. If you see what’s going on in the world today, a lot of it can point back to the challenges that we created when we invaded Iraq. The collapse of Syria actually is a result of the war in Iraq, where some of these fighters actually went across the border into Syria and created the problems and created ISIS as the successor, the Al-Qaeda dynamic. That area imploding has created, essentially, 60 million refugees in the world today that are a part of that, which is more than any time since World War II.

13:52

When you see the problems that are going on in the world, the big challenges in the Middle East, they emanate from some of these public policy challenges that we’ve had as a country on the international side. What I was trying to get through in that message is you can’t ... These are long-term challenges that require sustained commitment. It doesn’t require a sustained commitment at the level, though, that we started out when we had 160,000 troops there, but you also can’t just walk away or you’re going to end up facing consequences somewhere else. There is, for me, lots of reasons to be hopeful about a place like Iraq, when you see the leaders in these countries actually committing their lives to try to find a solution to these sectarian divides that divide countries.

Daniel Speckhard 14:38

That was that point about that particular country. I’m hopeful but I’m scared for Iraq right now, as people try to disengage or disconnect, fall back into war, and that a war will end up having consequences for the rest of us.

Tod Pritchard: 14:51

Daniel, you just mentioned that the U.S. can’t just walk away from some of these international situations, but in early October, President Trump announced the withdrawal of U.S. troops from northeastern Syria. Those U.S. troops were working with the Kurds who live in that region. They helped the U.S. defeat ISIS. But when the soldiers left, Turkey attack the Kurds, who they consider their enemy.

Donald Trump: 15:15

You do have to understand they’ve been fighting each other for many, many decades. Actually, for centuries, they’ve been fighting each other. But we are speaking to both sides, and we’re seeing what can be made out of a situation. But we have
no soldiers in the area. We’re getting out of the endless wars. I have to do it. We’re really serving, and we were serving as a police force. We had defeated ISIS. We defeated the caliphate 100 percent.

Tod Pritchard: 15:39 The Turks reportedly killed almost a thousand civilians and soldiers and wounded hundreds more. Turkey and Russia now control that part of Syria. They’re running joint patrols in the area. You know that region very well. You were recently in Turkey. What is your take on this situation?

Daniel Speckhard 15:57 Yeah, well that was a real strategic mistake by the United States. It will have a long-lasting impact on us, because this notion that those who fight alongside you for a common cause that you will be supportive and not betray them is one of the basic conditions of good alliances. The Kurds were critical in defeating ISIS, and did a lot of the heavy fighting alongside the United States, and deserve a lot of credit for what they were able to do. For us to leave them to this humanitarian crisis, to be pushed out and attacked by the Turkish invasion, Syria is going to have unfortunate consequences.

16:41 I also think there’s a different light to look in this as well, and that is the great powers competition that people are talking about in the sense of the new challenges with a rising China and Russia and the stress of the competition with the United States over that. This turned out to be the worst of all worlds in the sense that we handed this to Turkey and then to Russia without getting anything in return, and so, as a result of, or domestic political considerations or whatever, we have now given Russia major victory in Syria and made ourselves look weak. And that’s not even counting the humanitarian costs, which is the most significant cost for all of this in terms of lost lives and another 200 to 300,000 refugees on the move. There’s going to be long-term consequences, unfortunately, for what was a move that a few people find hard to understand.

Tod Pritchard: 17:36 You are troubled with Russia having more of a foothold in the Middle East than it did before, correct?

Daniel Speckhard 17:41 Yeah, because we don’t share the same values, and we don’t share the same strategic interest. Russia, in large part, is looking to get involved in places where it can check U.S. influence and increase its own global stature. We are working in these areas, usually, for a different cause. In the case of Syria, as you recall, it’s both the context of stopping the terrorist threat emanating from Syria, as well as the terrible regime of Assad and what they had done to their own population over the years, that the U.S.
had been involved in that country. Russia is more interested in creating strategic national alliances, and doesn’t really care about the values of the countries that they’re dealing with.

Daniel Speckhard 18:31 I think as the U.S. moves away, if we do move away from values as being our fundamental guide in our international affairs, we’re going to get ourselves tripped up. In cases like this, when you hand over the situation, you just end up with a worse humanitarian crisis, and still no end in sight to the problems in that particular region, and a potential resurgence of ISIS.

Tod Pritchard: 18:53 What do you think the chances are now that there will be a resurgence of ISIS?

Daniel Speckhard 18:59 Yeah, I think there is a lot of analysts who are writing about the probability that you will see a rise in ISIS. Again, you won’t see them, I think, holding territory the way they did in the past, but you will see probably more activity as a result of this. People will be pointing back to this point in time where the U.S. just walked away, as a reason that we’ll probably end up having to get involved again in the region in combating ISIS, and more American lives will be lost as a result of that kind of fighting.

19:29 There’s also a dynamic here where you may stabilize the situation in Russia and Turkey, because the increased presence may squeeze out ISIS from some additional areas, as well as some of those people who potentially escaped from the holding cells of the Kurds, they’re going to find their way back into Iraq. And Iraq, right now is having a lot of internal domestic political challenges, and going to be distracted from its ability also to take on an increasing challenge from ISIS. So, I fully expect additional ISIS activities as a result of this misguided policy decision.

Tod Pritchard: 20:06 Let’s turn now to China. Of course, the U.S. trade war with that country continues. Give me your thoughts on that situation.

Daniel Speckhard 20:14 I think the challenge we’re having right now is that you need a policy as you deal with these things, and then you need to be methodical in approaching it. And you need to use diplomacy as the key element of success in that. What you see happening now is kind of a Wild West six-gun kind of approach to trade policy, where we just threaten, threaten, threaten because we’re the biggest guy on the block, and then everybody else is supposed to back down. I think what’s happening here is the United States doesn’t realize we aren’t as powerful as we used to be in terms of the global economy, or even in terms of military might, that we can’t just dictate the terms that are
most favorable to us. As a result, things keep getting worse rather than getting better. I think there’s this sense that, at some time, the other side will back down, but I think what that misses is this isn’t a real estate transaction. We’re not buying a building here. It’s not just two parties, one on each side looking what’s in their best self-interest, But there is a whole dynamic of how things play in our domestic politics, in the United States and in China.

Daniel S.: 21:19 If you don’t take that into account, you forget that it’s not easy for China to back down or the United States to ack down, if we draw lines in the sand, because we now have whipped up national sentiment or domestic politics. China can’t just give in and not look weak to the United States. For me, trying to be a little bit more wise in designing results that allow not a zero-sum game, which is I think the world that the current administration comes from in real estate, but, instead, a win-win kind of approach where you’re looking at what do both sides need and how can we find solutions is what’s really needed in our international diplomacy work today.

Tod Pritchard: 22:00 And that dovetails into another question that you brought up as well, in another op-ed piece, where you discussed how the United States has relinquished our value-based diplomacy. We’ve abandoned the field there, so to speak. Tell me a little bit more about your feelings on that and what we can do to change that.

Daniel Speckhard 22:23 I’m really glad you asked, because it’s probably the thing that I’m most passionate about, which is the United States has to lead through our values. We can’t lead just because we have a big economy or we have a big military. Otherwise, we start looking like all the other countries in the world. What’s the difference between China and Russia and the United States? It’s that we have these values that respect individual dignity, human rights, and liberties that believe that democracy is the voice of the people, that should be the governance of those people. If we don’t live out those values internationally, if instead, internationally, we just go around trying to tell people what to do, or demand our way, or to worry only about ourselves and not try to share this vision with the rest of the world, we’re no better than other countries. And I think we’re much better, I think, in terms of our history, in terms of many of these countries. But you convince them to become democratic by example, not by cajoling.

Daniel Speckhard 23:22 I think that’s what we’ve lost right now in the sense that people want to come to the United States, study in the United States,
be like the United States, because they see the example we set. But if we aren’t respecting human rights, if we aren’t living and working in a world where we try to marry those democratic principles internationally, if we aren’t fighting for the people who are the voices of democracy in these other countries, but are just transaction-based, if we’re buddies with other authoritarian leaders because that seems to be our own economic interest, our values get lost in all of this stuff. In the end, not only will the United States suffer, but the world will suffer because those values, I think, are the way for a future that actually s people and gives them the prosperity and hope that they — so many, many places — they desire.

Laura Bunn: 24:09 What would you say are the driving forces right now in U.S. diplomacy, and how do you think we could move back toward value-based diplomacy of human rights and democracy that you just described?

Daniel Speckhard 24:22 I think the two things that are driving diplomacy and international players now in the United States are, one, domestic politics. I think we’re just pandering to a domestic audiences and trying to build wins for party politics on the international front. And second, that it’s transactions based, which I mentioned a little earlier, that it’s just we don’t have a grand strategy. We don’t think how the pieces fit together. We don’t think more broadly than what we care about over the next few months. That, in the end, without a strategic framework for what we’re doing and just look at each individual negotiation as an individual transaction, it doesn’t fit together, and it doesn’t end up advancing U.S. interests over the longer time.

Daniel Speckhard 25:06 For me, I think we got to get back to a more strategic approach, a more values-based approach, and one that ... In the past, the great thing about international affairs, it was nonpartisan. The partisanship, they said, ended at our borders. That I think has been ne of the biggest casualties of the last few years.

Tod Pritchard: 25:24 There are so many difficult challenges that we face around the world. What is the number one thing that keeps you up at night?

Daniel Speckhard 25:32 I’m going to put them together, and I think they’re going to play off on each other. The first I mentioned a little earlier is this return to a Cold War. It seems almost inevitable the way we’re moving and our engagement globally, with China and the United States starting to face off politically, economically, and almost in some places militarily if you look at places like the
South China Sea. China’s not going away. China’s not going to be happy to be a second-level player in the world. On top of that, you have Russia who is wanting to be a global player, but the only way they can do it right now is by being the spoiler. They go around the world and try to spoil situations and create problems for the United States.

Daniel Speckhard 26:14

The combination of China and Russia, in terms of an opposition to the United States, is a really difficult one that’s going to create lots of challenges for us in the future, but not just us. The biggest challenge for the Cold War was for the smaller countries. They were the casualties, because the proxy wars ... The wars don’t happen between China and the U.S. They didn’t happen between Russia and the U.S. They were played out in the third world, at that time, developing countries who ended up having wars with arms being supplied by the major powers. Guess who loses? The very poor people in those countries who can’t escape or can’t have any influence on this.

26:50

The second piece that compounds that is the changing environment. I mean global warming, climate change, is impacting all of us, but it’s impacting the poorest countries the worst. One of the sad things for me, working in the international nonprofit area, is because there are so many problems with the climate change here in the United States, the floods, the earthquakes, the forest fires, and everything else, that, domestically, we’re so focused on helping each other, which makes sense. You want to help your neighbors. But there’s not a lot of attention left over for the fact that 20 million people are at risk of starving in Yemen, or a million in Ethiopia, right now, or what’s happening with the floods in a place like Bangladesh or India. For those of us in the nonprofit sector, what used to be a lot of attention and a lot of caring and outpouring for these people who really don’t have any other solutions to their challenges and no resources to deal with them, they’re left at the end of the line.

27:49

I’m worried about this Cold War dynamic, plus the environment creating really terrible problems in the world. These are the people that the values that I took away from Wisconsin say that we can’t ignore. That’s what civilization means. It means to not let people starve or die of things that can be addressed.

Laura Bunn: 28:08

Thank you so much for sharing that with us. Was it solving these problems that drew you to the leadership role at Lutheran World Relief IMA World Health?
It was. I spent 29 years in government and public service. Had a fantastic career there. Enjoyed that. Then spent a few years in business because I know business can also be an impactor in the world for good. But I really was drawn back to the mission approach, and I encourage all your students listening, as well, really understand what drives them. For me, it’s being in a mission-oriented organization. Nonprofits are great at that. The really cool thing about nonprofits today is that there is so much room for innovation and change. It’s no longer just charity or you’re giving away things to help impoverished communities or people. It’s about how do you bring together business, governments, private-sector actors, foundations and nonprofits like ourselves? How do you use resources of people in Wisconsin who want to help in the world and leverage that 10 times over, to have impact and change in countries around the world by empowering communities?

For me, this is really an innovative time. We’re using digital technology for things like mobile payments in the field, to health care in a place like Democratic Republic of Congo, to thinking through how technology for farmers in Central America, coffee farmers, to know what the price for their coffee beans here is and when they should sell them. So, I’m excited about this period for nonprofits, and would encourage either internationally, nationally, at the local level, whatever people get excited about in La Follette school, or more broadly in any university, a student who’s listening to us, this is a cool time to be in this sector. You can have a big impact, and you can be very innovative.

That’s really great to hear. You must have had many rewarding experiences in your current role. Could you talk about some of these experiences, as well as your organization’s greatest challenges right now?

Yeah, I would say ... I’ll just give you an example of one that’s always touched my heart here, is one of my first trips in this job was to Bihar, India. India is thought of as this new, emerging tech giant in the world and stuff, but they still have a huge challenge with poverty in parts of the country. Bihar is a one of the eastern provinces that has 100 million people. If it was a country, it would be one of the poorest in the world. Half the children are malnourished in that place. We were doing projects there. I got to go out and visit them. What really inspired me was the way we were able to help women of communities be able to grow more through their gardens, be able to feed their families nutritious food to deal with the malnourishment, but also then to be able to sell some of it on local markets and
create self-help savings groups among these women, that they could reinforce each other.

31:03

But what I took away from that is that in international development and relief, I think just like anything, there’s this tendency to say we know better, but you always end up learning something from others, no matter what their situation or condition is. When I was so excited with this community I was visiting of women, I said, “What else can I do for you? You’ve inspired me. What more can I do for you?” They talked amongst themselves, and they came back to me and said, “Could you help the village down the road like you helped us?” I was just flabbergasted. I thought, what town in Wisconsin, if you said, “What more can we do for you,” and you were the Gates Foundation, would they say, “Oh, can you help the community next door, because they’re actually in worse shape than us?”

31:44

That was, to me, an eye-opener of what we need here in the United States, as well. We need to get back to this sense of community that goes beyond our own little village, our own little community, our own little town, our own little university, to think of ourselves interconnected and to be grateful for what we have, but also worrying always about the neighbor down the road. I think that’s the Wisconsin I grew up in, in rural Wisconsin, that your neighbors are ... Even if you didn’t know them well, you cared deeply if anybody was in trouble. That inspired me in what I do.

32:16

I’d say the biggest challenge, when you say challenges, is the thing that’s changed during my lifetime is that humanitarian aid workers are now targets for violence and for politics. It used to be that if you were an aid worker, you could go into conflict zones, or crime-ridden places, or other kinds of places and do good work and help, and people would leave you alone. Now you become a political target, and that has made it very dangerous. It’s required a lot more courage of the people who are involved in this and a lot more risk. That’s a really sorry state. It’s required nonprofits like ours to spend a lot more time and resources on security and figuring out how to do care for our employees.

Tod Pritchard: 33:01

Well, we’d like to thank you so much for all the work that you do and how proud we are in Wisconsin for the impact you’ve had on the world and you continue to have on the world. Thank you so much for joining us for the podcast today.
Daniel Speckhard 33:17 Thank you, Tod. Thank you, Laura. I really appreciate the opportunity to be here. Wish you and all your listeners the very best.

Speaker 1: 33:24 You’ve been listening to the *Thank You, 72* podcast, stories of amazing Badgers from the Wisconsin Alumni Association. For more podcasts, visit thankyou72.org. That’s thankyou72.org.