

**United States Foreign Assistance
Oral History Program**

Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection

USAID RESPONDS

TO

INTERNATIONAL EMERGENCIES

**Excerpts from interviews with
USAID officials (retired)**

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Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Arlington, Virginia

PREFACE

The oral histories of those who have served with USAID and associated organizations are rich with insights of US foreign assistance programs. Each history provides a chronological accounting of the interviewee's work along with commentary based on first hand knowledge of events, personalities, and development activities. To assist those who are interested in a particular country program area or topic, we are preparing a series of topic readers. These readers contain excerpts from individual oral histories on a specific topic that is addressed in a number of the histories. The first topic reader was on the subject of "Graduating Countries and Closing Down Programs"

This Oral History Reader is the second in the series. The topic is the experience of the foreign assistance program in its responses to international emergencies arising from natural and man made causes. It is not an attempt to tell the whole story about each crisis but rather provide the perspectives and insights of those directly involved at the time. The material is drawn from those oral histories that have been completed to date; it may be revised, subsequently, to include material from additional oral histories as they become available.

The excerpts in this reader are taken from interviews with: Aaron Benjamin, Donald Brown, Vince Brown, Charles Christian, Arthur Fell, Frederick Gilbert, Jim Howe, Vernon Johnson, Jim Kelly, Ernst Kuhn, Robert MacAlister, Robert Nooter, Haven North, Richard Podol, Scott Smith, Jack Sullivan, Ron Venezia, Miles Wedeman, Maurice Williams.

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AFRICA**NIGERIA: Civil War and Emergency Relief—1966-1970**

Excerpt taken from an interview with W. Haven North

NORTH: My work on Ghana and the other West African countries was soon overwhelmed by the Nigerian civil war, the Biafran struggle. When I returned to Washington in the summer of 1966, the civil war had just started and was beginning to build up. The relief crisis was becoming a major issue. There was the major foreign policy question of defining the strategy of how we maintained our relationships with the Nigerian Federal government and Biafra. I was involved for USAID in trying to restructure our assistance policy in a way that would keep the development program from being terminated. The first move on our part was the development of a revised strategy for assistance which I called approximately the "Restricted Assistance Strategy for Nigeria." Its purpose was to define what we could and could not do with the USAID program during the war with the aim of preserving as much as possible of the long range assistance activities and defending the program against those who thought we should terminate it.

Q: This was a period when there were tremendous political pressures on us from, I suppose you could call them Liberal ranks. Even show business got into the support of Biafra.

NORTH: That is right except the pressures were from both the left and right in an extraordinary coalition of private interest groups. The outcry seemed to reflect, in part, pent up frustrations spilling over from the Vietnam war. Biafra had declared its "independence" in May 1967 following months of negotiations aimed at resolving the dispute. Americans including many USAID personnel were evacuated from Enugu in October 1967. The first appeal for relief was announced in November 1967 by the Nigerian Red Cross with a committee to coordinate the work of voluntary agencies; and in December 1967, USAID authorized Catholic Relief Service to make the first allocation of food assistance. From that time on until the early months of 1970, the disruption of masses of people in the Eastern Region grew in scale and intensity as a consequence of the Federal Government's blockade of Biafra and the gradual military encirclement and squeezing of the Biafran territory by Federal troops. And with this disruption came the most extraordinary outcry in Europe and the U.S. to provide relief to those, particularly within Biafra, who were suffering and dying from famine and disease. I don't believe there has been anything quite like the breadth and depth of feeling about a crisis of this kind before or since, although one might include the African-wide famines, or the Somalia and Bosnia crises as comparable— although these crises don't seem to have the breadth and intensity of feeling that we experienced during the Biafran affair. Unlike today there was never any question of foreign military intervention and the United Nations was not acceptable for either peace negotiations or relief operations as "this was an internal affair." The U.S. Government became the principal coordinator working through the ICRC and non-governmental organizations. The U.S. voluntary agencies had

joined forces in an unique arrangement called Joint Church Aid (JCA) with Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish relief organizations participating.

The Biafrans had been very effective in getting a public relations group to tell their story. This was one of the first times we had anything of that kind on television other than Vietnam. There were great fears about famine and possible genocide. Both the facts about the numbers at risk as could be determined and the propaganda distortions stimulated a massive pressure to do something. The public sympathies were largely with the Biafrans, although the U.S. Government policy initially was more supportive of the Nigerian Federal Government.

Over this period, essentially from 1966-70, I experienced four years of probably the most frantic and intense pressures one can experience. While I was involved from the outset, I was appointed USAID's coordinator of relief operations with a working group of specialists in food assistance, health, logistics, and legal matters. This took place in November 1968 when the USAID disaster assistance office reached the limits of its resources and legal mandate (disasters were only to last 60 days at that time and rehabilitation 90 days). My job was to coordinate in Washington the full range of relief activities for both sides of the conflict funded by USAID and liaise with the State Department and private groups. Under Secretary Nicholas Katzenbach was responsible for the overall coordination of the U.S. relations with Nigeria and relief politics during this early period; Elliot Richardson filled the same role as Under Secretary during the Nixon Administration.

In October 1968, I, along with Stephen Tripp, USAID Disaster Relief Coordinator, and Ed Marks, USAID Coordinator in London and subsequently in Nigeria, traveled throughout the federally held territory in the Eastern Region (we were not allowed to enter Biafra) to survey relief requirements and report to Assistant Secretary Palmer who was visiting Nigeria and would be meeting with General Gowon. We prepared a lengthy report on the conditions in the war area, the requirements for food and other aid, and alternative logistic plans, particularly addressing the question of deliveries within Biafra. We also prepared a brief report addressed to Assistant Secretary Palmer which he could use in his meeting General Gowon in an effort to persuade Gowon about the seriousness of the relief needs in the area. It was a carefully balanced presentation of some graphic descriptions of the desperate circumstances of starving people (which Gowon claimed could not be true) with a positive tone about some improvements resulting from Government relief efforts (so as not to offend government sensitivities). The aim was to increase Federal Government cooperation in addressing the humanitarian crisis in the area and restrain the excesses of military operations. I should note that, during our survey, we visited one of the Nigerian army commands and found that they were doing a reasonably effective job in delivering food to those facing food shortages as the troops closed in on the Biafran area.

In November 1968 following this review of the relief situation, my working group and I prepared a report to the Assistant Administrator for Africa and Assistant Secretary of State for Africa. I recommended "a reexamination of the overall approach to the Nigerian dilemma.

Nothing short of a cease-fire and negotiations with both sides giving higher priority to human well-being will halt the worsening starvation and tragedy for an estimated 5-6 million in Biafra and about 2 million in Federal areas." I suggested that "a new approach based on humanitarian grounds alone to: strongly support the FMG; provide safeguards for acceptance and reintegration of Ibos with the right of recourse to independent arbiters (a major reconstruction and recovery program for the East and other parts of Nigeria would help ease hostilities); use whatever means short of force to stop arms shipments to Biafra and demonstrate through some international forum that Biafran insistence on secession at the expense of its people's lives will not be supported." As a first step, I suggested, "a full and frank presentation of facts to the American public to win U.S. endorsement of a negotiated solution within the framework of a united Nigeria. Also I recommended "stepping up substantially the relief operation and preparing to ensure the rapid recovery of economic life within the war-torn area." Subsequent to this memorandum, my staff and I were asked by Undersecretary for Economic Affairs Rostow to prepare a policy paper on Nigerian relief. The policy paper provided details on a possible U.S. position on Nigeria, the numbers at risk and food requirements, the surveillance system for monitoring malnutrition and health concerns, funding requirements, etc. I don't recall that there was any specific response to the memorandum or to the policy paper or follow-up action.

Initially under President Johnson the U.S. policy had been "one Nigeria." We would not support any attempt to split up the country. Then Nixon became President in 1969 and the word "one Nigeria" was dropped. Because of the tremendous public support for Biafra, U. S. policy became more ambivalent about Biafra's secession and the principle of "One Nigeria." and the uncertainties about the outcome of the war. (I believe that Nixon was somewhat partial to the Ibos but largely wanted to do whatever was necessary "to get the issue off my back.") At the request of Kissinger (then National Security Advisor to the President) the State Department was asked to prepare a NSSM (National Security Strategy Memorandum) for the President and cabinet on the future policy of the U.S. towards Nigeria and the relief crisis. I recall spending many hours working with Roy Melbourne (State), Roger Morris (White House), Dick Kennedy (Defense) and possibly others on this NSSM. The main theme of the NSSM was that our primary interest and objective for Nigeria/Biafra was humanitarian. The memorandum laid out U.S. national interests, alternative policy objectives with pros and cons, the relief requirements, and the alternative ways in which emergency aid could be provided. It was clear to me that the volume of food alone that was required was far beyond any logistical arrangement that would be feasible without a cease-fire and direct access to the Biafran area. I also recall that among the pros and cons presented for each option was one about whether support for Biafran independence would lead to a "domino effect" throughout Africa and, thus, an argument for not leaning towards Biafran succession.

The public and Congressional demand for action continued to mount. This led to the appointment of Dr. Clyde Ferguson as the U.S. Government Relief Coordinator with the special mandate to find a way to overcome the impasse on food deliveries into Biafra without becoming involved in the political/military dispute. It was an impossible task which he carried

out valiantly. It involved endless negotiations with both sides on various options such as special airlifts, road and river corridors. It, for example, included a million dollar contract with LST operators with Cuban crews to move food from Lagos to the Calabar River port to be trucked into Biafra—the LSTs never left the Lagos port and returned to the U.S. without delivering a bag of food. Both the Federal Government and Biafrans sought in these negotiations to place the blame on the other for lack of concern for the starving people while objecting to various approaches put forth on the grounds of providing some political/military advantage. Many others had tried to accomplish a breakthrough on relief deliveries over the previous months and had failed. President Nixon said when making the announcement of Ferguson's appointment that "the main problem is the absence of relief arrangement acceptable to the two sides which would overcome the limitations posed by the present hazardous and inadequate nighttime airlift..." The ICRC and the JCA were making night flights from Equatorial Guinea and Dahomey into a unlit airstrip in Biafra but the volume of food that could be delivered by this means was well below requirements. It was our job to track the flights and report to the White House each week the volume of food being delivered. USAID provided the main financing for the both the ICRC and JCA airlifts. We also supported a million dollar a month helicopter relief supply operation.

One interesting sidelight to this airlift operation was the JCA's demand for the use of C-97 Cargo planes that the Air Force was about to destroy as surplus. (C-97s had a larger capacity than the DC-6s the JCA was using. National Guard volunteer pilots were to fly the aircraft.) As A.I.D. was the only agency authorized to transfer U.S. Government property to private groups for overseas operations, I became involved in making arrangements with the Air Force. I remember calling a top official of the Air Force to make the request and describing what was wanted and why. His expletives and vehement protests were something to hear but understandable, something to the effect: "Who do these people think they are; what do they know about running an airlift, etc.?" and when I explained that the Air Force would also have to ensure a supply of spare parts for the planes, his protests were even more dramatic. I suggested that he might call Speaker McCormack, who was among those on the Hill supporting this request, about his objections. From that point on the arrangements to support the JCA airlift worked out quite well.

Q: We are talking about references to Somalia today where we have a military presence primarily to stop shooting warlords from creating a mass starvation there.

NORTH: Of course we were not involved militarily at that time. The U.S. policy was not to provide any military assistance to the Federal government, which made the Nigerian Government angry because it sounded like we were not supporting them. However, the Russians were supplying arms reportedly purchased by Nigeria. But, of course, we were not supplying the Biafrans either. We were attempting to find ways to restrict the arms flow, but I learned from this experience how extensive the worldwide blackmarket in arms was and how difficult to control. (The French, who supported Biafra, were supporting an arms delivery airlift to Biafra using the same landing strip as our relief flights, which added to the political and operational complications.) Our interest was humanitarian and every effort we made was

aimed at minimizing the humanitarian crisis. Of course, you can rarely separate the humanitarian from the political.

Q: You had some really true believers in Congressional staff, as I recall, who were very strong on the Biafran side.

NORTH: Yes, and one of the Senators, Senator Goodall, visited Biafra and adopted a Biafran baby as a show of compassion and political zeal. At the time, I didn't think it was right for the baby. The Ibo people were attractive and effective. The emotional support for Biafra was extraordinary.

Q: Africa's borders are very arbitrary, but any readjustment is an absolute nightmare.

NORTH: That is right. That was a major policy issue, and like Vietnam and other places, the precedent was a concern that secession might have created a domino effect throughout the continent, as some believed. The issue of supporting Biafra was also tied up with the question of oil interests; the major part of the oil reserves in Nigeria were in the Eastern Region with substantial American oil company investments. Were our interests in these oil resources better protected by supporting Biafran secession or the preservation of Nigeria as one country? As I noted earlier, U.S. policy became somewhat ambiguous on this point.

My role was essentially related to trying to maintain a relief operation that was balanced and responded to the need wherever it was. I was not allowed to see Biafran relief representatives when they came to Washington for fear that, as a U.S. Government official, I would signal a bias in their favor. However, the policy was not consistent on this as others did meet with them; and we arranged to have contract specialists visit Biafra to survey the food situation.

The Biafran relief operation became more difficult to address as the area was increasingly circled and compressed. As a consequence, there were constant pressures for information: how many people are there, how many are starving, how many dying, what were the food requirements; how much food was available locally? This numbers game persisted throughout the four years of the emergency. Public and political leaders always wanted to know how many were starving and how many were dying. In a situation like this, there are the real facts, which are extremely difficult to determine, and the political "facts" promoted by those interested in under- or overestimating the numbers. There were claims of 14 million people at risk and in need of food; others such as our intelligence community reported that those numbers were grossly exaggerated claiming only about one million were at risk. So we were constantly faced with people who were very genuinely concerned but overly influenced by one side of the issue or the other on the scale of the need. The major concern was trying to convince the Federal Government that there was a serious problem of starvation and a potentially massive death resulting from the war.

There were innumerable tensions among the relief agencies and with the Federal Government. The Federal Government would complain that these "do-gooders" were coming in and taking over and telling them to get out of the way. "After all this is our country; what are you doing here?" It was a very, very tense situation with various relief officials being ousted. And, yet, the Federal Government tolerated the continuance of the relief operation. It was my aim along with the USAID Mission to get Nigerians more involved in the relief operations and use our resources to achieve this, primarily through the Nigerian Red Cross.

As the war began to move against Biafra in 1969 and Biafra began to shrink in size and collapse, the international hysteria reached new levels of concern about the potential for genocide, that the Federal troops would go in and wipe out the Ibo people. We had to do something to stop them. We had to respond to the Federal Government in a way that would prevent this from happening. We knew by December, 1969 that the collapse was imminent; something needed to be done; so new contingency plans were developed. (We were always doing contingency plans.) Then in January, 1970, it became quite clear that the crisis was coming to a head; we needed to respond in a major way to the Federal Government to demonstrate that we were supporting the relief effort, helping them as a way of moderating this fear that there would be genocide (A fear that was exaggerated and not borne out, in fact, although it has been estimated that a million people lost their lives from the time of the earliest riots in the north.) Even so, there clearly would be a need for substantial assistance to help the masses of people dislocated by the war. As a consequence, there was considerable pressure within the U.S. that the Government demonstrate its concern and do something. The Administration wanted to demonstrate, because of the political outcry in the United States...Nixon and Kissinger wanted a demonstration that we were doing something. As the emotions mounted, it was clear we had to have some dramatic action, which led to the idea of a major airlift of relief and rehabilitation supplies. At the same time, the Federal Government had been meeting with the USAID Director Mike Adler laying out its needs and taking advantage of the domestic pressures in the U.S. to do something.

Mike Adler was at the one end of the phone and cable traffic and I at the other. He went to the Government and they said that they wanted this, this, and this, etc. And the demands grew bigger and bigger with "we wants"...80 more 5 ton trucks, 400 generators of all kinds, 10,000 blankets, 10,000 lanterns, nearly complete power stations, etc. Of course, the word was getting out through the system to the White House that these requests were coming in: "How are you responding? Have you got it done? How are you going to get it there?" Because the requirements for trucks in particular were too large for commercial C-130s, it was suggested that we use C-141s—Starlifters—from the Military Air Transport Service. At a press briefing this idea leaked this out, but the Air Force had not been told. The Air Force officials heard it over the evening news for the first time and were very upset. We had started some informal planning with them but all that stopped until the Air Force received direct instructions from the White House.

They went up through the Defense Secretary to the White House and said: "Absolutely not. We are not doing anything until we get an order from the President that we have to do

this." Part of the problem that upset the Air Force officials was that the Nigerians had said: "You cannot bring in any military flights here unless you paint out the US Air Force insignia." Well, that made the Air Force absolutely furious.

Meanwhile, I had been in the process of locating 80 or so 5-ton trucks, blankets, lanterns, generators. I learned very quickly you don't buy 5-ton trucks ready to go. They have to be assembled. You buy a chassis here and a body there, etc. Fortunately, I found somebody—David Paulsen—to work with me. He had helped us with earlier relief flights such as delivering two or three dozen jeeps by air. He was a brilliant logistics transport person. He worked with me and got on the phone and called around the country to find these trucks. Meanwhile Kissinger had joined in the act because the Nigerians were making such a point about the need for trucks; the word came down: "Give them what they want." I found that he was calling up truck companies as well.

In the process, UNICEF said, "Well, we have a dozen trucks that you can have." But they didn't tell me they were unassembled and all in boxes in pieces. I could see them being delivered in Lagos in parts and somebody thinking, "Well, what do I do now? How do I put these things together?" But we said we would take them. Meanwhile, we contacted people all over the country who said, "Well, we have a couple of 5-ton trucks here that we have ready to give to our customers. They have already been bought, but you can have them if you want them. For the cause we are willing to do this." So we had a number of trucks volunteered, but they were all over the U.S. Then International Harvester said, "Well, we have 20 5-ton chassis in Pennsylvania, stake bodies in Texas, tarpaulins elsewhere, etc. If we can get these together why you can have them." I said, "Okay, we will take them." We arranged a deal with Chrysler, through Dr. Hannah, the Administrator, who called the president of Chrysler motors, who agreed to set up an assembly line for us in Pennsylvania. We had the truck components come from all over the country to this place where they assembled them, including the UNICEF trucks.

Meanwhile the Air Force arrangement was stirring and the word was out that we had to get all these supplies to Nigeria in the next ten days so; we had to get going. The Air Force was saying, still furious, "We are ready, where are you? Where is the stuff?" I said that it was all over the country and gave them a list. Their planning people developed a plan for how to pick up the trucks, generators, etc. Then the assignment was turned over to the Military Air Transport people who were the real operators. They threw out the plans and said they were not going to do it that way. We were told to deliver the equipment to specific locations around the country and the MATs would then pick it up. So we arranged with all the suppliers to deliver to Air Force bases throughout the country. The MATs then shuttled the equipment and trucks into Charlottesville and then over to Cape Verde where another plane was ready with the insignia, vaguely "painted out", for the flight to Nigeria. Meanwhile, the trucks were coming off the assembly line at three a day just as fast as we were getting flights off to carry the equipment. At the same time, the MATS insisted that we have USAID personnel at each supply point to monitor their shipments. I recall that at the start of the operation my colleague had told me that everything ready to go. I understood that to mean

that the airlift was underway. I went to a church meeting that evening during which I received a call from the MATS contact. He said we are waiting for your ok to proceed; we don't go without USAID's signal as you are responsible for the operation. So I called my colleague who said everything is ready to go. So I called the MATS contact back and said proceed with the airlift. The next morning at 6 am I received a frantic call from Mike Adler in Lagos saying that he did not have Nigerian Government approval for the flights to land. I, in effect, said Mike it is too late now the planes are on their way. With his talent for working with the government, he was able to get clearance just before the planes landed. And within two weeks we delivered 63 trucks (more by sea), 10,000 blankets, 10,000 lanterns, 400 hundred generators, etc. from all over the country on 21 C-141 sorties—USAID was charged \$750,000 by MATS. Large quantities of food and medical supplies had already been delivered sometime before; the problem was to move it. It was an extraordinary operation. Shortly after, Deputy Secretary Eliot Richardson had to testify about what we had done to meet the crisis. So our office put together an extensive list of statistics on what we had delivered. The testimony went well and he was pleased.

Whether it did any good or not, whether the equipment was used effectively or not, I don't know; but it made the political statement of our responsiveness to the requests and, perhaps, tempered the Nigerian Government's actions against the Biafrans. That was the crest of the crisis. After that we tapered off and moved into a more structured rehabilitation operation. I left the operation in June 1970 and waited for my assignment to Ghana.

NIGERIA: Relief Operations Viewed from the USAID Mission—1968

Excerpt taken from an interview with Vernon Johnson

JOHNSON: When I was still in the Vietnam Bureau, Mike Adler had gone out to Nigeria as deputy director and had moved up to be Director. I had been one of the persons who briefed him before he left Washington; and when he needed a deputy he asked me to come out. So I went back to Nigeria a second time and became Mike's deputy. Two weeks after I got into the country, Mike went on a long home leave; that was late in 1968. So I took over the Mission. In spite of a civil war then being fought, we still had about 200 employees—down from the 500 I mentioned before at the height of the Nigerian program.

Q: This was two years after the first coup in 1966?

JOHNSON: Yes, in 1968; the war was centered in the Eastern part of the country and that was always a topic for discussions at the Ambassador's staff meeting—the process of the war, who was winning, whether food was getting in, what was happening! In Nigeria even under war conditions, the effects were not very strong in the rest of the country. In other words, people kept doing their work; the universities still kept going except for Nsukka, the one in the East. The other A.I.D. projects still continued to go although the war was continuing. There was a great deal of support here (in the U.S.) for one side or the other but the Mission continued to function and the Embassy continued to function, although reports on the civil

war dominated the Embassy reports..

Q: It didn't affect the program?

JOHNSON: Not a great deal. The people in the Ministries were still in place and the programs were still going. It was only in the East that there was great disruption; Enugu had disappeared as a city; all the agricultural research activities and the work stations had gone out of business. And the East was on a war time footing. But the rest of the country was not significantly affected. The program was still one of the largest A.I.D. programs in the world. It continued with much of the same kind of activity that had gone on before: agriculture, health, education. A lot of the work was in the North ... which in a way reflected support for the Federal Government.

Q: Were you involved in the relief operation?

JOHNSON: Not directly involved. There was an attempt to be neutral on relief issues, notwithstanding some of the pressures in the U.S. to support the rebels. The religious factor in terms of Eastern Nigeria was important in this regard; the Ibos were Christians; they were more highly educated. There was a great deal of support in the U.S. for them. We, of course, being accredited to the Federal Government gave no support to the Eastern Government. U.S. relief was private and purely humanitarian. The same kind of pictures of starving children that have come out of Somalia, Ethiopia, and other places since then were, of course, part of the scene in Eastern Nigeria at that time.

Q: How were relations with the Nigerian Government?

JOHNSON: I think they were fairly good; some of our people had quite close relationships even up to and through one or two of the Federal generals. I think we always kept a proper stance. Our Ambassador had come from Liberia... Ambassador Matthews, an excellent statesman in the sense of keeping the right balance and the right approach to things. We were on a good footing with the Nigerian Government.

Q: I had the impression that at some point in the process the Embassy's relationships with the Government deteriorated and they weren't really communicating and only the A.I.D. Mission was really accepted?

JOHNSON: That was probably true intermittently when rumors suggested U.S. support for the rebels. Adler, the U.S.A.I.D. Director, had a very close relationship, a good working relationship with some of the people. I think you came out once and may have noted good relations with Allison Aida. He was the Principal Secretary for Economic Development and Finance. He had a good deal of weight in the Government and our relationship with him remained cordial right through the war. And as a matter of fact, we were bringing in a lot of development resources. Remember this was the pre-oil period; the wells weren't flowing at that time, so Nigeria needed all the assistance it could get.

Q: But generally the U.S. policy for supporting "one Nigeria" was appropriate from your point of view?

JOHNSON: Oh yes; there was no doubt about that. Our official policy remained focussed on "one Nigeria."

Q: But it began to be a bit ambivalent?

JOHNSON: Because of the tendency of trying to keep one ear pegged to Washington where there was a great deal of support for Eastern Nigeria, and certain U.S. universities that had been working in the East were certainly very strong in their support for Eastern objectives. But in terms of posture, political posture, the "one Nigeria" policy was kept in focus by the Ambassador and by his people. The Nigerians were probably a little wary about what we thought; and some of our people might have made an off remark at a cocktail party, but the policy was clear.

Q: What was the Nigerians reactions to all of the actions of the relief operators, all the foreigners coming in?

JOHNSON: They weren't happy about that of course (the relief flights into Biafra); they couldn't do anything; they didn't have a workable airforce, although they did have a few MIG planes. However, the Easterners timed the operation so that when the relief planes came, I think the lights were turned on for one minute on the runway. If the plane couldn't take advantage of that, a plane wreck could occur.

Q: But on the Federal side what were the relations with the relief operations?

JOHNSON: On the Nigerian side, there was discontent even about humanitarian relief. I think the Nigerians, during the war, never accepted the idea of relief but grudgingly tolerated it. They claimed that food relief would be used for the military.

Q: Were there any other aspects of your work at that time?

JOHNSON: Not anything that stood out; we were just carrying out the requirements that the Embassy put on the Mission and that we as a Mission put on ourselves in carrying out the program that had been approved in Washington.

Q: Was there change in the policy towards Nigeria while you were still there?

JOHNSON: Not before I left in 1970. The Mission was still in place. I left Mike Adler there and John Hummon and Bill Ford came in as directors later on. I don't recall any significant change in policy. The Federal Government had won the war and they were in good spirits about that. And the East was in shambles and trying to put itself back together. Enugu, the capitol in the East, had elephant grass 15 feet high in the street.

Q: Were we trying to help in the East?

JOHNSON: After the war, we began to help as things opened up to the extent one could get in there to do something. I was not there long enough after the war to assess that, but there was nothing to prevent it. Otherwise, we were still training Nigerians; we were still helping with the universities; we were still doing many of the things that had commenced in the 1960s.

Uganda: Crisis in the 1970s

Excerpt taken from an Interview with Vernon Johnson

JOHNSON: After Nigeria, I came back to Washington for a short time and was assigned as U.S.A.I.D. Director to Uganda. That was in 1970. It was a nice mission, with 40-50 employees, and, thus, it was small compared with Nigeria. Development of improved ranches for cattle was one of the big projects. We were had a major contract at Makerere University; other educational/training programs were supported, agricultural research, a medium size poultry project, and assistance to health rounded out our program. Obete was President when I went there. A few months later he attended a conference in Asia and upon his return a coup had occurred. That's when Idi Amin became the leader. During the coup, we could hear machine guns and large guns firing very near our house in Kampala.

Uganda had been looked upon as having a rather special development prospect in East Africa. It was small and manageable. It was tolerant of its Asian citizens who were good business people. Its biggest asset was Makerere University, which, by any measure, was the finest university in all of Black Africa. Its graduates were spread over East Africa and in Uganda; most government posts were held by Makerere graduates. The university had good teachers who conducted a good bit of research. In fact, students from other countries, even from the U.S., came to Uganda to study under certain Makerere professors.

After a while the presence of Idi Amin was beginning to be felt and things began to change for the worse. This suggests that leadership can make or break the development process. In time, the better Ministers were relieved or they escaped in fear of Amin. Important people including Ministers began to "disappear" which was the common word that Ugandans used. White Peugeot were the common car that some of the C.I.D. people used; if a white Peugeot was parked nearby, people would become very nervous because somebody could end up in the trunk of the car and never seen again. This was fairly common; all kinds of weird and bazaar things occurred that one would never think could occur in a government setting. A top judge in the country was arrested and brought to a cocktail party where ladies were in their finery and the poor man was paraded before the whole group on his hands and knees in mock subservience. Even foreigners were becoming more nervous, because, for A.I.D., our cattle ranches and other projects sites were far removed from Kampala; people were posted there. Our Division Chiefs and backstopping officers had to go out to these sites

which became more risky. So we reached the point that we just decided that it was not worth the effort.

Q: Was any of this directed against the Americans?

JOHNSON: Not Americans in government but two Americans who lived in the country were killed. Because the climate is so pleasant (the only place where I never used a heater or an air-conditioner), some Americans had moved there including a few black Americans, for example. If they ran afoul of the government, they sought help from the Embassy to get out of the country. Nobody in the American government was accosted.

I had been in Uganda for three years when we decided to close the Mission. We recommended it to Washington and got approval to close. That's quite a feat itself going through the routine of closing down a Mission. Precise procedures had to be followed: selling things like refrigerators and stoves and whole houses of furniture. Keeping records. The night before we left, we were down to two people, myself and one other; we slept on the floor and left early the next morning.

During our packing to leave, Idi Amin sent for me because he had an idea that the British were forcing our hand. So he wanted to talk with me about it and find out why we were leaving. I went to the Ambassador, who said don't bother. Ambassador Melady said that he would take care of it. The Embassy stayed there after the Mission's closure.

In despotic countries such as Uganda at that time an Ambassador and Mission Director need close and frequent instructions. In this case, the Ambassador thought that our job was to project U.S. interests by maintaining good relations with Idi Amin's government. Most of us, including myself, thought otherwise. This made for friction within the overall U.S. Mission.

Q: What happened to the projects?

JOHNSON: We simply abandoned them. Going back eight years later, there were only remnants of some of the projects. I think that is symptomatic of so many projects, particularly in Africa, that, once the resources from outside are severed, it is very difficult for these project to be sustained. There are several reasons for this. For example, in an A.I.D. project that is on-going the resources and funds that are associated with the project give A.I.D. leverage to apply pressure on the government to deliver on whatever share they are to provide. However, at the point of phase out, that pressure, as well as the resources, disappears; the counterpart who worked with the project might be effective and efficient technically, but he has no clout to extract funds from the treasury.

Thus, one of the reasons that a lot of technical assistance projects deteriorate after phase out is purely cultural; the person who is left in charge of the project simply does not have access, remember he is just a technician, and to face the Minister of Finance is a real problem for him. So when the project needs resources—gasoline or some other critical item

of work begins to lag— it goes down from there. the local technician simply can't do what the American technician (who has a resource base) could do when he was there. Support systems fail to function: there are some technical reasons but access on the part of individuals in terms of class and standards is the critical factor in this.

UGANDA: Aftermath of civil war—1986

Excerpt from an interview with Richard Podol

Q: This was the war with Tanzania?

PODOL: No, this was the civil war. The latest, and I hope the last, civil war, which finally drove Obote out the second time, and his predecessors. I went there on a short visit in May of '86 and the government had captured Kampala in January, so things were just settling down. I heard all the war stories. The AID people had been trapped in the AID Mission for more than 24 hours. They couldn't leave because of the fighting. Fighting on the lawn of the Ambassador's residence, and the shells that were going overhead. So, it was new on everybody's mind. The people who'd been evacuated were just starting to come back in May. So, when I got there in July, it was like starting over again. It was like night and day from Zaire. And I mean that in the positive way. The president was dedicated to development. Again, no Swiss bank account or hint of ripoffs, though some of his subordinates certainly were into it. I met with him a number of times. We'd sit down, hold a conversation, sometimes at his request. We'd go over real issues, he'd make real decisions, and things would happen. It was a delight working with the man. The kind of person he was-

Q: This was Museveni?

PODOL: Museveni. AIDS was just becoming known then, and his advisors said, "We have to keep this quiet. It's going to make us look bad." He said, "No, we've got a problem. We want the country to know about it and we want to do something about it." So, it came out in the open, and we had a counter-AIDS program because of this. In other countries, they hid it. Not him. This was the kind of person he was. It was a delight to work in Uganda. In the early days, at night, yes, we turned on the air conditioner to drown out the gunfire, but you learned to live with that. We had his and hers flak jackets.

Q: You had those?

PODOL: Yes, we did. My wife and I each had one. We had hand grenades. The AID Mission Director had an armor-plated vehicle that had two rocket launchers in the front. We never drove it because, first of all, the gas mileage was awful, and, secondly, the roads were so rutted that you couldn't make the vehicle just bounce through the ruts. So, I never rode in it. We finally got permission to get rid of it and gave it to the Marines. But that was in mid-1986. Then things returned to normal.

Q: AID had bought this for the Mission?

PODOL: Yes. I say this to give you some background of what it was like. The first time I went into the field, in the richest area, around Kampala, which is called the "Luwero Triangle," the center of their coffee growing area. You went down either side of the road and you could pluck the foliage, which had grown in over the road. You'd come to towns and there would be piles of bones. This had been the torture center for the Obote forces. You could see the skeletons. The villages would collect skulls as a reminder. They put them on the side of the road in a kind of a memorial. They'd make several rows of skulls that you'd see. What I'm really trying to share was that the nature of what you had to do in Uganda was really rehabilitation. When the military would go through a building, they'd rip out all the fixtures: the electrical wiring, they'd take the window frames and knobs, because you could sell all that in the market. So, everything was just devastated. I'd say the core of our program initially was, first of all, physical rehabilitation - the agriculture research facility, for example. But also the private sector. There were a lot of dairy farms around, coffee plantations, and they'd gone and destroyed the buildings. So, we had a loan program set up with one of the banks. We would put up hard currency so they could import what they needed to rebuild their farms. Sometimes, that would be cattle as well as fixtures. So, it was a rehabilitation program primarily, but our focus was on agriculture, agriculture rehabilitation. And we worked with the co-ops. We got into environmental programs, in which there was an interest. And the small loan program. The other area of interest to us was health and then family planning. And then came the focus on AIDS, as that was an issue of great importance. Every couple of weeks, one local person on the staff would die, in the Embassy, for example. They were gone, and AIDS would be the answer. So, it was getting the message out on AIDS.

Q: What was the Mission strategy for dealing with AIDS?

PODOL: There were two. There was a major publicity campaign - we weren't the only ones into this - to make people aware of what AIDS was and how it was spread. In the African culture, you were asking a lot, because staying faithful to one's wife was not the norm. Back in Zaire, they had a term for this. You'd invite a Zairois out to an affair and you didn't know who he'd show up with as a female partner. The term was "Deuxième Bureau," the second office. That's the term they gave to their mistress. And it was just as common to bring a mistress to a social affair as the wife, if not more common. And so you had the same situation in Uganda, where you didn't remain faithful to one woman, but you freelanced throughout the society. So, it was socially a very difficult message to get across. So, you tried to do this. The other was to make condoms available: if you were going to fool around, you'd better use your condom. And Africans don't like to use condoms. They say it interferes with the pleasure of sex. We had a problem there. The third, which we started, which really our Division Chief started on his own initiative, were AIDS support groups. These were getting together family members who had a death from AIDS or had somebody dying from AIDS, and providing psychological support to those family members. This idea was accepted and signed in Kampala. That was the core of our program.

Q: AID started the testing program when you were there?

PODOL: No.

Q: Do you recall when started it or not?

PODOL: I don't really recall. I don't think it had started, but it may have just been about to begin. They found that there was some testing going on, but the quality of the testing was not good. You had to be very careful. We didn't have the controls or the qualified people to do it properly.

Q: How did you find the government's support in doing the program?

PODOL: We found that, with the Minister of Health, we got excellent cooperation. Within the Ministry, we found that the number one civil servant could be very difficult to work with. In agriculture, it was the opposite: the Minister was very difficult and the senior civil servants were very easy to work with. So, you had a rather mixed picture.

Q: And the agriculture, what were you concentrated on?

PODOL: Primarily working with the Faculty of Agriculture and with the Agriculture Research Institutes. With the Faculty of Agriculture, it meant sending people to the States for advanced degrees, and providing American professors through Ohio State and Minnesota to replace them while they went abroad for training. And in working with the Dean on the curriculum. And rehabilitating their Agriculture Research Station, which was right outside town. That's where they trained their students and did experimental plots and so on. So, physical rehabilitation, staff development, and some curriculum.

Q: Were you working at all with farming implements or support - cooperatives and things of that sort?

PODOL: Yes. We had a major program with the agriculture cooperatives. They were quite effective.

Q: What were they doing?

PODOL: They were selling. Cooperatives were getting into marketing and milling. We worked on the management of co-ops to improve their management structure.

Q: Was ACDI involved in it?

PODOL: Yes, with ACDI (Agricultural Cooperatives Development International). We were also rehabilitating some of the other research stations, which meant going in and putting housing back in shape where people could live in it, and rehabilitating the station. We had a

mechanic there who was rebuilding equipment, working with the local people on rebuilding equipment. These kind of things.

Q: Did you find any of the former AID projects in the country you could rehabilitate or put back on their feet?

PODOL: A lot of these had been before, but had been suspended and came back.

Q: What about the USAID-supported Torro School for Girls, a project of the 1960s?

PODOL: We were not in education at all. Washington at one time called and said, "Hey, we've got our education money. Do you want it?" And we said, "No, we can't handle it." We didn't have the staff to work on it, except for the agriculture faculty. That's about all.

Q: How big a program was it?

PODOL: It was growing each year. Uganda was in favor in Washington. It must have crossed the \$10-12 million mark, going up to \$15 million. We had a PL480 program, which was different. Uganda had the best soap-making plant in all of Africa. It had shut down during the war. The owner was what they called an "Asian." He came back and reopened the plant and he needed raw material. You had two choices: he could get palm oil from Malaysia, for example, or he could get animal fat from Europe and the U.S. So, our PL480 program was bringing in the animal fat to make soap. So, we were providing soap for the countryside and, at the same time, gaining local currency, which supported our other programs in cooperation with the government. And for the long-term opening up the possibility of a U.S. export market. They were very, very short of cooking oil at this time, so we brought in oil and sold it through a government agency. So, they had cooking oil on the market. Those were the two PL480 programs.

Q: What is your overall impression of the impact of our program there? Was it significant in terms of rehabilitation?

PODOL: It could have been and should have been, but we're talking time frames again. We were just getting rehabilitation going. It didn't happen overnight. The dairy farms that we worked with, they got their loans, their equipment was being imported, they were going back in business. So, these programs gave every indication of rehabilitating the economy. Exports were picking up in pineapples, for example. Just as I was leaving, the newest program got under way, and that was the return of Asian properties. When Idi Amin kicked the Asians out, the government took over the properties of the Asians and ran them into the ground. Museveni, when he came in, invited the Asians to come back and said they could have their property back. If they couldn't find them, or who knows, then the property would be sold to local Ugandans. A number of the Asians did come back. They were petitioning to get their property back. As I mentioned, the one that came back and took over his soap

factory. He came back as a Ugandan. They'd been in Canada. His wife retained her Canadian citizenship, which gave him both an out and a connection for imports and so on. So, that was how they played the game. We had brought somebody in to help them work up their divestiture program. This was the area that was really open to finagling, because the Ugandans really wanted some of these properties. I don't know how this finally shaped up, but this was one we were working on. That was the worrisome one. But we must have been doing something right because in my last two years in Uganda, I received performance pay awards.

Q: Did you have any particular problems or questions or relationship with the Embassy?

PODOL: I did have the full support of the Ambassador.

Q: Who was that?

PODOL: Robert Houdek, who was the most knowledgeable Ambassador that I've ever worked with. He'd been in Kenya. Then he went to Ethiopia. He really knew East Africa and that was a big plus. We had no problems. But it illustrates another kind of problem that AID might have if it ever was combined with the Embassy. The AID staff was much senior to the Embassy staff, because the State Department people that worked in small African countries were Junior Officers. So, I outranked the DCM and was the same rank as the Ambassador. The Economics Officer was just past his internship on his first real tour. The Political Officer I think was on her first or second tour, several grades below our people. This did not cause us any problems there, but it could have if they had really tried to get involved. They didn't. But if you put the two organizations together, how do you do it with the disparity in ranks in these countries that are not important to the State Department but are important to AID?

Q: Did that affect who was on the list to be invited to Ugandan functions?

PODOL: No, it wasn't that. It was, what do you do to merge the two? How can you have the AID people outranking the Embassy people? It would be very difficult to try and get that across. I'd been through 32 years of government service, which the DCM didn't have. Add in the Political and Economic Officers, I have more service than the three of them put together.

Q: What about relations with Washington?

PODOL: Great. Chuck Gladson was the Assistant Administrator. He came out to visit us, thought we had an outstanding program, and went back and said, "I want Uganda increased." So, we had excellent cooperation and usually Larry Saiers, one of the Deputies. From time to time, he was a little more difficult because he sometimes tried to nitpick. He said, "You want to bring out four people to work in the university? Why four? Why not three?" You know, the kind of stuff where it can drive you crazy, to have to justify that sort

of thing. Other than that, we had no problems. So, I found it was a really delightful post.

Q: You were there-?

PODOL: Until July 1989.

Q: Any more about your Uganda experience?

PODOL: Maybe just a postscript that might be of interest. Museveni was from the southwestern part of Uganda. He was the first president of Uganda from the south. All the others had been northerners. So, this gave him a range of support in the south, but not in the north, where the problems still are. But he was from the southwest. His wife, if you were to see his wife, you would think she was a Tutsi, which she wasn't. But she was a cousin of the Tutsis. Museveni's grandfather had come up from Rwanda, or whatever it was called at the time, with his cattle and settled in Western Uganda. The point I'm making is that there were very strong relationships that still exist between the Museveni family and the Tutsis, who are now running Rwanda. So, when the Tutsi refugees had to leave Rwanda, they came into Uganda and were there in Uganda for many years. They fought in Museveni's army against Obote. These were the people that came back and overthrew the Hutu government and now rule. So, you have a very close relationship between the current Rwandan government and the current Ugandan government.

The other is, we were pushing Uganda to hold elections, have a constitution. And Museveni was resisting not so much the presidential election, but the constitution. Here again, you get into the question of what is a cohesive nation. At the time of independence, it was a series of Kingdoms, which the British stitched together and called it "Uganda." The Kingship idea is still alive. Museveni invited back the heir to the throne of the people who live around Kampala. That was a big decision: whether he should be allowed to come back or not, and, if he did come back, would there be problems? I ran into this personally once. The head of one of the banks that implemented our loan program took me on a tour of his facilities out west. He was from one of the former Kingdoms in the southwest and his uncle had been the last King. He was a Prince. His cousin would be King if they had restored the Kingdom. So, we went out there. I didn't know what was going to happen. We got out there and, there it was, set up like a throne, he sat on it. All the people would come by, bow, pay their homage, hold a big party for him. Royalty. So, the feeling is still there. The feeling toward the old Kingdoms, tribally-based Kingdoms, is still there. So, you had to worry about "What kind of government can I set up? If I decentralize, what's going to happen?" For them, it's an extremely tough question.

Q: Do you think that was part of Museveni's concerns about elections?

PODOL: Absolutely. So, he first had village elections and now they have a Parliament. And they had presidential elections, but that was pretty one-sided. As far as I know, they still don't have a constitution that delineates power to regions, the old Kingdoms. Like

everywhere else in Africa, they don't have a common language, which makes it that much more difficult for all these countries. English is the link language, as we found out in India. It was the only common language in India, among the educated people.

Q: Any more on Uganda?

PODOL: Yes, I do have one more thing. One lesson that was learned was that, in Africa and maybe beyond Africa, people do not distinguish between public and private resources. That means that, if you are a government official and you have money or jobs, commodities at your disposal, your family, your clan, your village expects you to share those resources with them. If you don't, you become an outcast in your own village. So, the pressure they put on government official is very severe to share resources. Often, it is not resisted. In the agriculture research station of the university, we provided a tractor. Every so often, that tractor would disappear for a day or two and we'd find out it was out plowing the land of somebody nearby. We'd go to the Dean and say, "Why do you do this? That tractor is for your research station and for nobody else." Here we'd go into this situation again, about the demands that are made by his neighbors, and friends, and family members. They don't distinguish. If those resources are there, you can use them. You were entitled to your share. So, you look at corruption in a little different way when you understand some of the roots of it in these kind of cases.

WEST AFRICA: Responding to the Drought in the Sahel—1972-1973

Excerpt taken from an interview with Maurice Williams

WILLIAMS: The 1972-1973 drought in the countries of the Sahel - an Arab term meaning shore of the sea of the Sahara Desert - was disastrous for seven African countries from Senegal to Chad, wiping out their sources of food in crops and animal herds. Many countries and agencies responded with emergency food and supplies but lines of transport into the region were poor and several millions of people were at risk of starvation. Nor was there agreement on international coordination of emergency aid. The U.N. at that time lacked the designated role and capability for the work. Calls by FAO for massive airlifts of food without on the ground assessments of needs were not helpful. I conferred in Paris with the French Government, which knew the region well, and together we adopted a framework for assessing needs, locating supplies and related logistic capabilities.

President Nixon directed a major U.S. response to the drought emergency in Africa, in part to build his political support in the American black community. As the President's representative I was assigned a military aircraft to visit the Sahel countries and assure that emergency supplies were getting there. I flew across the Sahel visiting each of the Sahel countries, calling on their Presidents, and inspecting relief operations. Adequate relief assistance was getting through, although only by a very narrow margin.

The situation in Ghana and most of the coastal states were not badly affected by the

drought, with the exception of Senegal, the Gambia and Mauritania and stretching eastward across the continent.

Q: *Sam Adams and Don Brown were in charge of the Africa Bureau at that time?*

WILLIAMS: Yes, Sam Adams was the Assistant Administrator and Don Brown was his deputy.

The relief operation had three planes - operated by the U.S., Belgium and Canada - to selectively airlift emergency food to Bamako, Niamey, and Agadez, and we were barely getting it there in time to save lives. I remember visiting one location in Niger where the local administrator said, "If it hadn't been for your help, we would all be dead in this area." Their food supplies had been completely wiped out; it was quite dramatic. On that trip I also visited the refugee camps on the upper bend of the Niger River. That part of the river had dried up but I was interested to see Timbuktu. I was curious to know why Timbuktu was a household word with most Americans.

Q: *The remotest of the remote.*

WILLIAMS: Perhaps it was because at an earlier time, Timbuktu was seen as a magic place where as a trading post you could exchange salt for gold. There was gold to the south but they lacked salt; if you could cross the Sahara Desert with camels you could pick up salt slabs and at Timbuktu trade them for gold, so the story goes.

Q: *What was your impression of the Saharan countries that you visited at that time?*

WILLIAMS: The drought had devastating effects; many of the men had migrated to the south attempting to save their herds, leaving their women and children behind in the camps I visited. Mostly they were unsuccessful, and wealth in animals was largely lost. The drought shifted the balance of power between the nomadic people of Arab origin and the blacks whom they had largely dominated. There was much settling of old scores among these people, including discrimination in distribution of relief supplies.

In the settled agricultural areas the losses had also been great. There was potential for rural development in improved water management and security measures against drought, a recurring problem for the region. Trained Africans were able but few in number. Despite the difficulties of development in Africa, progress could be made if you could engage the best people available and help governments strengthen their structures of administration and cooperation. I thought the best prospect for the Sahel countries was in regional cooperation for mutual support and to take advantage of the increased aid being offered for rehabilitation. The Sahel leaders would later set up a consortium for a regional approach among themselves and with donors. In my next assignment I would lead a donor Club du Sahel to foster

development in the region.

Assignment in Mali with the Sahel emergency relief program—1973

Excerpt taken from an interview with Jim Kelly

Q. Let's move on? Where did you go from Zaire?

KELLY: At that time, two years was looked upon pretty much as a normal tour of duty. Just as our time was winding down in Zaire, a worldwide cable was sent out from AID Washington saying that volunteers were needed to help implement AID's emergency program in the face of the unprecedented drought then raging in the Sahel – this would have been in May 1973. My wife and I discussed the cable and agreed that, while we were not wild about spending 2-3 years in the desert region, we would like the idea of a short-term assignment if it would be offered. The main attraction was being part of campaign to help save thousands of lives. But the opportunity of seeing a rather exotic part of the world, without having to stay there too long, was also a turn-on. AID decided to send, as soon as logistics would permit, an “Emergency Officer” (later, we would be called Relief and Rehabilitation Officers – R&R) to each of the six Sahel countries. Three weeks after volunteering, six of us were pulled in from our field posts to Washington for briefings/orientation. I was told that I was being assigned to Bamako, Mali – and for a one year tour.

The assignment proved to be all that we hoped for – hands-on helping people and being able to see “results” right away. (Quite a change from the glacier like development dynamic we had witnessed in Zaire.) The regular AID program in Mali (a large one, consisting of 24 direct hire and over a hundred local hire, to say nothing of the US contractor personnel) had been phased out five years earlier as a result of two factors: the growing Soviet Union presence/influence in Mali and the decision to cut back the number of large US Missions in Africa as recommended in the “Korry Report”.

Upon arrival in Bamako, my wife and I were cordially received by the small US official family. I was assigned an office in the Embassy, which was only a few doors away from Ambassador Jones'. (As an aside -- in the coming months, I hit it off well with the Ambassador and when it came time for his DCM to move on, he sent a cable to the State Department recommending that I be named DCM. Although Ambassador Jones was “old line” and verrry British-like in accent, clothing and manners, he enjoyed “pushing the Department parameters”. He, and I, fully realized that it was very unlikely that the Department hierarchy would approve an AID employee as DCM. The answer, “No”, came back quite quickly. I was shown both cables.)

My responsibility in Mali was strictly for the emergency and rehabilitation program. AID still had some “regular” regional programs supervised by AID/Senegal. My immediate preoccupation was to get a handle on the PL-480 emergency feeding program, which had been managed until then by the DCM. (See below for “end use” monitoring.) It was a ticklish situation because the US Air Force had recently flown in three C-130's to help in moving the emergency food stocks from the capital, Bamako, to Timbuctou and Gao in the north. The Air Force officers were more comfortable in liaising with the more politically attuned Embassy staff than a developmentally oriented AID type. We worked it out, however, and I have a favorite picture which shows Ambassador Jones and I stretched out on stacks of PL 480 grain bags, while catnapping on an early morning flight to Gao, in the back of C-130 piloted by the Air Force chief of mission.

In retrospect, it is clear that we – and the other donors – got to Mali quite late with our food aid. By the time I arrived in Mali in June 1973, a good commodity transport system had been put in place, using trains from the coast and the C-130s/trucks from the south to the northern parts of the country. However, the severe food shortage, during which thousands died from famine related causes, had occurred from April to October 1972. It was only when the pictures of the “stick figures” started to appear on European TV screens in the summer of 1972 and in the US in the fall that the official donor community started to pay attention. But the bureaucracies were slow to react (those working in Washington at the time will have to fill in here, including to what extent the availability of funds for PL-480 might have been a constraint) and really did not get relief aid rolling until a few stinging editorials appeared in the New York Times and the Washington Post. It is clear that AID probably would have reacted quicker if its field office in Senegal had been peppering Headquarters with descriptions of the hardship conditions, particularly among the nomads in northern Mali, during the summer of 1972. Two things kept this from happening. First, AID experts were not traveling to the north at that time because their regional funded activities could be monitored by talking to counterparts and “checking the project books” in project headquarters in Bamako. Second, AID travel from Dakar to Bamako during the 1972 summer was lessened by AID staff being off on their R&R and home leave trips.

So, the US emergency feeding program in the Sahel in the early 1970's would later be criticized by the GAO on two scores: first, for being too late in getting started. Second, for not being stopped in time -- PL-480 commodities were still being shipped into the country in mid-1974 and interfering with the marketing of local grains produced with the return of the normal rains. (Later, we would realize that turning off the flow of food in a timely manner is usually a problem in any large emergency program.) I will come back to the issue of “detecting droughts in a timely manner”.

A final word here, however, on my role in monitoring the “end use” of PL 480 commodities during my stay in Mali. I do not remember to what extent

our R&R assignment instructions called for monitoring US furnished food commodities. There was a regional PL-480 officer, stationed in Dakar, who would visit Mali from time to time. However, as the only resident AID officer in the country, I know that it was hoped that I would “keep my eye” on things even if food monitoring was not my primary responsibility.

During my trips in country, for example to the refugee camps in the north, I tried to eyeball the food stock situation and, in particular, the presence and condition of PL 480 stocks. As I look back, I am embarrassed by what I thought I was accomplishing at the time. Rather than any systematic “spot checking” (for which I had not received any technical training), my effort was more like a “tourist's curiosity”. The PL 480 program was a large one (I can't remember the commodity totals) and foodstuffs were shipped to at least 25 destinations in country. Several monitors could have been kept busy full-time if we had been serious about end-use checking. Of course, one has to keep in mind how difficult it is to monitor in military run countries (which Mali was at the time) where a premium is placed on “playing-things-close-to-the-chest” and making sure that outsiders realize that they are guests in “our country” who should not be prodding for information – even when they are extending aid.

It also has to be remembered that, in most countries in Africa, during large-scale emergencies, government representatives take charge of distributing food at the local level. Donors are not willing to expend the financial resources which would be required to supervise local level distributions, And even if they were, it is doubtful that they could properly navigate the cultural waters to make appropriate decisions as to who should receive food rations at the town level. Even the local governments have trouble sorting out such situations and oftentimes are forced to make arbitrary decisions, which stick only because of rifle-power. For all of the reasons mentioned above, my instincts told me to go slow when raising issues on the proper programming distribution of food commodities. The one time when I did raise a little bit of a “ruckus” was when I was visiting Sikkasso in southern Mali with my counterpart, the Minister of Defense. On one of our rounds, I asked an official whether there was any US furnished grain in the areKelly: He, inadvisably, pointed to a heap (about 2,000 MTS of un-bagged sorghum lying exposed (no tarps) in the distance. I expressed my concern to him and the Minister about the lack of care being taken with donated commodities provided by the US taxpayers, etc, etc. Both look chagrined and said steps would be taken immediately to protect the sorghum. I realized later that the red sorghum was no longer considered of real value because locally produced (and preferred) grain was now becoming available on the market. (And – a postscript. Two years later, while stationed in Washington, I read about a big investigation being conducted by the GAO on the large sums of grain that had been shipped overseas, during the Sahel Emergency period, through the New Orleans port, which was severely infested prior to leaving the US. So, it is entirely conceivable that that heap of sorghum in Sikkasso was fit only for animal feed when it arrived in Mali. So much for taking Ministers of Defense to task without having all the facts.)

Q: What kind of rehabilitation activities were you supporting?

KELLY: My favorite was the “river barge” project. The cheapest way to move commodities from the south of Mali to the North was, and is, by river barge. I still remember the various transportation costs in 1973: from Bamako to Gao, it cost \$80 per ton by river barge, \$140 by truck, and \$215 by air. We were forced to bring in the C-130's for two reasons: first, the engines of two river barges were constantly breaking down due to inadequate maintenance over the years and, second, the rather short “window” during which the Niger river level is high enough for navigation -- the months of August-November. So...we decided to fly the barge engines back to New Jersey for a complete overhaul in the C-130s which had to return to Andrew Air Force base every three months for their maintenance check-up (after flying daily in desert conditions). The engines arrived back in Mali in practically new condition within a month and were immediately installed in the tug barges, re-christened in a big ceremony by the Minister of Defense and the US Ambassador, and sent sailing to Gao. These were great occasions for the AID/R&R office! You can understand why these rehab projects got much more ink in the government controlled press than the regular AID regional activities.

Q. So the Government liked the R&R campaign?

KELLY: Oh yes. My counterpart in the Government was the Minister of Defense, Kissima DoukarKelly: He was an Army man, very disciplined and hardworking. I would see him a couple of times a week and he made sure that others in the government were cooperating with AID. I very much appreciated his running interference because under the rehab program we were funding projects in each of the main sectors – some of which were peopled with rather sleepy eyed bureaucrats. As I look back at the program, however, I realize that this was where I formed my belief that “emergency/rehab programs are inherently flawed” – a sentiment that I was able to elaborate on during the sabbatical year I was given at Harvard in 1980. Try as I did to be imaginative in devising a system of accountability (I had no AID controller backup support), I still had to deal with the pressure to “move the money” so that the message could be sent that “US is doing its part to assist drought victims”. Of course, AID/Washington kept reminding R&R officers of the need to be “tough” by establishing conditionality and making sure that there was complete “transparency” on the use of the funds by government. But one had the feeling that there was more concern back in Washington on the dollar obligation rate per each country than about any final tally that would be done on the proper use of the funds. It was interesting to observe the approach of a senior officer from Washington who visited Bamako after we got the R&R operation up and running. About a week before his arrival, I received in the pouch a US government check for \$800,000 – the third installment of R&R funds – for handing over to the government. I decided to hold the check in the safe until the senior official from Washington arrived so that he could present the check to Major DoukarKelly: After all, since this visitor had been among the most vociferous about the need for “toughness” in dealing with recipient governments when it came to accountability, I figured that he would seize the opportunity of his meeting

with Major Doukara to hold “a frank exchange” and would welcome the check as a way of softening his hard message. Rather naïve of me. The meeting turned out to be all hearts and flowers...with nary a thought being given to accountability issues.

A final note on Major DoukarKelly: We became fond of each other and when my tour was up he presented a gold bracelet (worth about \$400 at the time) to my wife, Kathy, as a token of the government's appreciation of the R&R work. (Most sadly, the Major met an early demise several years later after being jailed on charges of plotting a coup against the President.

Q: Let's talk a little more about your views on emergency programs.

KELLY: Fine. The area has been an interest of mine since I had more exposure to emergency aid than your regular AID development officer. Emergencies happen suddenly, of course. An event occurs (e.g. volcanic eruption, flash flooding, etc.) and as a result there are thousands of victims who need relief assistance. There is very little time for adequate planning in support of operations. The international cameras are trained on the suffering, which becomes all too evident and abhorrent. The cry is for “action”. Money is quickly allocated and dispensed to implementers – freight forwarders, NGO's, governments.

In a very real sense, most people involved in emergencies are delighted with crisis events – except, of course, the victims. As one NGO rep observed in the early 1980's – “with a little bit of luck, we will have at least three major emergencies in the next five years”. He was looking forward to the refilling of coffers...the fat overheads to be charged. All the way up the line people profit from emergencies: for example, the transporter who is able to charge excessive rates because he realizes that the funding agency has to get the commodities moved immediately; the recipient government bureaucrat has more money to work with, with fewer controls, than he ever has under the “regular program”: and, the donor rep realizes that he has a better chance of getting a promotion or award during high profile emergencies than during humdrum regular programming periods. And, of course, after the windup of the emergency campaign, there is very little real “end-use” evaluation, that is an effort to discern where the relief funds went and who was actually helped. Such end use assessments are considered too expensive to carry out. In those instances, where they have been carried out and severe negligence discovered, never, to-my-knowledge, has the career of any emergency program manager or supervising officer been affected. This is what I mean by suggesting that emergencies are “inherently flawed” – no time to plan or strategize, the need to act quickly and dispense money without adequate safeguards, poor performance monitoring mechanisms and, finally, no stomach to scrutinize how well the money was spent.

Q: Sounds pretty bleak....

KELLY: I recognize that. But my observations are directed only at the “quick happening emergencies” – volcanic eruptions, wide-scale flash flooding, refugees fleeing ethnic cleansing, etc. Whereas much of AID's emergency effort over the past 30 years

in Africa has been in connection with the “creeping” kind of emergency, i.e. drought. What we have learned from our experience with drought is that you have to de-emergencize it! To begin with, this calls for careful monitoring of the rainy season. By using satellite imagery and on-the-ground checking, one can get a good handle on the likely size of the harvest -- at least six months before relief aid will be require from outside the country! This means that there is time for careful strategizing. Competitive procurement can be undertaken to keep commodity delivery costs down. Vulnerability assessments can be made which identify the varying degrees of need within the country. Well thought out scopes-of-work for NGOs can be drafted – both for implementing the relief campaigns and carrying out end-user evaluations when the dust has settled. So the picture is not all that bleak. Consequently, if we learn properly from our experience, there should be no drought emergencies in Africa and certainly there should be no drought related deaths. (I will come back to this topic in a minute.)

Q: What about the governments – obviously emergency response is their responsibility.

KELLY: Yes, of course. And, increasingly governments are showing more aptitude not only for facilitating relief campaigns but for undertaking sound meteorological and agronomic monitoring to help “de-emergencize” periods of inadequate rainfall. The situation has come along way from the 1970's when governments were reluctant to acknowledge severe drought suffering out of fear that they would be perceived as unable to govern properly or because tourists would be scared off. In the last 15 years, donors, particularly FAO and EU, have allocated large sums of money to train local staff in drought monitoring and detection. AID has been at the forefront, in its FEWS program, in improving data collection methodologies and using “the convergence of evidence” approach to produce analytical products needed by decision-makers (in-country and abroad) to justify the expenditure of funds. In at least 20 countries in the drought prone areas of Africa, there are now functioning and credible “famine early warning” units. The big, outstanding problem is how to keep these units functioning. There is a tendency to forget about their financial needs (not just staff salaries, but equipment and computer requirements) during good or average rainfall years. As a result, highly trained staff tend to move on leaving behind “shell” early warning units. I have argued for setting up multi-donor trust funds to support these units. Over the years, the donor contribution would be more than offset by the cost savings, resulting from better monitoring and analysis, in the amount of relief aid that would have to be provided. Opponents say “we can't start setting up trust funds to support government units which should be covered in the government budget – there would no ending to the number of trust funds and the government would be off the hook for operating expenditures.” I agree. We should not be asked to support a plethora of trust funds. Donors should carefully choose which units in government are essential to good donor aid planning and agree to assist in helping to stabilize these. I believe that the meteorological/agricultural data collection and analysis unit in governments would be near the top in any donor drawn up list of essential units.

Q: You suggest that considerable progress is being made in the

defusing of emergencies in Africa...and yet, almost on a weekly basis, the TV screen is filled with images of Africans suffering and dying from a host of dreadful causes.

KELLY: My point is quite simple. There is no reason or excuse why Africans should die from slow onset natural calamities like drought regardless of how severe the event may be. If you review the situation since 1982, you will find that there was no widespread “starvation” due to drought – except in a few countries (e.g. Ethiopia in 1984, Sudan in the mid 1990's) where the governments would not cooperate with donors by allowing free access to the affected parts of their countries. I am not referring to internal strife situations where donor hands are tied.

At the creation of the Sahel Development Program—1973

Excerpts taken from interviews with Don Brown

BROWN: Sam Adams was deeply distressed by this inadequate attention and a major part of our work together was an effort to induce greater interest and support to African development needs. Sam was especially concerned that the Sahelian area (a term with which I along with many others discovered only at this time) was largely ignored in American policy. He saw a gradual decimation in the region and its rather special culture due to a lack of resources and lack of interest. He was one of the first to point to the gravity of the awful Sahelian drought of the early seventies—really the first of a series of African natural disasters which have since received support from the United States—and Sam recognized that this awful event could also bring about greater public interest and concern.

Q: What about your involvement?

BROWN: Over time I became more and more involved in the Sahel disaster, especially as public criticism, particularly in the black community, grew over the inadequacy of American response. The Administration, already buffeted by the public over other issues, recognized the need to take stronger action. Among other things, Maury Williams, then AID Deputy Administrator, was named overall Sahel disaster coordinator and I spent a lot of time working directly with him. Maury was demanding and sometimes harsh in that period, but he got things done and drove the rest of the agency to give the Africa Bureau the support it needed. While the disaster still caused thousands of deaths, in the end United States relief efforts were essential in keeping the toll as low as was the case. A lot of lessons were learned—preparation against potential disasters, pre-stocking, transport and logistical needs, building disaster prevention capacity etc. Fortunately the AID Disaster Relief Office paid considerable attention to these lessons and this helped AID be more active and effective in subsequent disaster situations.

While the drought response was first priority, several of us felt that there was

real need to look past it and into how resources could be used better to build an economically stronger and more disaster resistant region. Encouraged especially by Sam Adams and Maury Williams, I worked closely towards that end with many able Africa Bureau hands concerned with the Sahel, but especially with Dave Shear and Princeton Lyman. We were interested in two levels — what could AID itself do aimed at more fundamental and longer term support to the region; and how could the Sahelian nations and many interested donors work more effectively together using shared understandings and goals.

For the first purpose, we sought direct legislative support for strengthened aid programs while at the same time putting major resources into defining the most effective kinds of responses for AID to undertake. We used every trick we knew. The Administration being under considerable stress related to other issues, we tried to show the political benefits it could achieve by a positive response not only to the disaster but also to longer term Sahelian needs. Fairly quickly we got the broad support, in State, in AID and in the White House, needed for this programmatic approach. At the same time, we worked closely with Hubert Humphrey, who had returned to the Senate and the Foreign Relations Committee, on legislative tactics. Dick McCall of the Committee's staff, was exceptionally helpful in his support. In the end we did get legislation which established the Sahel Fund. Years later this initial Fund evolved into the broader African Development Fund which provided the kind of recognition and program basis for U.S. support to Africa which Sam Adams had so strongly advocated.

I remember one amusing conversation we had with Senator Humphrey during this period when I asked him why his views on a particular issue seemed different from those he expressed when Vice President. His response was that "where you stand depends on where you sit!"

With funding more secure, major efforts were underway to provide meaningful program content. I must admit I was probably overly concerned with showing early results while many of my colleagues in the African Bureau argued that we knew too little and needed to build a stronger research base. We managed to achieve a reasonable consensus on these points and did devote considerable effort to building for the longer term while putting reasonable resources into agricultural projects which did have some more immediate productive impact. However, I gather that later evaluation exercises criticized us for having given too little attention to institution building; whether those evaluations gave adequate recognition to the pressures and limitations which we faced at the time is an open question in my mind.

On the Sahelian and international fronts, there was a growing recognition of the need for a large scale international effort—accompanied by a mad scramble as to who was going to be in charge, each party recognizing the need for coordination while fighting to become the ultimate coordinator. On the African side, the states did come together to establish a Sahel planning office. While this was welcomed by donors, they

also wanted a mechanism by which their views would be taken fully into account. The World Bank organized its own Sahelian section. Brad Morse built a Sahel Affairs Section into UNDP. The French and Belgian Governments each sought a leadership role. Edouard Saouma, the then new Director General of FAO, was convinced FAO should be in the lead. In AID we convinced our colleagues that it would be a mistake for any single donor, including the United States, to be the lead organization since no single external coordinating donor would be acceptable to Sahelian leadership. We urged a new form of relationship which would bring the Sahel planning group into close liaison with a combined organization of donors. From this was born, with great difficulty, much debate, innumerable visits to other donors, and several international conferences, the Club des Amis du Sahel. The idea of the Club was that it was a gathering place for donors and Sahelian states to work out ideas and develop planning models for investment purposes, but to do this in a collegial manner. While no one organization or nation was in charge, it was recognized that different groups had special abilities and sectoral and sub-sectoral committees were established under the leadership of different national groups. It is very much my impression that this approach has worked generally well and it has served as something of a model for AID's current approach to meeting the needs in the Greater Horn of Africa. Equally there are some similarities between the approach of the Club and the way in which donors have worked within SADEC on southern African development needs.

I remember vividly the international conference in Dakar where the concept of the Club was finally given unanimous consent. Up to the last vote we were unsure if it would be accepted and in fact several hours were spent the night before convincing Saouma of the rightness of this approach. After that final vote Dave Shear and I went off to have one royal celebratory dinner.

Q: On the Sahel program itself, would you elaborate on what the strategy was for bringing Sahel from this famine-drought period into a more development mode.

BROWN: First, one has to recognize these things are all overlapping.

Q: Sure.

BROWN: And that you were putting your concentration, more concentration on certain stages and elements of a process than in others. And in the first years, there was nothing. There was hardly a program in the Sahelian states until the drought came. So you were dealing with the weakest probably the weakest program in AID in existence anywhere in the world.

Sam Adams was insistent that more attention needed to be given to that part of the world. But it was hard to find the justification. There was little in the way of economic resources, mineral resources, etc. These were countries that did not have any for the most part any major influence on US interests. And one could talk about

humanitarian concerns and one could talk about economic potentials for the future and what that could mean for trade and so forth but it didn't have much of an echo. So you are starting from a very weak situation.

You had a terrible drought. A terrible problem with the need for massive amounts of food. Coming at the same time that the United States was selling off enormous amounts of food to Russia because of the weak harvest in Russia at that immediate time. The prices were going up and the availability was going down. It was a huge struggle just to get people to accept that they had to devote resources to provide food aid to the region. And that took a lot of effort.

Then you had to spend a lot of time worrying about the infrastructure. Some kind of infrastructure through PVO's; through AID itself. Through the nascent missions that we had in place. To get that food where it needed to go. We certainly did not succeed in that process nearly as well as AID was able to respond to subsequent disasters but I think we did as well as one might hope in retrospect. We also helped the agency learn a lot about pre-stocking, organizing, planning, communications, transport and logistics and the like.

I don't know how much I would have thought about the need to move to development in Sahel if it hadn't been for Sam Adams saying, "By God, we will". And it was he who really said this was an area of neglect and these are cultures that are going to die without some help and we need to do something. And he whipped us up in the gentle and mild way that Sam whips anybody up to begin thinking in those terms. And as I've said, some of our concerns were could we not get a stronger legislative base? And we spent a lot of time on that.

And secondly, it was a question of how was the international organization, the international system going to respond and we spent a lot of time trying to deal with the institutional basis for that. We spent a lot of time just dealing with the media and the public about the need for movement in this direction. At the same time being heavily criticized by the black community for not doing nearly enough. There was a combination of those two things. And both sides, the black community was absolutely right. We weren't doing enough but the other side had to be whipped up to do something. So, then the question is, "What?"

The paucity of information was horrendous. At the local level there wasn't much. Given the weakness of our programs, there was little historical knowledge. But it was obvious to us that what was needed was longer term solutions.

Q: Was it also true that the French were not very interested in having us get interested in that area or not?

BROWN: Well, they were not eager, I will say that. But I will also say that I think we

worked in good cooperation with the French technical assistance agencies and we were not stopped. But clearly the French feared that if we became too active that there might be a shift in attention by leadership in those countries away from France to the United States and they didn't want that. But I don't think that kept us from things and in fact, to the degree that there was any kind of meaningful background and knowledge about the region it came from the French government.

As I say, it was obvious to us is that the thing that was needed was long term development program strategies etc. that were going to take into account the degradation of soil, the limitations due to soil, water and climatical conditions. And I knew an awful lot of people who kept saying, "We need to study, we need to study." And, of course, they were right that we needed to study things if we were going to have meaningful programs over a period of time. At the same time, we needed to produce something. We couldn't just study and call on the time of officials to learn about livestock or sorghum production and we had to get in there and do something.

And I suppose I probably put more attention than I should have on trying to get people to turn out working projects. Working projects which could be urban or rural but primarily rural obviously. Primarily agricultural of one kind or another. They were usually such things as small irrigation schemes or improved seed or improved marketing systems and the like. And some of that was useful and some of that worked and stayed. But some of it obviously, the institutional backup structures were so weak that at any time we backed off a step, they would collapse.

But still, I accepted the fact that those longer term strategies were needed and the kind of studies that were involved were undertaken. And one of my interests in the concept of club of the "Mes Amies du Sahel" that I've talked about was that bringing together the knowledge of the French and the Americans and FAO into some kind of cohesive structure was likely to bring about the kind of knowledge and development of institutions that was necessary faster than doing things solely by ourselves.

Now, I understand people have said we didn't do enough in institution building in that period and I certainly understand that. And it is both a valid and invalid conclusion in my opinion. I think it would have been extremely difficult to do very much more in institution building at that period. Now, did we do enough over a longer period in trying to develop the right help and the right institution doing the training programs etc., I can't say because I was not following the program that closely. But certainly people like Princeton Lyman, Dave Shear and others were making every effort to try and have a balanced, reasonable and rational approach to the region including longer term strategies.

Q: The concept was really to talk about or deal with the region as a whole and so there was an effort to mount a major regional projects as such. That was part of the strategy, wasn't it?

BROWN: It was part of the strategy. I don't think it was a major part of the strategy. I think we recognized that there were sufficiently important national differences and even local differences that you had to put the concentration of your interest at the local level. At the province level. At the national level. There were certainly some things that could be done regionally. There were some transport things that could be done. There was the whole question of the Niger River and its utilization which had regional implications. There were the interconnections between the in-land states and Senegal and the Ivory Coast as coastal states which were important. And we looked at and worked on some regional activity. But I personally, while I tried to do what we could on the regional level, I thought it was far more important to work at the national level. Always seeking to take experiences learned in one country and see to the degree to which they were applicable to another.

Q: To what extent did you find the African leaders in the Sahel interested in a common program approach to their development?

BROWN: The African leaders were interested in a "Marshall Plan", as they constantly called it. A massive resource transfer program. And since it seemed to appeal to a lot of people...if that could be done in regional terms, they talked largely about the need for regional programs. But, that was essentially simply to get more resources at the national level. And of course, that didn't work. There was an important increase in flow of resources into the region but never anything approaching the dimensions of a Marshall Plan or anything that you could even conceive of as being that. And of course for good reasons. Circumstances were totally different.

But there was an increase in resources. And there were increasing thoughtful and able people at the national level and within the framework of some regional institutions which over time better and better utilized those resources.

Q: This was a time of a great debate...I don't hear it so much now...of whether the desertification process was expanding .We had a big MIT study on that subject, I believe , at that time?

BROWN: Yes

Q: Where did that work come out?

BROWN: I don't think it came out anywhere exactly. Like the number of dead as a result of the drought. You never knew what the result was and I've heard numbers that were different by 1000%.

My assumption is, from what I have read—which is limited—on the subject is that this was a major cyclical problem for the region but it is not a continuous problem. We are seeing this year good rains and in most of the Sahelian states. In fact flooding in

some areas. But there is a cyclical problem there. It has been interesting in IFAD because we have been trying to build into our IFAD programming a greater recognition, not of average circumstances, but of cyclical circumstance—so that you recognize perfectly well that one year out of five you were going to have a disaster and you had to build your programs around that concept. I don't think any of us were doing that in those days. I assume AID is probably doing more of that sort of thing at the present time as well. But I still think that is what it is. It is a cyclic problem—a serious one. And one which will never end in the Sahel. I mean you are not going to reach a point where there are no more droughts, no more disasters.

Q: There were some observations that more of the attention should have been with linking the Sahel and the coastal regions in terms of economic potential and growth. Was that envisioned at that time?

BROWN: I've heard some talk of that but I must say that was more cocktail party talk than serious talk as far as I'm concerned. I never had any important discussions within the US government or with other governments on that issue.

Q: Well, finishing up on the Sahel. What do you suggest from your experience are the lasting results of the effort of the "Club de Sahel?" What do you see as continuing benefits and effects in these countries? Are they better off because of it?

BROWN: I would certainly hope that the people of the Sahel are better off now than those who lived there twenty years ago and that there has been a flow of resources. And there has been a flow of knowledge and there has been a flow of better trained people. There are programs going on in every one of the Sahelian states in the field of agriculture which give promise for broader agricultural production; for more safe agricultural production. There are capacities to deal with disasters—which didn't exist before. So that when they come up, the impact on people's lives is still terribly important but not so deadly. So yes, I think a lot has been done. I am constantly fearful of the decline and ebbing of US interest in Africa, in general. And I think we are certainly seeing it in terms of AID flows at the present time. Which is one of the reasons that I was so interested in getting a legislative base at least for the Sahel at that time. And I was very pleased to see that in subsequent years others managed to broaden that to the African Development Fund.

It is hard to give all the hard-headed justifications for doing a lot in that region. And perhaps in Africa as a whole except in very selected countries. But to me there is no question that Africa is going to continue to be an element which cannot be forgotten by the world. Whether you like it or not. That there are opportunities for broader understandings, broader trade, broader opportunities back and forth between the United States in particular in Africa. And I think it is important for this country to continue to participate with others—not alone—but participate with others in reasonable levels of support to African development.

More on the creation of the Sahel Development Program - 1978-1983

Excerpt taken from an interview with Arthur Fell

FELL: I guess I'm going to have to jump ahead. Following the Sahel drought, a major effort was made to bring together a consortium of donors to train themselves on the problems of the Sahel and see if there couldn't be some sort of concerted action on the international level to prevent anything like that from ever happening again and trying to improve the development prospects for West Africa. The major players involved in this in addition to yourself, Haven, and Sam Adams in those days was David Shear who was head of the office for West Africa and Roy Stacy who had helped to create what was eventually called the Club du Sahel, a secretariat based in the OECD to work with the donors and help with an organization based in the Sahel in Ouagadougou, the Interstate Committee to Fight Drought which had been set up by the Sahelians themselves.

I forgot to mention one of the things I had done. The person in USAID who was put in charge of the drought in 1973, the Deputy Administrator of AID, was Maury Williams who was a gigantic figure in those days. At one point he decided he wanted to make a tour of that area. They said: who's going to go with him? I hope he's not going to be listening to this. He was known to be a person who was rather demanding you might say. He'd like things done when he wanted them done and he was persuasive in getting his points across. They called me up down in Cameroon and said: Art, get on a plane. You are going to go to Paris and meet up with Maury Williams.

Q: *You were in Cameroon?*

FELL: I was in Cameroon at the time. They said, take him around the Sahel. Show him everything.

Q: *This was before you had been to the Sahel I guess.*

FELL: Well I had been in the African Development Bank before so I had worked around the Sahel.

Q: *Of course! You knew the area a little bit.*

FELL: I knew the area somewhat. That was almost a defining moment in my career, because that could have been the end of my career. It turned out not to be. I met Maury Williams up in Paris. I remember we went out to old Bourget airport when it used to be. We met there and sat down and had something to eat and said what are we going to do about the travel plans and got on the plane and went to Africa. We traveled around together for three weeks I guess. He was out there for quite a long time.

Q: *He was what at that time?*

FELL: He was Deputy Administrator of AID. It was amazing he spent that long out there. If I can remember where we went. As a matter of fact I have a record of this. I kept day to day notes of where we went. Memos of all the conversations. I've got all these in my files. We went to Niamey and visited the refugee camps there. We went to Mali and visited the refugee camps to Timbuktu.

Q: *This was still at the time of the drought.*

FELL: Still the drought. It was in 1973 at the peak of the drought.

Q: *He was on a Presidential mission?*

FELL: Right. I interpreted for him. We met the Presidents of all those countries. Maury Williams actually understood quite a bit of French and was amazingly good, but he didn't speak French and didn't want to speak it and so I was his interpreter. We went to Ouagadougou because they were setting up the CILSS. That was the inaugural meeting of the CILSS.

Q: *What was that?*

FELL: The Interstate Committee to Combat Drought in the Sahel which was a grouping of the eight countries, the Sahel countries of West Africa to band together and try and get some joint planning and joint agreements on what they could do about the drought, improve agricultural production, and improve their own food security. I remember we met with President Senghor and I interpreted for Mr. Williams about what the United States might do in the Sahel with the head of the CILSS, Mr. Dakoure, who was minister of agriculture and quite a gigantic figure in those days in Ouagadougou, sort of a key figure in setting up the CILSS. We met with President Traore in Mali. We eventually went to Chad and met with Mr. Tombalbaye. We got along very well.

Q: *What were your impressions of these presidents? What was the picture you were getting from their perspective?*

FELL: I should mention President Laminaza in Ouagadougou in Upper Volta. Actually Mr. Williams gave me the clue on how to analyze some of these things. President Senghor was exceptionally erudite. Being individuals it was hard to generalize. Of course Senghor was a towering figure, quite an intellectual figure and a very brilliant man. He is in the Academie Française now. Even today he is one of the most well-spoken Frenchmen in the world. If you can say he is a Frenchman. He is a Frenchman I guess. He gave a very poised overview of everything. He was very anxious that we do a lot for the poorer countries, particularly Chad. He wanted to see the whole region sort of move forward together. He had a real vision, a very wide perspective and

long term perspective of this. He realized it would be a long term effort. I think some of the other presidents we met were under stress, and Mr. Williams pointed this out. He said in effect: these are almost desperate men. He said their governments are under tremendous stress. I'd be surprised if many of their governments are there a few years from now. He was quite right in saying that and not long after a number of those governments fell.

Q: *How did you all perceive that this stress was there? Because of the drought?*

FELL: The drought was bringing to fore many of the local problems they were having. Naturally any time anything goes bad, people blame it on the government, whether they're right or whether they're wrong. These governments had very little to do with the fact that these droughts were taking place; it was a natural catastrophe. But also the way the drought was handled and their aftermath showed how they were donor driven. I mean when you saw trucks it was the US financed trucks, it was Belgian trucks. Belgian workers, US workers, French workers. Governments were almost impotent in a way to do anything about the drought themselves. Sam Adams always used to say, "How are the people coping out there?" People had coped to the extent that they coped. Probably 100,000 had died. They lost a lot of herds. And were just invisibly out there in the country where no one could see them having a lot of trouble. Or where they were reaching feeding or refugee centers, you saw a lot of expatriate work going on trying to do something about it. It probably showed up a lot of the central government's impotence in being able to deal with a catastrophe of this magnitude. I'm sure that put them under a lot of stress in addition to other things. And then you saw some of the nasty little problems that come up. In the height of the drought, the wife of the President of Niger was playing games and whether this was low level corruption or high level corruption, the rumors move about very fast, and people lose confidence in the leaders fast. I mean people are starving and they think that the leader's wife is doing something wrong. In Chad, I remember, we had trouble even getting some of the food through customs agents in Chad who were holding up food. These things get known very fast. They caused a lot of trouble and eventually Tombalbaye was killed.

Q: *This trip with Maury, what did you learn from it? What was the conclusion?*

FELL: I think the conclusion was that there was a lot of unity to the problems that all these countries were facing. That they were very much the same type of problems, and maybe we were naive about it but there was some technology that we could bring to bear that could improve things in agricultural packages, improved practices, improved grazing practices more forestry. Also there was an international cooperation that had taken place on the international level in the emergency relief operations and the aftermath of the drought, and why not try to build on that and build some international cooperative framework where the donors are working together and not at cross purposes.

Q: *Where did that idea start?*

FELL: The germ of that idea came out of USAID itself. I think that is one of the strong things that come out of USAID. It was an idea that practically speaking we could contribute toward setting up some sort of a cooperative arrangement with the other donors to work on a big "project" or program we would call it for West Africa. Well, you, Haven, were involved in this. Not only you but Don Brown, Sam Adams, and David Shear were the people that had this idea. They also were looking at it with an eye to our Congressional aspect - how could you show our Congress that we were going to try to do something new, innovative with other donors in a international framework for a very poor region in Africa.

Basic human need was big in these days; working with the poorest people. These were the people that really had been hit hard so maybe the United States ought to be there showing we can do something. It was a thoughtful idea that we could try to work together in an international way with the other donors. That's where we got in touch with the OECD. Maury Williams since that time had become chairman of the DAC and of course was well aware of what had happened in the Sahel because he made these trips and had been the President's coordinator for the drought in the early 70's. He sounded out the French, who would be a key in doing anything in West Africa and also other donors who were sitting around the Development Assistance Committee, which was a discussion body in the OECD for development, and found that there was generally agreement except for Germany to do something. The Germans didn't like the idea. He was very savvy in getting around this one way or another. A major person in the Secretariat was Anne de Lattre, who was interested in getting involved in this area and had a long standing interest in Africa. We loaned Roy Stacy, one of our most talented officers to work with Anne de Lattre sounding out the Africans themselves and working with the donors and setting up a small secretariat in the OECD that would help work with the Sahelians and the interstate organization in Ouagadougou to develop plans, to do joint work, and joint planning and approve projects.

Q: This was sort of unusual for the OECD wasn't it? Why would they agree to do something like that?

FELL: Very unusual. They agreed to it because it was slipped through in an almost surreptitious way through the DAC. Maury Williams had a meeting in the DAC. He interpreted that meeting as giving him a mandate in his personal capacity as Chairman of the DAC to negotiate this thing. The Secretary General of the OECD showed his flexibility in permitting this appendage or little unit if you will to be set outside of the budget of the OECD. As long as it was not financed by the OECD itself but financed by the donors, he said well it is not part 1 part of the core budget, but part 2, part of the budget. No one was really able to raise an objection against it, so it went forward because there were enough players on the inside, like Mr. Williams, Anne de Lattre, Roy Stacy, our agencies, and on the French side they were willing to make the contributions. Some of the other donors came forth, the Dutch were very interested in seeing this go forward. The Swiss were very interested, because they wanted to see this in some sort of

a broader regional framework, it fit in with their development plans. It just so happens that there were enough donors who saw this as an interesting program to get involved in, that it all jelled and came together. The financing was available for this framework.

Q: *Everybody but the Germans.*

FELL: The Germans sat on the sideline sucking their thumb and didn't like it. Eventually, grudgingly, they came on board. But much later. Today there is a German technical person on the Secretariat of Club de Sahel in Paris, but it took them 20 years to come to this. However, they actually did provide assistance to the CILSS which was more important than providing it to the Club de Sahel Secretariat. The way this was set up was we had this very small unit... Oh I forgot to mention the Canadians, My God how could I have forgotten the Canadians? The Canadians were major promoters of the Club de Sahel. Incidentally it just so happened how I had gotten involved in some of this, the first meeting of the Club de Sahel was held in Dakar hosted by President Senghor, and President of Mauritania, Ould Daddah, we met at the time. They presided over the whole session there. I remember Don Brown came, The Secretary General of the OECD was there. We, the USAID mission, helped to host and organize, and set up that first meeting of the Club de Sahel which was held in Dakar in 1975.

Q: *This was when you were in Senegal?*

FELL: When I was in Senegal, yes.

Q: *So you were in on this early part?*

FELL: Yes I happened to be with Maury Williams in Ouagadougou in the setting up of the CILSS, I was at the very first meeting of the Club de Sahel in Dakar. Eventually, when Roy Stacy rotated out of Paris, he was made head of development planning in Washington. I replaced him in the Club de Sahel Secretariat. I stayed here for several years, spent a lot of time in Ouagadougou or all the Sahel countries working with the Club de Sahel's framework.

Q: *What happened at this first meeting?*

FELL: The principal event was that the partnership between the donors, mainly represented by the OECD donors, and the CILSS, the interstate committee was sealed, and they made a resolution, the Dakar resolution that they would work together within this club which included both the Sahelians and the OECD donors and any other donors that wanted to get involved including the African Development Bank, the World Bank and others, to get involved in this planning and programming their effort, and trying to understand better what the problems were in West Africa.

Q: *Were there any issues that were addressed during that time?*

FELL: I think the main issue was that the Sahelians were leery that this would become donor driven. They wanted to make sure that their organization was in the drivers seat., and that it wouldn't be taken over by the donors.

Q: *Was there any issue about the Sahelians cooperating together?*

FELL: I think at that particular moment, there weren't any burning issues between the governments that divided them tremendously. Later on, I think some of these issues came to the front. Little problems between Upper Volta and Mali, maybe there was a small war that had taken place but generally speaking I think the Sahelians had quite lucidly seen the value of joint work and cooperation. I think that Mr. Dakouré (Minister of Agriculture of Upper Volta) and President Senghor (of Senegal) had talked to many of them saying: look our best chance in getting a major effort in this is to show that we have some cohesion, and we're going to work together in this. If we don't work together , we'll hang separately as we say, so I think this message got across, and they were trying to show a fairly united front. I think their major worry was that it would become too donor driven. I think that it did become too donor driven at times. It shows that oftentimes our recipient countries are more lucid in seeing some of the problems and that we don't see them quite so clearly. Also there had been a lot of background studies about what could be done about the Sahel about reaching better food security. That was major objective in setting the objectives, what would be the objective? The objective was food self-sufficiency which was a watchword for saying improved self-reliance in food production.

Q: *It was strictly food related?*

FELL: It was mainly food related, but it included the environmental aspects of the drought and to combat the drought and the encroachment of the drought, and improved land practices so that environment was a part of the analysis.

Q: *Was there a clear strategy for the Sahel program at that point?*

FELL: I think there was a clearer strategy than we thought. The strategy we thought was there would be technical packages that would be very performing, and we were optimistic that a lot more irrigated land would go into production and provide more security in a zone that had very erratic rainfall. That was the major thing. We were operating against some of the most difficult parameters: low rainfall, erratic rainfall. Those are difficult parameters to operate against to try to get more secure food production. We probably under estimated the number of years it takes to develop that capacity.

Q: *What sense did you have of the capacity for the Sahelian countries to carry out a program?*

FELL: On a very surface level we were impressed by some very fine individuals. Sometimes we tend to generalize from these individuals and think that there are more there than there are. In fact there was not enough technical capacity to carry a lot of these programs out. It was a much longer term effort than we ever thought it would be. It is still going on. There was another aspect that the Club de Sahel got involved in, which had a spin-off that had immense importance, that had been neglected. For the first time, and this was initiated by USAID, we looked at policy instead of just looking at technical aspects. As a stroke of genius, we brought in CRED the Center for Research in Economic Development from the University of Michigan which happened to be headed up by a very ambitious strong economist named Elliot Berg. Elliot Berg got involved in a study that was launched by AID but funded through the Club de Sahel network with the French playing a very minor role in it which was Cereal Policy in West Africa. It turned out to be a landmark study, because he basically said a lot of these projects don't matter if your pricing policies and your input policies are not good, and if there is not a more liberal approach to the way marketing of cereals is done and more information given to farmers and a whole lot of other things related to policy. If these policy problems are not addressed, none of the projects are going to work.

Q: *How was this perceived by the Sahelians?*

FELL: Not very well. Up to that time it was not considered fair game for us to comment on their cereals policy because that was internal. It was almost like a sovereign domain. It was like saying we're going to come in and work on your judicial system or your department of interior government system and get into the inner workings of your own government. They didn't like it very much. Eventually it was put on the table in working groups. I think that if this had been done in the wrong way it could have fallen completely flat, but luckily the Sahel network was set up in such a way that even an idea like this was able to be put on the table; people were able to read it; it was able to get some kind of discussion and sort of took on a life of its own as certain of these things do. It became part of the agenda of the club to work on that issue.

Another issue that was raised in those days that was a ground breaking issue was the question of recurrent costs. I think this came out of Washington and USAID, one of the many good ideas that came out of USAID. The idea was that a lot of new projects were going to be started up; the donors were starting to take renewed interest in the Sahel. The Dutch and Swiss were increasing their programs. The Italians were beginning to gear up. The French, I don't think they were increasing their program, but were cooperating more with the other donors at least in talking within the club network. The US had been able to develop the Sahel Development program through the Club du Sahel network, and the fact that it even got into legislation that we were doing this, we were able to increase our budgets. The Canadians had increased their budget. There were more projects. We became worried that if these projects were not well thought out and the recurrent costs of these projects were not taken into account, what we now call the sustainability of these projects would be doubtful. They are all going to end up fighting for central resources that

are not going to be there. This was capsulized in the idea of recurrent costs. So we asked HIID, Harvard Institute for International Development, to look at this issue. We were absolutely dumbfounded when the results came in. They studied dozens of projects for the World Bank, the African Development Bank, USAID, other donors, and did a major study. They found that almost none of these projects addressed this issue. That even the World Bank in all its majesty had neglected to think about not only recurrent costs in their own projects but the cumulative effect of looking at it from a program standpoint when projects were over, how are these going to be maintained? What's going to happen; where are the national budgets going to come up with resources to maintain some of these things? Whether it be infrastructure or software or whatever. This concept of studying recurrent costs wormed its way in to a lot of projects and had a spread effect of immense proportions in the way we look at development and has threaded its way through development planning. The other way that cereals project had a big effect was the World Bank had seen it and said this is really important stuff, so they hired Elliot Burg who had been our economist working on it, to do the first major study of sustainability in Africa and in general which eventually set policy in the World Bank for the next two decades.

Q: *What was the eventual outcome of the cereals policy? What do you understand happened to it?*

FELL: Well, it became a major issue and I think it eventually led, over a period of many years, to the structural adjustment agenda. It got into the discussions of the reform agenda that was picked up in structural adjustment. It was one of the major items of discussion and dialogue that was put into structural adjustment. Eventually many of these policies were changed or completely amended. So the seeds were set by some of this work that was done at the early days of the Club de Sahel.

Q: *Did anybody make any change at the time or was it longer term?*

FELL: In the short term I don't think there were major changes made. We were still thinking within a state operated system whereby you had state operated warehouses, state operated marketing boards and agencies. But within five to seven years many of those had collapsed because the donors began to withhold financing for them. That might have been a not very visible effect of what caused the collapse of some of those marketing boards. They also imploded from their own inefficiencies, became bankrupt or just inoperative. So just by the sheer fact of the way things were operating, the cereals policies couldn't be continued. A lot of them were changed; import policies were changed. But I still see rearguard actions going on of even donors supporting these state operated marketing boards. Inefficient operations like that still exist. But major changes in liberalizing the practices in West Africa have taken place. I think that many of those would not have happened, had those discussions not begun at that time in the late seventies.

I stayed at the Club de Sahel to 1983 and worked on environment, and forestry programs, among others.

Q: You started at the Club de Sahel when?

FELL: 1978 and I left in 1983 and went to Kenya as the Deputy Director of the REDSO office in Nairobi.

SUDAN: Droughts, floods, plagues and civil war—1986-1990

Excerpt from an interview with Frederick Gilbert

GILBERT: Well, in 1986 I went to Sudan as deputy director. In April of 1986 after a period of harassment by various Middle Eastern terrorist elements one of...there had been sort of a pattern of harassment and then stalking and that sort of thing. And then eventually, on...I think April 15th or 16th, a communicator was shot and permanently disabled.

Q: On the embassy staff?

GILBERT: An embassy communicator on his way home from having gone in to process a cable late at night. The next day as I recall, the wife of an AID officer narrowly escaped the attentions of somebody who had a gun. The ambassador called an evacuation and reduced the staff to all but a very minimum staff. That was in April.

When I arrived at the end of May, John Kohring had gotten there a few weeks earlier to assume his duties as mission director. And he and I shared a house together and I think there were maybe four other U.S. direct hires in the country at that time. And we and the USAID local staff ran things on that basis until about October or so of that year when we began to gradually bring back. Well, first we brought back our dependents and then we gradually brought back other USAID staff.

During that period the AID development programs had sort of been moth balled-necessarily they had to go down to a minimum level of functioning. But we sure had plenty of other things to do because there were always emergency activities or programs that needed to be implemented in Sudan. During the four years that I was there, we...I think had 11 disasters.

Q: You were there four years?

GILBERT: And that was between 1986 and 1990. There were two western drought emergencies. I sort of arrived in the middle of one. Or maybe there were three...and two

after I arrived. There were two locust outbreaks. There was one rat plague. And then there were at least two declarations regarding the civil war in the south. And there was the Khartoum floods. And the only thing that we didn't have was frogs as I recall to complete the biblical plagues.

Meanwhile the program was I think, the biggest development program in the Africa Bureau at the time. Certainly the biggest mission in the sub-saharan Africa. And the development budget was pretty close to 95 or 96 million dollars. That involved both non-project and project assistance. And as I said, almost constantly there was a major humanitarian emergency to deal with if not two or three.

Another thing that we were doing was providing food through the back door so to speak later on during those period when I was there.

Q: Were you involved in Eritrea refugee support?

GILBERT: Yes, we had Eritrea refugee support. That didn't take a lot of hands-on management because the PVO's handled that and there were no hassles about that to speak of.

I don't think I've ever worked so hard in my life. The work week there went Monday through...it actually went Saturday through Thursday. A six day week. And of course, Washington worked Friday which meant that you seldom got any real relief on Friday or Saturday because somebody in Washington especially in the kind of fraught circumstances that we were always in would be thinking of things that needed to be responded to.

During that whole period Jane used to make sure that we never sat down anyplace in full view of other people. Because if you let me sit down for ten minutes, I'd fall in sleep invariably-whether we were in church or a dinner party or whatever. But it was oddly exhilarating. I suppose exhilarating and wearing in the same way that working in a hospital emergency room might be. You had the feeling that if you oversleep or screw up it might cost peoples' lives.

I think that we were talking about in relation to Ghana how many friends we made and how that was kind of a unique experience. Oddly enough-and this is a common experience. Sudan ran second to Ghana in terms of the number of Sudanese friends that we made that were not just acquaintances but people that we really got to know in some depth. And they have a...they are extremely hospitable people. And the Sudanese elite is extremely cosmopolitan. Very appealing people.

One of the things that keeps that country afloat is the fact that they have an education systems that is quite high quality. I think they have got the oldest university in Sub-Saharan Africa besides those in the Republic of South Africa. And the Middle East

is full of Sudanese university professors, airline pilots, police and military officers, magistrates and judges. And the Sudanese are not really happy permanently anywhere else. They speak Arabic and they are very observant Moslems. But they seldom permanently settle abroad. They remit.

And so the interesting thing about Sudan is that the government is always broke but the country never is. And it is because you know, they can't collect taxes and they can't control their borders. But there is a tremendous amount of agricultural production and there is a tremendous amount of remittances and there is plenty of stuff that gets imported that is never bought officially through the foreign exchange system. And the country functions.

Q: What were the main program activities?

GILBERT: Well, we had an ag-research project. We had a project that was building roads in the south. We had another project that involved creating agricultural credit and cooperatives. We had a number of non-projects that assistance things and one of them I recall was related to petroleum financing. We had a PL-480 Title I program that related to wheat and bread and flour making policies and trying to get them to use other things than wheat for making bread. Again, a huge local currency program that was operated in some ways that are a bit parallel to what I described in Tanzania. Oddly...I mean, it is not too surprising that what I remember most vividly is the relief activities.

We did everything thorough PVO's. CARE, World Vision, an outfit called AICF (International Action Against Hunger), the French NGO, and others. And all of this relief activity had to be coordinated and accepted—at least somehow tolerated by the Sudan government. There was also an outfit called the High Commission, a relief coordinating body and that body depending on the climate would either be under the control of a benign person or an impossible person.

The Sudanese government never was coherent; it was kind of anarchic. You'd have certain people that you could work with and certain people that you couldn't because just everybody to a surprising degree was free to do their own number. You'd have some guys who were fairly low down in an administrative structure who would feel free to overrule their bosses. And it really required an awful lot of work on behalf of the donors as diplomats you might say, to intervene and neutralize these things that would otherwise block the implementation of relief programs.

And then there was always a tremendous amount of logistics to be arranged in order to move food say from Port Sudan to the western part of the country.

Q: I see.

GILBERT: When you consider there were usually two or three things like this going on

at one time, we really had our hands full. The donors of the European and the Brits-sometimes the U.N., all of those donors that in effect that were represented at the Ambassadorial level. And therefore you know, the American ambassador was expected to participate and usually would be reluctant not to if all his brother mission chiefs were involved in these things. Which meant that we really had to work very closely with the embassy. Most of the time it worked out pretty well.

I think at one level I was lucky to get out of there alive. It is the only place that I have ever worked that I have known people-a number of people-who got killed doing what we were doing.

One of the things we had to do was go down to Southern Sudan and they way you did that was you either took a U.N. plane or chartered from a company called "Nile Safari" that ran a charter service. And you went down to these southern town. What you would do is come in at 12,500 feet which is out of missile range. And then you get right over the town and then just corkscrew right in down to the landing strip and hope that the people who are guarding the perimeter around the city kept the bad guys from getting too close to the landing strip.

In one case a relief plane was shot down, when apparently SDLA infiltrated the town. And the other thing that would happen once in a while was that these pilots would...you'd think this would just be inconceivable but they'd just decide what the hell with it and at least once or twice planes were brought down because the pilot didn't feel like following the rules which made you pretty alert riding in the back seat of a plane that was going into one of these situations.

Q: Did we have an office in Juba at that time?

GILBERT: Yes. We had an AID office in Juba which was owned by us. It was kind of a campus layout. And quite a lovely facility. And one of the things that always got to me was flying down there and this place hadn't had a direct hire person down there for years and it always looked spic-and-span. The staff always doing what was supposed to be done.

Q: They were running projects out of there?

GILBERT: Well, they facilitated some things that we were doing there and communications often. They at least helped with communications with the PVO's that were in Juba. And a lot of NGO's had offices in the area trying to take care of a large number of refugees or displaced people around Juba. And so the existence of that facility was very helpful because we allowed some people to use it. Meetings were held there for instance.

We also let it be used as a recreation site for the PVO community down there.

There was a pool on the premises. There was always a regional government in Juba for the Equatorial Provinces. Sometimes the equatorial regional administration would have something to do because there was some hinterlands to attend to and other times they didn't have that much to do.

Q: It wasn't in the middle of the civil war then?

GILBERT: Well, it was. They never got inside the city of Juba. But they obviously- they got close.

Q: But this was federal territory in...

GILBERT: Central government territory. You know, it was diplomatic territory in Juba. There were a couple of cases where shots were fired near enough to make a hole or chip some of the mortar. And then after I left, two of the staff of that office were executed by the garrison in Juba because they were accused of somehow aiding the rebels.

We had had a policy of letting people come out if they wanted to. But Andrew Tombe who was the sort of senior local- he had a big family down there and I don't know. Anyway, he was the guy that they laid hands on one day in downtown Juba. He and another guy were arrested and shot.

Q: Anything particular about the emergency operations, any lessons or experience that is instructive?

GILBERT: Well I learned a lot about PVO's.

Q: How did you find them to work with?

GILBERT: Unruly. I mean, a very positive force but kind of trying to work with at some level. Often people, I mean, heroic, I've met some of the most impressive people I've ever met in my life with PVO's for instance especially some of these things like Doctors Without Frontiers and people who are putting their lives on the line constantly. But still it is a much richer mixture of strong and weak and sane and insane and so forth than you have among the donors.

Q: Right.

GILBERT: One of the things I think is that I was lucky that I was involved in the Sahel drought. It was helpful that I had been because John had not been in the same way. I would have to say that it is very dangerous to be on the ground in those situations because of AID/Washington. You are accountable but AID/Washington isn't.

And AID/Washington goes through cycles of attention and inattention and

concern and unconcern. For instance, in 1986-88 there were unusually heavy rains. And in effect it became impossible to get food supplies down to southern Sudan by many of the ways that we had been using. And then the Khartoum flood occurred. This has to be one of the all time great crazy situations.

But there really was a crisis. And during that summer and fall and probably and maybe even later I would guess that people died by the thousands in southern Sudan. Hundreds of thousands. At least probably a hundred thousand. And it is pretty painful to be part of something like that because some things work and some things don't work. You can always be haunted by the idea that something that didn't work might have worked if you'd been a little bit more attentive—if you had foreseen what might have gone wrong or things like that better than you did or you should have paid more attention to everything that you did.

But in any case, we reported and reported and reported on this and we think of things that we could do. And then the press began to show up. Washington became very interested. I remember getting a phone call from Julia Taft. The gist of the phone conversation was something like: "We think it's time to do something and we want to send a team out there. Obviously you guys have not been able to come to grips with this situation and if we send a team out somebody might deal with it and get you off your fanny so to speak". And I said, "We'd like to have that team, but read your cable traffic". She sort of let that go by. And this team showed up and they did some very good work. But it was also clear that these guys saw themselves as out there in sort of an adversarial role. Obviously we were bad guys because we had let all this stuff happen. And they were going to do our work for us. We were obviously too stupid or lazy to do. This wasn't entirely subtle, a sort of vibration or unstated message.

There were a couple of particular situations that they just couldn't leave alone. And then they went back and they submitted a report. And this is what led to the whole idea of Operation Lifeline-Sudan. And you have to give a lot of credit to Julia and Jim Grant and people like that who were able to weld together this effort escalating the whole level of our effort in terms of. There has to be a political decision at some point. And so these people engineered it.

And this was some time in the fall of 1988. We got a cable that said that we are going to be going to the White House and Congress about this and we need an answer to these questions. And the questions...I didn't like the questions that much. They were somewhat accusatory questions. And so the staff worked on this. And this stuff absolutely had to be in Washington as of something like COB or opening of business say on "X" day or "Y" day and they brought this cable to me. There were three or four cables that thick almost, you know detailed answers to these questions. And I kind of quickly read through them. And people are standing over me as I read through it. I was acting mission director. John basically had to spend most of the time in the U.S. because of family problems.

And the cables were well written but I had them miss the embassy deadline. And I wound up sending them out NIAC immediate because I told them to go back and put all the references of all the messages that we had sent in over the last six months at the beginning of at least the major cables. And I'll never know, but I have a feeling that is probably one of the most useful things I ever thought to do. Because after that the tone changed quite a bit. And in effect these people had been receiving all these reports for a very long time and were not reading them. And I think it was helpful to remind them of that.

So then the relief situation entered a new phase. And you know, we actually came to negotiate with the SPLA to allow trains to go from the north to some parts of the south and from...send convoys into SPLA territory from Kenya. But even so, the U.N.D.P. Resident Representative led the first train down from northern Sudan down to-I forget the name of the town now. And they damn near got killed. The SPLA had agreed to leave these people alone but their militia on both sides-the government side and the SPLA side. And there were these militia kind of border dwelling Arabs that were usually from southern Darfur-who for fun or profit were raiding in the south. (And you have heard about the problem of slavery; among the other deprivations that these people committed was taking kids and even young women and bringing them back and selling them. I don't know if it is slavery or what-but close enough.) And they got through the SPLA territory and one or two other places and the next thing you know the train was stopped by these Arab militia and almost killed them. I mean one of the guys who was an Arab speaker could follow their conversation and it was in the balance whether they were going to blow them away or not. They decided not to finally.

Q: The supplies got through?

GILBERT: That time. I think there were a few other trains but that was never a significant way of moving food. It continued to be that the main way of getting food down to the south was to bring it into the government controlled cities. You just had to assume that either people who needed the food would come and live in those cities and if they didn't need the food bad enough to come to the cities they must be more or less all right. Operating from Kenya, it was possible to do better overland. Food was gotten in gradually by sending the trucks through Kenya and through Zaire.

Q: But there had been some sort of a truce negotiated between the two parties?

GILBERT: It was always a matter of something that would last for a matter of six weeks or a couple of weeks. Never anything very strong or very lasting. Never a general truce but usually some kind of an agreement to let this or that convoy of trucks through. But even when we were shipping food down to government controlled cities, the government would periodically get the idea that we were somehow shipping arms.

I think that some of the PVO's were able to take some planes into some rebel

controlled cities. The government would go search these planes; they were convinced that some of the PVO's were trying to bring guns to the SPLA and the SPLA were convinced that we were trying to help the government by bringing food to government towns. Of course it all boils down to using food as a weapon.

Q: Right.

GILBERT: When I was in Abidjan I got back from a trip to the U.S. and I was summoned to a meeting with John Garang. The SPLA leader who happened to be in Abidjan who somehow knew about me and wanted to have a conversation. I found out...I checked with the ambassador to find out what it was all about. I didn't want to walk into something. And Ken Brown, the ambassador said, "No, here's the situation. He's here trying to drum up support. We know that and we know what we can and can't do so go ahead and meet with him".

I didn't want to really because frankly unlike some people I had a pretty ambivalent feelings about how a guy like this. I mean when you really get down to what the issues are between the SPLA and the government, how many lives are they worth? I did go and meet with him. And did manage to shake his hand. And I did actually have a pleasant conversation with him because he in effect is an Anglophone African and quite a raconteur; he got his PhD. from Iowa State and is quite a charming individual.

And as a matter of fact one of the things I tried to do because I didn't want to talk business with him, was that I tried to keep the conversation as much as possible on his telling me stories about all kinds of Sudanese personalities that we both knew. And he basically had some idea that I could help him somehow in what he was trying to do. I helped him understand that I couldn't be of much help where I was. It was an interesting conversation. He did tell me a lot of stories that were really amusing about people who were in high positions in the Sudanese government.

The crazy thing in Sudan is despite the war in effect between the SPLA and the government there were all these genuine real personal friendships.

Q: Between northerners and southerners?

GILBERT: Yes. It is not as if there is some kind of a racial ethnic hatred. I don't think. But there is certainly a cultural and religious issue and you know, I think most northerners think that most southerners would be a lot better off if they were all Muslims. And that definitely that they would probably think more clearly if they spoke Arabic instead of their own languages or English. And they definitely probably think that southerners shouldn't have much access to education except to Arabize them.

I mean, enlightened people wouldn't necessarily say that but I think there are these reflexes that are built into the system. And that is in effect what the war was about.

You know, it was really over to what extent the south was going to have their own institutions and educational system and opportunities and so forth. It has never been about secession. Except once in a while. Now I think in the last couple of years the Dinka element within the SPLA has talked about secession. But the rest of the southerners don't want secession because then they would be under the domination of the largest tribe in the whole country which is the Dinkas. It is a very complicated, even subtle thing that they are all struggling and fighting and dying for. And some of it is just a question of power-which elites are going to have important roles and which ones aren't.

Q: Did you have extremists in the north? Were there extremist factions?

GILBERT: Yes. Then you come to the coup in 1989. And you've always had what they called the "Moslem Brothers." I don't pretend to have a terribly good understanding of what they are all about. But I suppose they believe in kind of a Muslim society. I guess they would be called Islamists, fundamentalists. This is probably one of the most interesting and upsetting things I ever witnessed. They managed to have this coup. I don't think they were more than five or ten percent of the educated population and they tend to be well educated.

It is the same thing that happened in Nazi Germany. A minority group of extremists got control. The other thing that was similar to Nazi Germany was that the mass of the Sudanese are very decent but kind of apathetic people. Kind of easily led politically. So they were able to take over and getting food to the south; Operation Lifeline Sudan became a lot harder when these people were in power. They created a situation where we had to phase-out development assistance programs in the Sudan. We wound up redesigning or pruning back our development assistance program so they could come to some kind of decent conclusion but not the conclusion envisioned.

But the bizarre thing is that from day one after that coup took place—this was sometime in April or May of 1989; I was getting ready to go on vacation. I had to send Jane and our sons on their own because I could not leave. The group came to power and in their initial pronouncements they talked about creating order out of anarchy and making things work again. It is true that the civilian government—the elected government—couldn't do anything right. They just couldn't make any decisions. And things were sadly drifting.

I think we were already beginning to question whether we could seriously operate a development program in the kind of chaos where they couldn't do or finance anything unless we gave them the money. So these guys talked of just a conventional African military takeover transitional gain when they took power.

But almost immediately, Sudanese contacts of ours-you know, people who were substantial members of society and the business world-very serious people-began and say, "You know what's just happened? These people who have taken power are Islamic

Fundamentalists. And they are going to take this country and turn it into a little Iran or that sort of thing". And so we passed this information to the embassy and we got the "isn't that cute" response. The AID people are trying to help us understand what is going on politically in country". And "Oh, yes, we'll look into that".

And, of course, we saw their political reporting and what they were reporting was that really that these guys had ties to Egypt. They were very moderate people and talking a little bit Islamic fundamentalists but that is not really what they are all about—this kind of thing. But we kept getting all this feedback from the people like the head of the biggest public accounting firm in the country and that sort of thing. People saying you know, "What's going on? They see people from the embassy all the time and why is the U.S. government not worried about this?"

And so we would continue to remind people of what we're hearing and I remember going back to Washington and being asked and telling them these things and they'd say, "Say, well that's funny...that's not what State is saying".

Well, the Egyptians had been supporting a coup. The head of the diplomatic mission in the Egyptian embassy in Khartoum was apparently an intelligence official. Apparently there is a close kind of love-hate relationship between Egypt and Sudan. They had thought that they were supporting a bunch of moderate people who were going to take over the country and kind of get it squared away and on a more business-like track.

These Islamic fundamentalists are so damn clever that in effect they stole the coup from the people that the Egyptians thought they had bought. And so the U.S. embassy was taking its assurances from the Egyptians. And I guess to some extent the rest of the diplomatic community did for awhile but I think that the U.S. held to this line; clung to this forlorn hope longer than the other diplomatic missions. Until a new ambassador arrived, I never did hear any direct acknowledgement of what had happened. And that was after three or four months went by.

Q: At some point the decision was made to close out the program.

GILBERT: It didn't have to be made. It was in the law. Once there is a military coup. So it didn't hang too much on this question of what the character of the coup was.

Q: I see.

GILBERT: Anyway so then we set to work once again to close our development programs. It was pretty much completed and packed up by the time I left in June of 1990. But still, the resources that we were handling either directly or indirectly were—depending upon how you count it—certainly over 100 million dollars a year.

Q: This was both emergency and program assistance and projects?

GILBERT: As the program assistance-development assistance went down the humanitarian aid went up. I remember being struck by that. So that was Sudan.

I guess one of the anecdotes that stuck in my mind was when OLS—Operation Lifeline Sudan—was building up during 1968 we had to make more trips to the south. During this time there had always been a defense attache's office in Sudan and an airplane.

Q: I seem to remember something about that.

GILBERT: Yes. And the guy who was the defense attache and who was the pilot of the airplane was just a peach of a guy—Joe Kennedy. The kind of guy that would just do anything for you. Somebody you'd go fishing with. It came up that all these things are happening and sometimes we couldn't get an airplane and so how about using the defense attache's airplane? He said, "Gosh, why...that's wonderful. Why didn't you guys ever ask before?" And to make a long story short, the answer from Washington was "Are you crazy? You could get hurt doing that!" In effect, I guess somehow the whole idea of the piece of US military equipment and military personnel might somehow wind up in trouble. It triggers all sorts of things that aren't triggered if mere civilians do these things and get into some kind of difficulty. That is something that I never dreamed might be the case. And I'm not sure I understand fully. I suppose that there is a whole complex of legislation and issues that arise.

Q: Didn't we have a plane in Sudan at that time?

GILBERT: Yes. So then out of this came the idea that obviously we are going to need to have aircraft, air transport to get on with this job. Not only for moving goods—food and other relief supplies—but also to get people where they need to go to oversee and manage these operations.

Q: This was mainly related to relief operations?

GILBERT: Yes. So there is an outfit called "Airsolve," an NGO, which essentially grew out of missionary activities. But then I think they gradually...maybe in the context of Ethiopia and some other situations, got into working on relief and humanitarian assistance.

There was also another airplane that was available and that was a Twin Otter. UNICEF had a Twin Otter. They were pretty kind about letting people get on when space was available. I forget what the origin or how we would have had access to that plane. I remember a decision—we almost decided that we would take it and it would be AID control. But the smartest thing we ever did was to put all that under the U.N. As the obvious source of money to operate it, we had privileged access to it. The administrative heading wasn't ours. And, of course, the U.N. was in the habit of using equipment or

using facilities like that on a pool basis and they were happy to do it. It worked out very well.

I feel very lucky to have had the experience working in Sudan during that period. Especially now that it's over. Well, it is one of those things that you wouldn't have not done but you sure as hell wouldn't care to do it again.

Q: Right. I know exactly what you mean. Was there any lasting effect of all this massive program that we had for so long out there? How would you characterize what may have become more ingrained in the...?

GILBERT: I believe almost at a mystical level that it had lasting effects. That there are people there whose approach to life and work will always be different either because of just the interactions that we had or kind of thinking that we shared. Or more specifically because of the training that they got. A fair number of Sudanese were getting training in the United States in different roles. We trained a lot of economists.

One of the things that we did: Brian De Silva—one of the people on our staff (this started under Joe Goodwin, who was in Sudan when I got there) had laid out a series of economic studies of the economics of irrigated agriculture. And they had built a model. And Brian had a team of something like ten or so Sudanese young PhD master economists who were developing and then operating this model. I think it turned out to be quite successful.

But you know, in any kind of a medium term how much of this was lasting in a sense is pretty hard to say. However, there are people who are alive who definitely would not be alive today because of what we did then.

Q: Relief.

GILBERT: Now, I don't know if they died afterwards but I think in general the relief situation has improved quite a bit because of this Operation Lifeline Sudan.

Q: Was there some sort of institutional system established for relief operations?

GILBERT: I just think that OLS elevated the profile of the whole thing. Audrey Hepburn came out as a special UNICEF ambassador. And you know, that was a great treat. But I mention that because it is symptomatic of the fact that this was getting discussed on a completely higher level than it had been previously in the U.N. and even in host governments or donor governments.

And so, I think the parameters of relief operations in the south just continuously expanded—albeit with some setbacks—to the point now that USAID is running from Nairobi a regular development program in SPLA territory by providing

assistance for primary education. They are getting inputs distributed to farmers so that there is a way to get these people in a position to grow food, then, it doesn't have to be hauled from the Indian Ocean. Also there were attempts to get some kind of civic administration— a development-oriented civic administration— set up in SPLA controlled territory but it was like having to walk a tightrope so that you didn't, in effect, support a new African country.

The SPLA had a relief arm which was theoretically an NGO. These guys were impossible. They were basically just a bunch of guerillas. Probably the ones that they didn't trust in the field, were sent to go and do this relief stuff. I mean, the people who had to deal with these guys in Nairobi and southern Sudan just despaired. But I gather that now this group—what ever it is called—is now gradually turning into some people that you can actually work with and can make a bargain about how things are going to be run and they stick to it. The vehicles that they have remain there. They don't disappear for unknown uses. And so that is some progress.

But one of the things that comes to me is that Sudan was my only experience in a country where the U.S. presence and the U.S. assistance program were significantly related to Cold War geo-strategic issues. I can't think of a single example that we got into for those reasons where you've had any significant success. It is too bad that we had to play those games. I'm glad I only witnessed what happened in one of them.

You know there are leaders in these countries such as the leadership in CAR which were about as poor excuse for a national leaders that anybody could even dream up. In Sudan the overall situation—the government, the public authority situation—was just completely chaotic.

But you know it reminds me of these accounts you read about concentration camps during World War II where you find super people who are working sincerely and diligently to do the right thing. Often in situations where they get penalized for it rather than rewarded. I remember being struck by that in the Health Ministry in Bangui and I definitely was struck by it in many cases in Sudan. You know in these situations they bring out the best and the worst in people. There is plenty of worst but there is also some amazing examples of just really exemplary behavior.

One personality I can think of is the Governor of Kurdufan whose name I'm not sure I can even say now. But he was instrumental in helping to get food down to a part of southern Kurdufan which was affected by the drought. There are Dinka towns in southern Kurdufan and areas down there where there was an awful lot of starvation. I remember taking a train trip down to this area as soon as the rains permitted to see what was going on. That was a pretty upsetting experience. On the way, there were people who tried, again, military types, the railroad officials tried to frustrate the purpose of this trip by creating artificial problems. We finally got down there this governor, more or less, made it happen to the level of going around and grabbing people by their neckties and

shaking them until they got some sense. Actually he wasn't that kind of a guy. I mean, not a physical guy.

But I distinctly remember down in one of these southern Kurdufan towns that railroad authorities had said that we would leave at a certain time and that our situation was taken care of. And we sort of went and relaxed and I fell asleep. And I remember waking up to the sound of voices raised and staggering outside to find that this guy was just throwing a pea green fit because these guys had gone home after telling us they were going to put the train on the track. And we wound up commandeering cars and going and rousing the head of the railroad out of bed and collecting the train crew, just by force of this guy's personality. These guys had thought that they could overrule the governor of this province.

Q: And they didn't want to go because of the fears of militia or were they just...?

GILBERT: Maybe the fear of the militia had something to do with it. But I think it was just some type of cussedness. Maybe they just didn't want to make the trip. Certainly the army didn't want us down there poking around. It focused an awful lot of unfavorable publicity on Sudan because we walked into a situation where a four year old girl dropped dead in front of my eyes. People were starving down there.

Q: And you delivered food on this train?

GILBERT: We had some food with us but we were also going down to try to assess the situation.

Q: How long a train trip was it?

GILBERT: Probably fifty miles through countryside that was supposedly in government hands but one never quite knew. But it was really just a holocaust. Among the Sudanese for everyone that was a bad actor there were some that were super good. I don't understand how people manage to live in a society like that. It must be pretty trying. I guess the sad thing is that you would hope that they wouldn't be so politically apathetic.

SOUTHERN AFRICA: The Drought Emergency Task Force—1992

An excerpt taken from an interview with Scott Smith

SMITH: So, in April, 1992 after only about nine months, a fast and busy nine months, I left the Europe bureau and went to Africa again. Initially I served as co-director of the drought relief task force with Steve Brent, who was working in the bureau at that time; when he was assigned to South Africa a few months later, I became director of the task force.

This, too, was a fascinating experience and a highly successful one, I must say. The overview of the effort that I would give is that the US provided, in a period of less than a year, close to \$1 billion of resources to the countries of southern Africa. The US response was tremendous. The drought happened at a time when there were a lot of resources available for a variety of reasons. But this effort was also a success because of the degree of cooperation and concern that existed in the countries of the region and their ability to coordinate among themselves--even with South Africa, which still was an apartheid regime at that point. They were very pragmatic, working together on transportation coordination and other things. This made the effort in southern Africa an enormously successful one.

One of the things that hopefully contributed to that success was the coordination we were able to give to the program. As I mentioned earlier, the task force was created as a joint effort between the Africa and FHA bureaus. Much of the assistance we provided was food aid, which was managed by FHA. Disaster assistance was managed by OFDA, which was also part of FHA. The Africa Bureau devoted a considerable amount of resources for development programs aimed not only at responding to the drought but also to improving communications and making the region and its economy more drought-resistant. So it was a true partnership. There were some tensions and tugs and pulls from time to time as you can imagine, but I think it worked extremely well.

There was a steering committee, a group that was composed of people from both bureaus, headed by John Hicks from the Africa bureau and Lois Richards from FHA and a couple of other people, someone from State Department as well. Every week or so there would be larger meetings that would include people from throughout the government who were interested in the drought situation, including CIA, the military, Agriculture, OMB and a whole variety of different actors. There was good coordination within the government, a good structure within the agency. A small task force was organized and put together. I think at the highest point we had seven people working on the task force, but usually it was about half that number. In fact, it was more of a challenge than the coordination effort itself just to get people detailed to the task force to help carry out its functions. In 1992, the agency was enormously stressed in terms of personnel. At the same time the Soviet program was beginning to draw off people from the traditional development bureaus. So, it was really tough to get people detailed even for a few months to the task force. It was a constant effort to try to find people and replace people who had served a month or two and were going back to their positions, etc. It was kind of a motley crew that was put together: there were some IDIs on rotation and a couple of contractors and other folks who were there for a short periods of time. But, it worked out pretty well.

The role we played in the task force was essentially two or three things. One was to be a central point for information both about the drought itself and its consequences and what was happening in the region, as well as the overall assistance

effort, so that everybody would know what everybody else knew. That was a primary challenge of ours, to be a central point for information about not only US assistance flows but European assistance flows and other UN agencies' flows, what the new needs assessments were, what was happening in the field and, of course, what the US government contributions were.

A second principal role of the task force was the public affairs, public relations side of things: making sure that the word got out about what the US was doing. We also staffed out, although we usually did not participate directly, a number of hearings that were held on the Hill about the drought and the relief effort. We coordinated with the PVO community through a special group set up with in InterAction on the drought. We basically served as a point of information and contact and public affairs to people outside the executive branch of the government.

The third key function that we played was to try to spot opportunities for programs, to play a little bit of a catalytic or promotional role around certain kinds of things that we thought would be appropriate responses, and then try to get the parts of the organization who were responsible for carrying out those programs to put them in place. We very consciously did not take on ourselves any implementation responsibilities. That wasn't the authority that was given to us and it wasn't appropriate for a small ad hoc task force that had very little continuity. But, what we did see as our role, where we thought there were opportunities, was to work with the Africa Bureau or Food for Peace office to try to encourage them to carry out those programs, to try to resolve bottlenecks or issues, or if there were communication problems between the two then try to work those out.

Q: Comment a little bit about the scale of the drought issue as you understood it.

SMITH: The scale was tremendous. There were major failures of the rains in that region the summer of 1991-92. Tremendous loses of crops. The production of maize was 30-40 percent of normal. There were tremendous shortfalls that needed to be met by either relief food or commercial imports. South Africa, which was normally produced tremendous surpluses of corn, was also seriously affected and had no surplus at all, in fact was drawing down on its own stocks. Zimbabwe, which was the other surplus corn producer in the region, was very, very severely hit and complicating that, it had in the previous year or two sold off a lot of its substantial maize stocks to gain foreign currency for some of its expenditures. So the drought came at a time when Zimbabwe's buffer stock was at a particularly low ebb. So, there were tremendous problems, basically from Tanzania south, affecting all of the countries in southern Africa--Zambia, Angola, Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland, as well as South Africa. Hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of people were at risk of dying from starvation or other drought related causes.

Q: What was the main problem you had to address in trying to meet this need?

SMITH: The main issues were transportation and supply. In both cases the response was magnificent, both from within the region as well as from outside. On transportation first. Much of the port system and rail system which serves southern Africa originates in South Africa. There was in the region at that time considerable antipathy between South Africa and its neighbors over its internal policies. And yet, despite that, there was a very close, if not very high profile, working relationship between the frontline countries and South Africa around port and rail transportation issues. There were even, and this was pretty hard to imagine in the environment at that time, government people, middle level people, from the governments of some of those countries who actually went and worked in South Africa with the transportation people coordinating the ports and rail system as a way of keeping communications going and working a whole structure of transportation in the region. There was an increase of our assistance to the ports and rail corridors from Mozambique into Zimbabwe and Malawi, and also some assistance came in through Dar es Salaam and Tanzania and down the rail to Zambia and across into Malawi as well. So, there was a lot of effort. The regional program in southern Africa was still headquartered in Harare and Ted Morse was the director there at that time. And, of course, Ted is one who is very experienced in emergencies and played a key role and was sort of a local, on-the-scenes or in-the-region coordinator for a lot of the US assistance. The whole transportation mechanism worked extremely well.

The other side was supply. There was a lot of flexibility even within countries to swap supplies, to use what buffer stocks there were, for some commercial sales from South Africa to other parts of the region, even though South Africa, itself, was under a bit of a strain. On the US side, as I mentioned before, the response was absolutely tremendous. It was just a coming together of somewhat unique circumstances that haven't been repeated since. There were in the US at that time substantial corn stocks and the Department of Agriculture, in particular, had a lot of corn available through its Section 416 programs as well as Title I of PL480. In fact, most of the food, more than half, that was provided by the US in response to the drought was Department of Agriculture food, not AID food. It was close to a billion dollars worth. Hundreds of thousands of tons of corn were provided.

Another feature which I think was really innovative was that pretty much for the first time AID approved some PL480 Title II shipments to the region without designating in advance where it would go. It was kept there as a swing stock, allow us to see how things went in terms of the needs and how the individual countries were doing in terms of the pledges that they were receiving for food and other assistance from European countries and UN agencies. We actually had an ability to respond even before the major appeal was out for food assistance, because we had something like 45 thousand tons of corn that were literally on the high seas as the emergency was beginning. We were able to use that in a flexible way, and most of it ended up going to Malawi, which was at the end of all the rail lines, the most distant point from any of the ports and the most difficult place to get to. In that way we were able to head off some major suffering and problems in Malawi.

So, the internal regional cooperation on transportation and commercial purchases among countries, cooperation between the frontline countries and South Africa, which was somewhat without precedent, and then the generosity that was available from the US and the flexibility in terms of moving things, etc., made it a very successful relief effort. The next season the rains did come again and although there wasn't a bumper crop by any means, the drought in effect was over and the relief effort had been very successful in averting any widespread disaster or death.

For the first few months Steve Brent and I shared the leadership responsibilities for the task force. Steve handled most of the external relations issues and I handled a lot of the information and program response questions. We shared the overall direction of the task force. Steve then left, I think in September, and went to South Africa on assignment and from that point on until I left the task force in December, I was the director of the task force. But, the role that I personally played was to define and oversee each of the areas that I mentioned before. First was being the staff to the two bureaus and the three offices involved in this, the Africa Bureau, the Food for Peace office, and OFDA, for issues related specifically to the drought. We didn't carry out implementation responsibilities. We were there as kind of the catalyst, the coordinator, to make sure that things were going on. We acted as the secretariat for the meetings of the principals, documenting the agreements they took and following up with the different offices to help trouble shoot any problems or to get things done.

We coordinated all the information on pledges, on deliveries, from other countries and organizations as well as our own, so we could track the performance of the response to a major appeal that had been organized for the region in May of that year. My personal responsibility was to oversee the person who was handling the information activities and make sure they were timely and got to the right people and were up to date.

And, then, third, I played more of an external information role, participating in various meetings about the drought and US response to it, and was a spokesperson for issues related to that. At some meetings InterAction organized, we were the interlocutor with them; we served as staff in preparing some of the testimony that both Lois and John gave on the Hill about the relief effort; and had some meetings with staff of different committees on the Hill ourselves.

Then, not unimportant, my role was to keep the task force staffed so that we would have some people to carry out these functions. That actually turned out to be one of the more difficult aspects of this whole thing because of the situation I mentioned before.

Q: Was there any particular lesson that stood out from that experience?

SMITH: Well, I think the lesson is one that reenforced my earlier experiences and that is, where there is commitment, where there is concern, on the part of the countries where a natural disaster is occurring then an international response will be much more successful in attracting resources and they will be much more effectively used. When you contrast the drought experience in southern Africa with similar relief efforts in other places of the world that maybe have been the result of natural causes like drought, and more recently civil wars and other kinds of things, the difference between the southern Africa drought and some of those others is largely explained by the fact that you have in southern Africa by and large countries with governments that took responsibility for their countries, which cared for their populations and took pragmatic actions that were designed to meet the needs in their countries. They did not play politics with it, did not use food assistance as a tool in an ongoing political, or in some cases, a civil war situation. Not that none of the countries in that region are not corrupt, but in this case there was very little of attempts to profit from the relief effort, not a Somoza in Nicaragua after the earthquake in the late seventies situation. But there was a sincere concern and interest in relieving the potential hardship and suffering of the people. I think that is what really made it successful.

I guess in another way it validated the organizational approach that we took, which isn't always the approach that AID has taken with its task forces for relief efforts. We very consciously played a role that was facilitative, was catalytic, was information sharing. We did not take on a role as a SWAT team that would serve as the channel of our resources, a special task force that took responsibility away from the line offices that are in charge of that. Our role was the opposite. We were the ones at the center, but it was just a small core, and our job was really to help the other offices carry out their responsibilities better. Through the lens of the urgency of the southern Africa drought, we tried to make sure it got priority attention among all of the other demands that these offices had to respond to. We tried to break through bottlenecks and figure out what the problems were and that sort of thing. So, our role was not an implementing role but was really to try to get others to do their job. This didn't take responsibility away from other, and even though we were a small group ourselves, we really had, in effect, the staff and resources of all of those other offices to respond to the drought.

LATIN AMERICA**Peru: Reconstruction program - 1972**

Excerpt taken from an interview with Aaron Benjamin

BENJAMIN: From Quito, I was assigned to Peru in the summer of 1972 to work on the reconstruction program for a major earthquake that hit at the end of 1971.

Q: You had a home leave, I guess after Ecuador?

BENJAMIN: Yes. I took home leave in July of 1972 and then proceeded on to Peru. The earthquake took place in the north, in a valley called the Callejon de Huylas, located about 150 miles up the coast from Lima and about 50 miles to the east of Trujillo. To illustrate the force of this earthquake, it literally sheared off the peak of Mount Huascarán, causing an avalanche which slid down the side of the mountain into the nearby town of Yungay completely covering the town. In pictures, you can see the tops of palm trees which were about 30 feet high. All that remained visible was the top 5 feet of these palm trees. The town was completely buried in ashes and rock.

Steve Tripp, who headed the AID Disaster Assistance Office, recently completed a memoir, which describes the disaster in detail. I provided some pictures for the document.

Other towns that were affected were Trujillo, with a population of 100,000 on the coast, and Chimbote, a town of about 60,000, also on the coast.

Most of my work in the time that I spent in Peru had to do with housing reconstruction in the two cities on the coast and the rural areas up in the mountains. We secured a \$15 million loan and a 28 million HG to meet the housing needs of the 1970 earthquake.

In the rural areas, both on the coast and in the mountains, we had the opportunity to do something distinct from the traditional guarantee and loan funded housing programs. We worked with the Engineering University in Lima to come up with what we called the Stabilized Adobe program. Adobe was the traditional building material. Together, we devised a system wherein the traditional adobe was mixed with asphalt or road oil, which made the adobe mix waterproof. Then we helped the campesinos (rural farmers) develop a formica lined wooden form for casting the adobe blocks. The adobe block came out with a surface that was as smooth as glass. This was helpful because when adobe blocks have nicks and chips, they tend to erode very quickly, particularly when they get wet. Also, to help the self help builders avoid the traumatic effects of earthquakes, we taught them to reinforce the adobe block walls. Using an empty tin can, they cut a round hole in each block before stacking them, and then put a cane pole, two inches in diameter, through the hole in the stacked blocks. In this way the

cane pole served as a reinforcing rod. The Bureau of Standards tested this system on a vibrating table and the results showed that this reinforcement which costs virtually nothing, was about 19 times more earthquake resistant than unreinforced adobe. That was an interesting innovation.

Q: It certainly was.

BENJAMIN: Another thing was that, traditionally, rural people would use home made Spanish tiles for roofing. They were very heavy and caused a lot of damage during an earthquake. We were interested in designing a lightweight roofing system as a substitute for the heavy tiles. So, we devised a method whereby we took bamboo poles, about 2 inches in diameter, laid them out and wired them up in 3 feet square panels, built a basic flat roof structure, laid out the bamboo mats, then covered the mats with 1/4 inch of this stabilized adobe mix. In this way, the roof became waterproof and so light that if it was shaken and ripped off it would cause virtually no damage. I received a great deal of satisfaction in meeting these challenges with alternative construction techniques and materials. The major lesson learned through these activities was that the answer to economical, effective building solutions in developing countries is to use traditional methods and materials, but improve upon them.

Q: Did you have a staff?

BENJAMIN: I had one assistant, a Peruvian civil engineer and a secretary, but I worked closely with the staffs of the Housing Bank, the local Savings and Loan Associations and the Department of Engineering of the University of Lima.

Q: Highly qualified?

BENJAMIN: Absolutely. My assistant had a Master's Degree in Civil Engineering and many years of experience. Actually, most of the technicians from the local institutions had Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in architecture and engineering.

Q: Now, you were in Lima, the capital?

BENJAMIN: Yes, my office and home were in Lima. but my projects for the most part were in the north.

Q: This raises the question, did you receive or did you already have Spanish capability? Did you receive Spanish training?

BENJAMIN: I had studied Spanish in high school and college. However, when I went to Bolivia, I was not at all proficient, though, after a couple of years in Bolivia, taking advantage of the Mission's language program and through daily contact with native spanish speakers, I learned to speak, read and write Spanish fairly well.

Q: Did you receive training at the mission?

BENJAMIN: I took Spanish language training at all of my Latin American posts until I reached a level of 3+.

Q: I would think that working closely with your counterparts that you would almost need Spanish capabilities.

BENJAMIN: It was absolutely necessary to work effectively.

Q: Do you feel AID could have done better in that regard, in preparing you before your first mission?

BENJAMIN: No, not really. I believe that to learn a language effectively, you must be immersed in it, preferably in a Spanish speaking country, as in my own case. You really have to be in contact on a daily basis with people who don't know English.

Q: So you were studying Spanish as you went along on your first assignment?

BENJAMIN: Yes, absolutely.

Returning to the program, in Peru, AID developed a very strong housing guarantee program in Lima and I was involved in that, but it was the reconstruction programs in the northern cities that took up most of my time.

Q: Now who was your backstop in Washington on the housing guarantee program?

BENJAMIN: We had a Washington based housing office in those days which was headed by Stanley Baruch. Harold Robinson was deputy director for loan and grant funded projects and Peter Kimm was deputy for Housing Guaranty Projects. Juan Cabrero, an engineer in that office, was specifically backstopping the Peruvian Housing Guaranty projects and I was backstopped by Harold Robinson on everything else

Q: ...the man that first recruited you.

BENJAMIN: Yes,

Q: I remember those names.

BENJAMIN: Peter Kimm eventually became Director of the Housing Office, which was expanded in the early 1970s to become the world wide RHUD0 system, eventually absorbing urban planning and many of the functions of Bill Miner's office over in Central

AID. It has since been further enlarged to include environmental and municipal development programs.

Q: You generally worked through the Bureau, I guess at least the mission did.

BENJAMIN: Yes, except with regard to the housing guarantee programs

Q: In these first three missions that you have mentioned, did you consider all of the project activity successful or were there areas of weakness that could have been improved if they had additional agreement support or any ingredients added? You may want to think about that and feed that in.

BENJAMIN: My general feeling was that I couldn't have gotten better support from the mission as well as from Washington, although a lot had to do with one's own initiative. In Bolivia for example, I managed a small housing project that was financed by the Cooley Loan Program. Do you remember that? That program came out of grain sales, and was probably a forerunner of PL-480.

Q: Right.

BENJAMIN: This program was promoted initially by a grain producer in the mid-west. I believe that his name was Garvey. The proceeds from the grain sales were used to finance development programs, and under the Cooley Loan Program in Bolivia, we were able to do a housing project. Housing wasn't the most popular program in the AID portfolio, so we always had to develop creative sources of funding.

Q: That worked well for your local currency support.

BENJAMIN: It worked very well thanks to good contacts in the private sector and some imagination. What helped especially was a piece of legislation in the early 70s that permitted U.S. Savings and Loan Associations to invest up to 1% of their reserves in the Housing Guaranty Program overseas. The Housing Guaranty Program generally opened doors to banks and a large variety of financing organizations in the United States. I used to spend a lot of time when I was on home leave, promoting investment by these organizations in housing programs.

A particularly good contact was Harold Tweedy, who was the head of the First Federal Savings and Loan Association of Pittsburgh. He had enough faith in the program to invest 3.5 million dollars in the Bolivian Housing Guaranty Program and later agreed to invest six million dollars in Ecuador program through a consortium consisting of 19 Savings and Loan Associations in the U.S.

Q: What I hear from you is that the private sector in the U.S. and in these developing countries were very effective and played a significant role in your programs.

BENJAMIN: Yes. Both in Bolivia and Ecuador the Savings and Loan System, for all intents and purposes, was private and though the Government did not provide it with any direct financing, the Enabling Legislation that authorized its creation provided a government guaranty for its investments. This made it possible for both systems to develop an international contractual relationship with A.I.D. through their respective governments.

Earthquake in Managua, Nicaragua—1974

An excerpt taken from an interview with Maurice Williams

WILLIAMS: The earthquake in Managua brought me another assignment as the President's representative for emergency assistance. In this case, President Nixon phoned me one weekend at my retreat on the Potomac River in West Virginia which I told him was my Camp David. He said "I want you to go to Managua and take charge of the relief effort. I'm concerned that the communists may take over the country. Somoza is a personal friend of mine; I will have a letter for you to carry to him."

The following Monday I was briefed at the White House on the situation in Nicaragua and the nature of the mission. I had presidential authority to engage whatever resources were necessary to deal with the results of the earthquake which had destroyed the capital city. Then I was asked to brief the assembled White House press corp on the effects of the earthquake and the nature of my mission. President Nixon's interest in the Managua disaster was both to help his political buddy, President Somoza, and to highlight a highly visible U.S. humanitarian effort, partly as a distraction of media attention from the bombing of Hanoi then underway.

I flew to Nicaragua by military helicopter from a U.S. army base in Panama. What was left of Managua was a desolation of rubble that was still smoldering from fire which had swept the city. All central services had been disrupted and people had fled to surrounding areas. A U.S. military field hospital in tents on the outskirts was treating the injured. The central relief problem was food and its distribution. Even before the earthquake, there had been a failure of agricultural production and there was a problem of insufficient food supply.

Nicaragua is a relatively small country with nearby U.S. military logistical facilities in Panama, the Central American U.S. Command. Very quickly we were able to call forward large supplies of food and tents for shelter and to have these supplies airlifted to various distribution points by large U.S. army cargo helicopters. Local Nicaraguan authorities in nearby towns organized the distribution of supplies. I visited these centers to assure their reasonable effectiveness. It didn't take too long. In comparison with emergency relief for a large Asian country or African region, the logistics and distribution were quite easy.

Of interest was the U.S. Army field hospital which was now routinely servicing what had been the city of Managua. Initially there had been casualties, many resulting from gunshot wounds, which led me to believe there may have been an attempted revolt against Somoza as President Nixon had worried about.

However, the calls on the hospital were now few and fairly routine. While the local city hospital had been destroyed, most of its personnel had survived. The sensible thing was to turn the equipment of the U.S. Army field hospital over to local medical personnel, which is what I did without prior permission from the Defense Department. It was perhaps a bold move, but I didn't see any reason to lose time or to leave Americans sitting there in the sun in tents with little or nothing to do. Several days later I received a cable from the Defense Department: "Please Mr. Williams, don't give our engineering equipment away, we need it." There was an army engineering group there helping to clear away the debris, and I wasn't about to give that away.

There was an AID Mission in Nicaragua which I naturally drew on for assistance in the relief operation. We began planning for a housing rehabilitation program and other activities, and I prepared to depart. Somoza was quite a character.

Q: *Did you meet him?*

WILLIAMS: Oh, definitely, I reported to President Somoza first thing on my arrival since I carried a personal message for him from President Nixon. I also met with his senior officials to review organization of the relief operation. His residence was on a hill overlooking the ruins of Managua and there was a platoon of American infantry soldiers armed and camped on the site - apparently there by order of President Nixon.

Before departing, I called on President Somoza to bid him farewell. He said he would be at the airfield early the next morning to see me off and asked that I carry a written message to President Nixon. I demurred about Somoza coming to see me off, but he replied, "I will be there, not for you personally but because you are the representative of the President of the United States."

The next morning, after a helicopter flight, I boarded a commercial Pan Am plane at about 6 a.m., when the pilot received a message, "Do not depart until I, Somoza, President of this country, get there to bid farewell to President Nixon's representative." The Pan Am pilot replied "That's not possible." Somoza's then radioed, "You wait for my arrival, or you will never land in this country again." The Pan Am crew decided to wait and some 45 minutes later Somoza and his cabinet arrived at plane side. They lined up. I went down the line giving each a farewell embrace, then enplaned with a wave. They stood at attention while the plane took off. I suppose there is a certain style among Latin American dictators.

Q: *What kind of impression did you get of Somoza as a person? Did you get any*

kind of feel for him?

WILLIAMS: He was a large and genial man with American manners, having trained at West Point. He welcomed me warmly; I believe he was frightened by the destruction and confusion of the earthquake. Most of the police, fire and security forces would have been immobilized, many disappearing to save themselves and their families. Discipline was probably poor. In that chaotic situation Somoza must have sent an urgent call for help to President Nixon, who sent a U.S. army unit to guard the Somoza residence.

Somoza impressed me as an entrepreneurial type. Certainly he had extensive business monopoly interests and apparently was milking the country economically. I had set up reasonably firm accounting for U.S. relief supplies, looking to municipal and religious authorities for their distribution. However, I found that relief supplies from other countries and private agencies were being received by Somoza's son, a young man in the uniform of an army lieutenant, who stored them in a locked warehouse outside the city. One had a sense of inefficiency and corruption. I urged the opening of that warehouse and public distribution of those supplies, but couldn't be sure it was done.

NICARGUA: Reconstruction program - 1974

Excerpt taken from an interview with Aaron Benjamin

Q: You finished a two year tour in Peru.

BENJAMIN: It was a little less actually, but it was a very productive tour, not only from the programmatic aspect, but also because our son was born in Lima, at the end of September, shortly after we arrived there.

I think it was at the beginning of 1974, that I got a call from Nicaragua, which had suffered a major earthquake in December of 1972. Apparently, several major fault lines converged right in the center of the old downtown of Managua, the capital city, and with the earthquake, it was literally wiped away. I was invited to come up there to get involved in their reconstruction program and was pleased to accept considering the enormous challenge.

Q: That was a real challenge for our disaster assistance program as I remember.

BENJAMIN: Yes it was. OFDA did a tremendous job during the first year after the earthquake, providing emergency assistance, tents, medicine, etc. I went up to Nicaragua in February of 1974, and immediately got involved in several programs. One was called Las Americas, a project to convert 11,000 temporary shelters into permanent homes. These were wooden shacks that were built in three months. We developed a program to make these houses permanent over a three year period. The first stage was to put in utilities, water, sewer, electricity, and so on; the second stage was to put in a cement floor over

the dirt floor of each dwelling. Next, we put in pre-fabricated sanitary units, with built in shower and sink just outside of the shelters, replacing the latrines outback.

The next step, was to build three rows of cinder blocks at ground level, around the perimeter of each house cementing the blocks to the cement floor. At the same time, at intervals of one meter, we installed foundations. These consisted of a steel angle attached to a cinder block. We planted these foundations in the ground and attached them to the block walls.

Except when the cement floors were being poured, the family was able to continue living in the house while the construction was going on. Eventually, the rows of cinder blocks were built up to window level, the roof was replaced, and rooms were added.

During this three-year period, schools, day care and health centers were built in each neighborhood, as well as factories and vocational training centers within walking distance or a short bus ride from the project to provide vital sources of employment for project residents. We had, in the space of three years, converted a community of 11,000 temporary shacks built to respond to the emergency needs of the earthquake into a community of about 8,000 permanent homes served by a complete array of services and community facilities.

Q: This was a program that was expedited I would assume. There was a lot of pressure to move quickly on this one.

BENJAMIN: Oh yes, absolutely.

Q: It was well funded I would assume.

BENJAMIN: Yes, a \$3 million grant was provided at the emergency phase to build the temporary houses, and was followed up by a \$15 million loan for their conversion into permanent housing and services. Incidentally, another \$15 million was provided in Housing Guaranty Authorization for middle-income housing. Apart from housing programs, another \$30 million loan was provided for general reconstruction, which included the construction of schools, hospitals and public offices. Also, low cost financing was provided for water and sewer connections in pre existing low income neighborhoods.

Most of the new facilities were built in three distinct satellite centers, seven kilometers from the old center, away from the fault lines, in the vicinity of the new housing projects that I described previously. Each of these centers was to have major shopping and office facilities and were to be connected by ring roads similar to our Washington D.C. Beltway System. Three ring roads were planned which would be intersected at critical intervals by radial roads, coming out of the center of the city. To

serve the technical needs of the reconstruction project, I was responsible for the recruitment and management of about 50 expert consultants, including architects, engineers, urban planners, economists, sociologists et. al.

So, that was the nature of our reconstruction program. I must say that although the plan that I just described was supported by the AID Mission, the Nicaraguan Government and most of the private sector, it was subject to a lot of criticism. There were many interests that wanted to return to the status quo and rebuild back in the old downtown, right on the concentration of fault lines that had caused such horrific damage in the first place.

Q: These satellite centers were out in the suburbs?

BENJAMIN: Yes. They were about seven kilometers away from the old center. We had hoped that eventually the old center would be cleaned up and redeveloped with recreational facilities and parks, but under no circumstances rebuilt to the same degree of high density as before. Remember, 10,000 people died in that earthquake; and virtually all of the deaths took place in the old downtown area.

Q: That is a tremendous number.

BENJAMIN: Especially in a town with a population of only 250,000

Q: Did they end up with parks in the center of town after that, or did they build back up?

BENJAMIN: No, unfortunately, at least to the best of my knowledge, the center has not yet been rebuilt at all. Efforts have been stymied because of the political turmoil that has taken place over the years in Nicaragua. I left Nicaragua after about four and one half years in July of 1978, when the Sandinista invasion of the capital city took place. The Sandinistas ran the government for several years, which period was characterized by counter revolutionary activities and economic deprivation. There were great hopes for an economic resurgence with the advent of free elections a few years ago, but regrettably thus far, no major changes for the better have taken place.

Q: I assume under the type of government they had down there before the Sandinistas, the full support of the country was available for the relief programs?

BENJAMIN: Yes. The government pledged all available resources to relieve the suffering caused by the earthquake and to restore the damaged and destroyed facilities--schools, hospitals, roads, housing, as soon as possible.

It should be noted that there was not only a concerted effort to reconstruct and replace damaged public and private facilities, but also to respond to the long-term

development needs of not only the capital but also secondary cities like Leon, Masaya, Corinto and Granada. These cities had populations ranging from 20,000 to 60,000. To determine their urban development needs, AID financed a National Urban Assessment which was carried out with the cooperation of INCAE, the Central American Center for Business Administration, which was located near Managua. Urban Planning Programs were developed for the individual municipalities and technical assistance was provided to the Vice Ministry of Urban Planning, which in turn provided technical assistance to the smaller communities. AID was interested in expediting the development of the secondary cities and promoting the devolution of power from the central government and the capital city, to these smaller communities, ultimately transferring to them, economic as well as political power. That in itself was quite an interesting program, and I think we made a very positive impact.

Also, we had an excellent agrarian assistance program called INVIERNO, the acronym for the Institute for the Welfare of the Farmer. It examined virtually every facet of rural life and provided assistance for various sectors such as agricultural production, marketing, transportation and health, generating market town and rural municipal development technical assistance and loan programs.

Q: So there was a substantial development program going on at the same time as relief activities.

BENJAMIN: That's right. It wasn't just a reconstruction program. As I've indicated, it was quite varied. Development initiatives in the urban, rural and industrial sectors were being carried out concurrently. The program was ambitious and very challenging. I was professionally satisfied with my contributions to both the reconstruction and long-term development aspects of the AID Program, and I was particularly gratified when the AID Mission nominated me for the Rockefeller Award for my accomplishments. Also, I was one of three winners named for a joint award by AID for the design and management of the grant funded technical assistance program, which helped to create the institutional capability to guide the planning and reconstruction of a new Managua.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC: Reconstruction and housing development—1979

Excerpt taken from an interview with Aaron Benjamin

BENJAMIN: Yes, I was then assigned to the Dominican Republic, which had suffered two powerful hurricanes in succession, Federico and David, which affected the western half of the island as well as the capital city. My assignment was to manage reconstruction and housing programs related to the disaster.

I started out by working closely with the Dominican National Institute of Housing. AID was ready to provide grant funding for emergency housing to that agency, but the government bureaucracy couldn't seem to absorb these resources and respond expeditiously to the emergency, so I started looking around for other possibilities.

As it turned out, several NGOs, already actively engaged in disaster relief programs, were located throughout the Dominican Republic. Among the better known organizations were CARE, Catholic Relief, and Save the Children. I approached them and asked if they would be interested in getting involved in emergency housing programs. They responded enthusiastically and within a week or two, I had several of them signed up. We took small grants of \$10,000, \$20,000 and channeled them through these organizations. They would hire foremen, typically a carpenter, a plumber, an electrician, each to work with a group of twenty people in the community to help them build simple houses using concrete block with galvanized iron roofing material instead of the palm fronds and shingles that they'd used before, which were hardly hurricane resistant materials. Locally produced block making machines were purchased and people in the community were taught how to make concrete blocks. This program lasted for one year and was sustained by an AID grant of \$530,000. It resulted in the reconstruction of 1,879 existing houses and the construction of 84 new houses.

Q: Concrete block houses are very substantial.

BENJAMIN: Yes. These were very substantial houses. We worked out arrangements where a cooperative would be formed, would be given a grant, and would then contract with individual families. Each beneficiary would have to make payments within his or her economic capacity to repay. This wasn't going to be a gift, but rather a loan that the beneficiary would repay over time. The repayments would go into a revolving fund, and the fund would be used to finance more houses. We had about 20 of these projects going on during the first year. They were innovative and fun to do because with a little bit of incentive and guidance, these people could do virtually anything. They got to the point where they made their own windows-wooden, louvered windows without glass, which is all they needed in that climate. Eventually, some of the cooperative did so well that they sold the surplus windows to the Housing Institute for its projects. These were people who had no previous technical or business experience, but with a little bit of guidance and technical assistance they became successful entrepreneurs.

This enthusiastic participation by local communities inspired us to finance a Center for Appropriate Technology, which became a research center for traditional building materials and construction techniques. Its function was to explore the use of local materials and building methods to reduce costs, making housing affordable to those who needed it most. It wasn't until the second year that the Housing Institute got its act together and we grant funded a house repair program, including materials worth \$220,000, which were used to repair 1,300 units. This grant was followed by a \$1.4 million grant that financed an additional 1,000 core houses. In total, between the programs of the NGOs and the Housing Institute 4200 houses were repaired or newly constructed through the AID funded Housing Reconstruction Program.

Incidentally, I would be remiss if I didn't mention that the Dominican Savings and Loan System, one of the earliest in the AID supported family of Latin American S and L Systems, had under its jurisdiction the administration of several Housing Guaranty Projects. That program started in the middle '60s. Working closely with the Dominican Housing Bank, the agency that oversees the Savings and Loan System, I was able to negotiate a new \$15 million HG for Worker's Housing. That program was unique in that the employer provided the down payment, the government the land, and the worker paid the balance of the long term mortgage.

HONDURAS— Contra Task Force Operation—1989

An excerpt taken from an interview with Ron Venezia

VENEZIA: Then I met Ted Morris. Ted had come looking for me and Ted said, "Hi Ron." I knew Ted. I said, "Hi Ted." I said, "What do you want?" He said, "You know what I want," and I knew what he wanted. He was running the Contra Task Force in Washington. He had headed it up on the Washington side and it had two branches in Central America. The major one was in Honduras and there was a small one on the Costa Rican front. But the one in Honduras which was set up as an independent operation needed a director. A director of field operations and nobody wanted that job. Nobody, and here I was. I spoke practically fluent Spanish. I'd had enormous experience in Central America. I was going off for a year, nothing to do and here he was sitting on a priority program where he was meeting every morning with Secretary of State Schultz. Secretary of State Schultz started his day, every day with a fifteen minute briefing on the Contra Operation.

This was when AID was running it. I have no idea what happened before AID was running it because you had a situation where the CIA was running it first, and they got pulled out. We'll get into this probably next session. It was given to the State Department and they screwed up and finally gave it to AID because there was nobody else to do it and that's another story. I sat next to Congressman Bonior on the plane coming back from Asia, and I asked him, "Why did you do this to AID?" He said that

nobody else would take it. So here was Ted, and he could pick and choose. He had chosen me and he just started a campaign and Ray Love, the Counselor of AID called me. And he said, "Ron, now we're not going to insist that you do this, but it's very important to the Agency. You're one of the few people we think can do this job and you're available. Of course, we're not going to hold this against you but we really want you to take this job." So I had to think about it and I said to myself, philosophically I wasn't opposed, I had voted for Reagan. I was comfortable with policies we had in Central America. I was convinced that it was part of what we had to do and I've always been comfortable with AID's relationship to foreign policy.

I've always regarded AID as part of American foreign policy. I've never been uncomfortable with the fact that I was promoting U.S. foreign policy with AID funds, U.S. foreign objectives which may or may not have developmental objectives. I've always felt that was the rationale. How could we think that we were sitting out on an ice flow somewhere? You're part of the U.S. Government establishment. I've always felt that this current administration started out with the feeling that they were going to go off on an ice flow for a little bit, and they were hauled back pretty quickly by Haiti and Bosnia, but it was too late. So I could not say to myself, look, I couldn't do a Bill Clinton, you know, I don't believe in this war and so therefore I will not do this.. I couldn't say that. Philosophically I knew it's what has to be done and I agree. Then the question became whether I could actually do it, if it meant giving up my year. It was a hard decision and I thought about it for a day and I came home and I talked to Burgess and I said, look, you know life's full of choices. You've got to make a choice somewhere along the line. Most of my jobs in AID had just appeared and I've never had a job I didn't like and I think this will be exciting, so I took it. Gave up my year off.

Q: *Were they mad at the Senior Seminar?*

VENEZIA: They actually denied the Agency a candidate the next year because of it, my picture was in the book.

Q: *How long were you in Honduras?*

VENEZIA: One year.

An adventure in Honduras with the Contras—1989

An excerpt taken from an interview with Ron Venezia

VENEZIA: Honduras was, I'm not sure what to call it, an adventure, an episode, it was a crazy situation. The Contras had been fighting for several years, this would be 1989 now. The Costa Ricans, the Sandinistas and the U.S. Government on one side, and the Cubans and Soviets on the other side, had fought to a stand still. In effect, it was quite clear that neither side could win. The elections were coming; Reagan was going out of

office and I think Jim Baker who was (as far as anybody could tell, and I don't have any insights on it) the master politician.

Q: *Jim Baker was the Secretary of State.*

VENEZIA: The decision was made that this had gone on long enough. It was highly divisive, as you can imagine, with the body of politics in the United States. Reagan had been handed a budget - I forget what year it was, probably 1986 - in which the entire budget was given to him in one fell swoop. It had one last article in it just before his signature and that was denying assistance to Contra. He was invited to veto the entire budget on that issue. He did not. The question became, what to do with the Contras? There are a lot of people who are going to write this history and I don't intend to, but when I came along clearly the decision had been reached that something had to give. The emphasis switched over to elections in Nicaragua and the entire focus of the U.S. Government then shifted to trying to create the conditions for elections, that meant a cease fire. A cease fire was put into effect but the Contras then retreated out of Nicaragua to Honduras and set up camp in what was one of their original camps, a place called Yamales.

Yamales was a valley about 10 kilometers from the border, in the jungle basically. There were a couple of camps further up the line towards the north coast of Honduras, and there were 18,000 armed troops, some of whom were still in Nicaragua at the time and there were 40,000 family members who had followed their troops out and were living in town. Basically they weren't living so much in the valley, though some were in the valley, but many were in the towns just outside the valley. The Contras were clearly not encouraged to continue a very aggressive campaign in Nicaragua. The peace process was obviously going to take some time, so something had to be done. The background is now pretty much a part of history. The CIA had started their support to them and had run afoul with Congress. I don't think Congress could actually cut off support to the Contras so the job was turned over to the State Department. The State Department did it for a few years and it also ran afoul of the auditors. The job had to go to somebody, it was quite clear that State couldn't handle it.

I remember coming back (this was before I knew I was going down there) from one of my trips to the Far East and we stopped in Detroit, Michigan and David Bonior got on the plane and sat next to me. I was in business class, at that time we could fly business class for long trips. He sat down and ordered two double scotches or maybe it was bourbon, I'm not sure but he was going back to Washington and he was there so we talked. He was an approachable guy, a quiet guy, and we were talking and I said "How could you have given AID this job of taking care of the Contras?" he said "Because nobody else could do it and there wasn't anybody who would take it, and we had to give it to somebody. So AID got stuck with it." That was basically the answer.

When it happened, AID formed a task force, Ted Morris was called up. Ted

probably still has the reputation of getting anything done against impossible odds and Bob Meegan was called in as his Deputy, who was a lawyer, a very, very creative lawyer. They were told to put together a team, so they put together a team and they started what was referred to as the Task Force for Humanitarian Assistance for Nicaragua Resistance. It had two fronts, to the north of Nicaragua which would be Honduras and then on the Costa Rican side. The Costa Rican front was a much, much smaller operation. They set up shop in Honduras in the Embassy as a task force. They were not connected to the AID program there at all, there was no connection there in terms of communication. The AID program in Honduras looked at this like, well, I won't even mention what that was. [laughter] John Sanbrello was the Mission Director at the time. John was just appalled that this was going to be in his backyard, and of course, didn't want anything to do with it. They had to set up a whole separate arrangement, a parallel aid mission in the country but based in the Embassy and it was very, very minimum quarters. We're talking about small rooms, two or three people to a room. That went on for a couple of years, the truce held and they were trying to get the elections going. The then Director of Field Operations said he wanted to move on. I'm not sure that he was seen as being all that effective. They obviously needed somebody, so there I went. It was obvious that this thing was entering a final phase. I went down, I left Burgess in the house. Our son and daughter had just come back from a stint of school and they were looking for a house in the area so they moved into the house, so that side of the equation became a lot easier. Then Burgess decided to join me for periods of time and then come back. We started this operation, I went down and decided that "If you get lemons, you make lemonade." This was my first real opportunity to manage a field operation. It was the equivalent of a Mission Directorship, but it wasn't really, it wasn't a mission. But I had 250 people and a fifty million dollar program.

Q: *They were Americans?*

VENEZIA: Well, let's see. There were ten direct hires, then there were approximately 20 PSC's, and we had institutional contractors doing a whole host of things. We had an institutional contractor doing training out in the valley. We did an enormous amount in training for the Contras. We had an institution contractor on health and then we had 50 auditors. There were 50 Price Waterhouse auditors, most of them were Hondurans connected to the Price Waterhouse Operation in Honduras. The GAO had set up their own connection here. The GAO sat in on my staff meetings. A very cooperative operation, I can tell you. Everyone was going to make this work. General Beckington, AID's Inspector General, was the second person they talked to in AID when AID got the phone call from State and Congress, he was also on board. The Agency had to protect itself, so we were super careful. The GAO was down there and the RIG (Regional Inspector General) had their offices in Honduras. There was a RIG auditor who sat in on my staff meetings and he also had complete access. So you added all of these things up and it was a big operation. It was the strangest thing I had ever been involved with in my life. I don't know what story to tell you, they were all different and fascinating.

Q: *Well, what was the overall mission? What were you really trying to accomplish?*

VENEZIA: Our job was to keep the Contras happy. That meant that they not fight or at least keep them from waging open warfare. There were skirmishes still going on in Nicaragua, but they would only fight if they were attacked. We were to keep them happy, keep them fed, educate them, keep them healthy and not let them get sick and do it in such a way that it was entirely accountable. I can't tell you how much paper we generated, but I'll give you some hints. We had a warehouse in Tegucigalpa where we would assemble the food, and I'm talking food here, we were the biggest buyers in Honduras. We controlled the price of beans, we controlled the price of rice, when we bought, people shuddered.

Q: *You bought it locally, rather than import it?*

VENEZIA: We bought it all locally, but there were other things we brought in. We would import medicines for example. But the food was all purchased locally. We were feeding 18,000 troops and 40,000 family members. The 40,000 family members were not getting a full ration, they would get a food stamp type of ration, which was meant to supplement their food, because many of them were working in local economies around the area or helping each other out, or had some money of their own. The troops got a full ration. We had a nutritionist, we were calculating diets, and we were watched by the auditors. Meaning that every time a truck left the warehouse it had an auditor on it and the idea was that the truck would not stop on the way and pick up arms. There was a time when the bananas that we were buying were being passed through a metal detector by the auditors, it was paranoia. We had paper on everything except for one thing which I'll get to later on. I'm trying to think of where I can start, there was the food and there was the whole medical side of the arrangement, and the training. When I got there, there was a hospital and two rehabilitation centers where the wounded were taken care of. The Contra had it's own medical corps and we were supplying them with medical supplies and drugs. We had two helicopters under contract from Louisiana, they were civilian helicopters. We had two airplanes, they were small planes with a back ramp that we could do drops with and we would do jungle drops. There was one guy who was in charge of assembling packages, packing the parachutes, and putting the parachutes on these things and they would take off and do air drops.

Q: *The area was quite inaccessible?*

VENEZIA: Well, there's a picture right over here. I'd go out and watch from my helicopter and see that it was done correctly.

Q: *You couldn't drive into the area?*

VENEZIA: It was an area where a road would not go; we were in the jungle. Most of them were down in the Yamales valley though and that was accessible. This program had

enormous flexibility. We had a non-withstanding clause and with Bob Meegan as our guy with regard to what was legal (and he would make a legal determination on the spot, he was wonderful in that sense) we did some interesting things. There was a river that would flood occasionally, and it would wipe out the road. Well, the decision was that if we were going to feed these people, we had to be able to get food in there, so we built a bridge. A big cement bridge, still there today I presume. We did it and there was no problem at all. One of the training courses we had was road maintenance, we had the Contras out there repairing their own roads. Every day when I went to work, I had absolutely no idea of what was going to happen.

We had a lot of people looking over our shoulders, including Congress. It kind of tapered off, but in the beginning we had quite a few Congressional visitors mostly from the House side, but Senator Warner came down. The Contras had their own connections with Congress as you can imagine. The Republican side of the House and Senate were also very interested that we were taking good care of these guys and their families, so they would come down. It was kind of interesting, we made it quite clear that money appropriated by Congress was for the Contras, so if they wanted me to use our helicopters to take them out there they had to pay for it, because I couldn't use my money to take them out to the Contras. We had several occasions where we took people out and they had big parades, and I was sitting there thinking what the heck am I doing in this place.

Q: *What was the magnitude of the effort? How would you characterize that?*

VENEZIA: It was fifty million dollars.

Q: *Fifty million dollars a year, or one time?*

VENEZIA: I had 50 million dollars for my year. The entire program was in the neighborhood of 140 - 150 million dollars. By the time I got there, we were in the shank end so I had only 50 million. We were buying five million dollars worth of groceries a month. Plus paying all of the fees for the contractors, which were enormous. Plus all of the fees for the auditors which were also enormous. Also facing unique situations where we would simply have to decide what we had to do.

The Honduran Army was guarding the old hospital. The old staging area north of Tegucigalpa was a grass strip and that had been the staging area for the CIA. They had closed it down in terms of it being an air strip and they had actually buried planes there. When you flew over you could see the places where they had taken a bulldozer and destroyed the planes and buried them rather than turning them over to the Hondurans. There was still a hospital there and it was used mostly for taking care of the sick. When the war was very active the task force was literally waiting on one side of the river, which was the border and the wounded would come floating across the river and they would be gathered up in the helicopters and taken to the hospital for treatment; they were war wounded. That part was over with, we were dealing largely with normal sickness, but

also with a lot of rehabilitation of wounded people.

The Hondurans were guarding that with their Army and they demanded that we feed these guys, a little bit of a rake off to protect it, and the answer from the lawyers was that we couldn't do that. We can't give money to the Honduran Army. They said you've got to close down. The one meeting that I had with the head of the Honduran Secret Service, I went in and I said "Okay, do you mind if I move it?" and he said "No." He thought we were bluffing. So I went back to the office called together the staff and I said, "We have to move a 100 bed hospital with two operating rooms. We have one month to do it. Let's go." I had a wonderful staff, literally they were all volunteers, just push a button and they would leap. Because they were all having a marvelous time doing this stuff, it was all very unusual and in some ways a lot of fun. So, we went out to the valley, we selected a place and we said, "See this place here, we need to have a hospital here. A 100 bed hospital with two operating rooms in one month, let's build it." So we built it. Made of wood and it had some cinder block sides. We had to build a bridge across the river to get to the site, that was interesting in itself. We took some trees down and built a road. When it was almost done I called together the staff and I said, "Has anyone ever moved a hospital?" and they said, "No" and I said, "Well, if you need to move something, normally you call a moving company." So we called the Honduran moving company that moved the Embassy goods in and out of the country. I went over and had a meeting with the head and I said, "Have you ever moved a hospital?" and he said, "No, but it can't be that difficult." So we helicoptered them up there to do an estimate. We said, "We're not going to leave a thing for the Hondurans, take it all. Leave the building, but take it all." They gave us an estimate and it seemed fair. The trucks headed out and they loaded up a 100 bed hospital, they took the wire out of the walls of the building, they took out the lamp posts that were around and all of the public lighting, they took the generator, and they dug out the fuel tank. We cleaned the thing out down to the bone and simply moved it about 150 miles.

Q: *What happened to the patients?*

VENEZIA: The patients were moved. None of them were all that serious, we're talking about sick kids. There was a separate center called the Rehabilitation Center which was much closer to Tegucigalpa where the war wounded, the paraplegics and these kinds of things were, and they were in rehabilitation or just being taken care of. The real serious cases were there. We set this new hospital up and I have to presume the Nicaraguans must have thought that we were crazy. Here we were in the last year of the peace process and we were acting as if we were going to be there for the next 20 years.

Q: *Did the Honduran Government ever try to intercede?*

VENEZIA: The Honduran Government never really did anything. They just wanted us out of where we were, so we said okay fine we'll go over there. Which I imagine they thought was a good idea, it'll keep everybody in one place. I'm sure they saw what we

were doing and they didn't seem to mind. They probably thought that they were going to get what was left over, so whatever we did was fine with them. So we built the hospital. Yamales was a funny place, there were 28 battalions in the valley and they each had their own particular area. Another part of the operation was the food. When I got there, there was always a problem thinking about what if the river rose, even if this bridge was put in, what if it went out? How can we assure that we will always have food for 18,000 people, we couldn't let 18,000 people starve. I decided that we should build a warehouse in the valley and move a months supply of food there and keep it as reserve. Simply turn it over. In other words, use it as a stock, but we would always have a months supply of food available on the other side of the river. So we did that, we built a big temporary warehouse. It was a wood structure with a canvas covering.

We then had to worry about some of the Contras that were still inside of Nicaragua, and the program said "Fine, they're Contras, so you have to support them." We couldn't send food in so we sent money in. We had a game with the Nicaraguan Government, we would be buying Cordobas from suppliers that would go down to the Nicaraguan border and they would buy Cordobas and they would bring them into the Embassy and we would buy them in the Embassy, pack them up in garbage bags by battalion and fly them down to Yamales and we would have once a month a distribution ceremony. You can't imagine the paperwork here, the paperwork was exquisite and extensive. We knew exactly where all of the money was going. The money would go out to the battalions and then the battalions would send messengers into Nicaragua with this money. As economic conditions worsened in Nicaragua the money got to be worth less and less and less. The idea was that they were trying to put out new money so that the old money would disappear. They would put out new money and we'd buy it. The amount of money going into Nicaragua was not all that much. It wasn't a lot of money, but it was a nice cash flow. Then I would go to Miami, FL occasionally, because we had an operation in Miami where the officers of the Contra and their families were on a payroll. It was the old CIA payroll, but it was part of the family support system so we had a place in Miami which had an accountant and I visited a couple of times and saw the distribution. They actually distributed money to the people of Miami, it wasn't a lot of money, but it was something. I'm trying to give you an idea of the scope of this thing.

Then we had the family feeding in the areas, where the food would have to go out to the various towns and there would be distribution centers where the families would come in. We had established a ration card system, 50 Price Waterhouse people working full time. There were identity cards, there was cross checking, checking to make sure that you weren't selling the food, this was all going on at the same time. Then there was the medical side of it for drugs which eventually got the program into trouble. Then there was the training program, we were training people in shoe making, training people in carpentry, sewing, and we trained 8,000 literacy teachers, then we started a civics program which was a prelude to the elections. This was done with people from INCAE and they would teach civics, democracy. They were supposed to go back in and use their literacy teaching tools and the civics materials given to them, to extend themselves by teaching

Nicaraguans as a prelude to the elections that they should vote.

It was a very strange operation, very varied. Then there were the Cuban exiled doctors that were flying in on weekends from Miami. We would meet them on Tocontine airport late Friday afternoon and helicopter them directly down into Yamales and they would don their operating gear and go into those two operating rooms and operate for 48 hours, free of charge. And they paid all of their own expenses coming down. They were specialists, mostly orthopedics and eye doctors. This rural hospital had the most sophisticated equipment that you could imagine. We were taking out shrapnel from eyes, they had these very high powered microscopic machines and they were resetting bones. They worked 48 hours, straight through. They went from one operating room to the next, back and forth. Then I would fly them back to Tocontine on Monday morning and they would take the plane out, and went back to their practices.

Q: *Amazing.*

ENEZIA: We had a contract with the Seventh Day Adventist hospital just outside of Tegucigalpa to work with children. There were a lot of children that had been hit by mines and had war wounds. It was a hospital that was very underutilized and they leaped at the opportunity to provide this kind of service, and they had good facilities. They were doing rehabilitation of children. Then there was the operation run by the PVO to make prosthetics. We had a prosthetics factory in Honduras that was manufacturing artificial limbs for the Contras. It went on and on and on.

Q: *How would you characterize the accomplishment of the overall mission?*

ENEZIA: We kept them happy. I had to make some tough calls. I decided to be both tough and kind. I demonstrated a lot of interest in them, which I think a couple of my predecessors had not. They had been dragooned into this thing and they let their feelings show, I think. But I was sincerely interested in their welfare, I really felt that they had gotten themselves into a circumstance, a lot of which was not of their making. They had trusted the U.S. Government and I was in many ways part of the U.S. Government to them. I always tried to demonstrate human concern for their human problems. At the same time we had to be careful, because some of these guys were the biggest crooks in the world. I have a souvenir branding iron which says "AID", I think there are only a few left in the world, and we branded the cattle just to make sure that we wouldn't be buying back the same cattle that we gave them. It was very interesting.

Q: *Was this just a temporary affair just to keep them happy for a short time?*

ENEZIA: The whole idea was to keep them happy during the peace process that was aiming at forcing the Sandinistas to hold elections, which were going to be held in 1990. There were a few bumps along the road, the biggest bump was when there was a Presidential summit in San Jose, Costa Rica. I'd been there about six months and

President Bush came down and President Ortega went over dressed in what George Bush called his cowboy suit which was the fatigues, the bandanna, the red and the black. I think he was so frustrated at (I personalize this in the sense that this would be my perspective and I'm not sure it's absolutely true because I was looking at it from my own side of the fence) he was so frustrated that we were doing such a good job in keeping the Contras from disbanding, they were certainly not going to disband, if they weren't gaining weight they were certainly not losing any weight under our programs. We had these far flung new enterprises. We built a brand new hospital, ten kilometers from the Nicaraguan border in the middle of the jungle, as if we were going to be there forever. He went to this conference and I'm not sure what the motivation was but I think it was partly from our side, blew his cool. And said in effect that he was calling off the truce and was threatening to go back to war. We believed him, we really did because there had been several occasions where they had done some incursions from Nicaragua into Honduras and so we took them very seriously.

Once he announced that, I got my staff together and I said "Well, let's prepare." So the first thing we had to do was to disperse the food, we were ten kilometers from the border, and it was an easy shot. They could have come up the valley and down the road, I think the Contras would have defended the place but a well mounted incursion into the area would have been serious. Especially if they came in with helicopters, even though the Contras had Stingers or Red Eyes, I'm not sure which, I never saw one and I never wanted to see one. So we said okay, let's disburse the food. And again, a wonderful machine, I could push a button and people did what they had to do. People were used to having a great responsibility, and they would go out and just work. Within 24 hours we had disbursed a whole months supply of food throughout all of the battalion areas. I'm not sure what we did with the hospital. We did a whole series of defensive operations. I was down in the valley at least once a week, sometimes twice a week and we maintained a Toyota down there. I was driving through the valley, down a road that was maintained by the Contras (perfect shape by the way) over culverts that were put in and I had the radio on. I was listening to Radio Nicaragua and President Ortega was sitting in Managua (this was live) ranting and raving about the program that I was directing and I was driving listening to him. He never used my name, he talked about the Humanitarian Program. I said to myself this is insane.

Anyway, it was that kind of a program. I'm sure that a lot of other experiences in AID were similar to this. A lot of the refugee stuff is I'm sure, highly similar to this. One felt that you were standing in the eye of the storm with the Congressional debates and the elections and whatever else. We approached the elections, elections were held and it was quite clear that the U.S. Government was going to make a decision. Jack Sullivan who was the head of the Central American Desk for State and had spent his early career in Brazil and consequently spoke Spanish with the most horrible Portuguese accent, not unintelligible, but a painful [laughter] kind of Spanish. Spanish with a Portuguese accent is just terrible. He spoke good Spanish but it was heavily accented. He came down to deliver the bad news, and the bad news was (this is before the elections) there

was going to be elections and the U.S. Government was going to abide by them. Whichever way they go, if they go to the Sandinistas we will live with it. But there will be elections, we support them.

Meanwhile, in Washington Ted Morris had shifted his attention, he had been a real pain in the butt to my predecessors. Ted is a nit-picker, he is very much detail oriented, he's very good by the way but he had a reputation for being all over his staff. He's a little controversial like that in the Agency. He had been all over my predecessors like a cheap suit, which may have accounted for some of their attitudes. By the time I came in the election issue had become the major issue of all of his meetings in Washington, and all of his conversations and all of his attention and energy was directed toward the Nicaraguan elections, because that had it's own dynamic. Jim Baker was looking for money and he wanted to raid the program, they had to make different kinds of interpretations on what we could spend and how would the money get into Nicaragua and who would handle it. Ted was the master of those details, and he began to focus largely on that. There was a lot of latitude for me to do simply what made sense. Did it make sense, will it work, and will it make a difference? Those seemed to apply with a vengeance. Then you have to ask is it legal? I eventually found myself with a lot of latitude and able to do a lot of things, which eventually got me into trouble.

About two thirds of the way through the year, I got a call from the IG Inspector for the IG. He was in charge of the inspection side. I'd met him and I knew him. He was a Texan, a very easy guy to get along with. He called me up and said "Ron can you come over to my office?" I said "Sure." So I went over, it was late in the day about 5:30 and he said "Ron, I think I have to tell you that tomorrow Don Enos, your Deputy is going to plead guilty to two counts of bribery." I looked at him and I was literally dumbstruck. I remember to this day being dumbstruck and saying "Bribery, by whom?" I couldn't even imagine by whom. And he mentioned the name of Bill Crowse and it hit me like a ton of bricks. Bill Crowse was the head of a contract team that had been subcontracted under a larger contract for health services which had been given to a PVO that in my view was having difficulty performing when I got there. Especially in terms of getting things done, the people they were fielding were okay for medicine distribution, once we went into the phase of having to build this famous hospital I talked about and having to move these people, they literally didn't have any kind of agility at all. Bill Crowse was a friend of mine from 20 years before that I had known in Guatemala when I was a Peace Corps Volunteer and just joined AID. So I knew Bill, he showed up and Don Enos my Deputy, who had been there through all of my predecessors and thought a lot of himself. He thought he was really good and operationally he was. Don had convinced me, kept putting in front of me the fact that Bill Crowse's operation was first class and that they could deliver. So the more that the health program got into trouble, the more it became obvious that we needed help, so we asked them for a proposal. They made a proposal and to save time we proposed them as a subcontractor to the PVO. Don handled pretty much all of the negotiations. I okay them, but Don handled the negotiations. I found out later that he kind of rammed them down the PVO's throat. In

effect saying that if you don't take this then we will fire you. Well they did. And Crowse's people did an excellent job, they did a first class job, except we had a couple of problems later on with the IG, trying to figure out how much money had been spent on a drug purchase in Costa Rica. It taught me by the way, that buying drugs is the most devious business in the world, because even the IG couldn't figure it out. I'm involved with it now at the World Bank and I counsel everybody that there's nothing worse in the world than trying to procure pharmaceuticals through a competitive process. Anyway, Don had taken kickbacks, not only in this program but had taken kickbacks in the Salvador program with Crowse. The IG had been tracking him for three or four years. I was dumbstruck. He gave me an outline on what had happened, very brief but made it quite clear that it was very serious. They had called Don to Washington on the pretext of an interview and when he got up there Ted had said "Look, the IG wants to talk to you for a second." and they took him over across the river and they walked in and sat down and Ted said "Well, I'll see ya." and he left. Then they turned on the videotape, and Don watched about a minute and a half of the videotape and turned to the Inspector and said "Does this mean I'm going to lose my job?" and the Inspector said "Mr. Enos, you're in far worse trouble than that." Don was watching a videotape of a meeting that had been set up in a hotel room, including Bill Crowse and Don Enos and it was all on tape. They had scammed Bill Crowse through his driver, I won't tell you how because it's personal but they scammed Bill Crowse through his driver and nailed him and they said to him "Look, we don't want you, we want Mr. Enos. Now you have a choice here, you can go to a place where we can pump in air and light, you'll be so far underground that nobody will find you for 20 or 30 years or we can talk." and Bill said "What would you like to talk about?" And he told them everything. And everything was in effect, that Don was skimming off of contracts that he arranged with this firm. I think Crowse, being largely the one saying "I'll do this for you" and Don just simply being unable to resist it. Don had terrible money problems. He was always owing money. I counseled him several times because there were always people coming in and saying "Don won't pay me what he owes me." I would counsel him. I would say "Pay your bills for God's sake." But he got himself into a situation where he was laying out money on properties that he had bought that he thought he could rent. One in Panama and Noriega came in and it was sitting there empty, he married a Panamanian and his wife and family moved into their house in Virginia and wouldn't pay him any rent. He had about a 4,500 to 5,000 dollar outflow that he couldn't cover, and he just needed the cash. They caught Don on tape, I remember the night that they did. Looking back, we had a lot of TGIF's, there was nothing else to do there so Don had a couple of drinks, he drank a little bit and he was high and I won't go into details, but it was one of those things that teaches you a lesson. Bill was being controlled by camera and by the phone, Don was arguing with him on the amounts and Bill was trying to tell him that "no, there were different amounts" because Bill had not told everything to the IG and Don was telling him more than he had told the IG. Don offered to go out to the car and get the records that he kept in the trunk, and Bill said it was not necessary. The phone would ring and the IG on the phone would say to Bill, "Tell him to get the book," and Crowse would be sitting on the phone saying "Oh dinner, dinner at 8:30, sure." It was wild, it was a view of AID that I had never seen

before. But they nailed him.

I left the IG's office in a daze, had spent 6 to 8 months being absolutely imbued that AID was going to do everything in the world to keep this program whistle clean and we had done it, and on my watch this guy was going to get indicted for Christ's sake, for thousands of dollars of money from the program. I went home and I hugged Burgess and I didn't know what to say, and I'll always remember that night. I sat there in bed and watched the clock change. I couldn't sleep. I just sat there and thought about it all. I got up the next morning and called the IG guy and told him that I had to come and see him, so I went into his office and I said "I have to tell my staff, they can't hear this on the radio, or in a cable or from the Ambassador, they've got to hear it from me." He was sitting there listening and I broke down. I literally broke down emotionally and he jumped up and closed the door and he said "Geez, what's wrong?" and I said "I'm sorry, I'm just overwhelmed by this." It was a full 24 hours before I could talk about it without literally breaking into sobs. I called Ted and he was a blubber face also, we were a thousand miles away from each other and blubbering at each other on the phone, it was awful. We felt so strongly about this program, he more than I, because he dedicated more of his life to it than I had. We were dumbstruck. The Agency handled it well, Don plea bargained, entered his plea on a Friday morning at 10:00 so it hit the papers on Saturday and then disappeared, it was picked up a little bit but disappeared. The General who obviously knew about this was not out crowing, everybody understood what was at stake. And what was at stake was AID and everybody understood that it was a victim. I was never held personally responsible, the subcontract, Ted had never even seen it because it was a subcontract and it was in my authority. Ted never held it against me that I'm aware of. It was just one of those things. We wanted to get something done so we did it. It was a mistake.

The program survived, and the elections were held. Jack Sullivan came down and they called in the commanders and there was this big meeting in this big headquarters tent, there was Sullivan sitting at a desk faced with about 100 -125 very rough, tough looking guys, all carrying AK-47's and dressed in khakis. Many had come out of Nicaragua just for this meeting. Supposedly in an Army, but you wondered how good this one was. And he gave them the bad news, a tough job. He did it well with his horrible Portuguese accent and the news was that the elections were going to be held, our objective is to have elections and we will live with the outcome. If you lose, we will try to do our best to take care of you, but we have to move this into a democratic environment somehow. Where the Nicaraguans have a chance to choose what they want. Once this became known, the Contras began to plan to go back into Nicaragua. I could see it myself and I reported it, but they were making plans. One day just before the elections they left and they left behind their families and their kids and their wounded and their maimed and their old. The fighters left. We kind of knew what was happening and we didn't say anything to stop them. They took some of the drugs with them, they left behind some of their medical corps. From one day to the next the operation shifted from feeding 18,000 troops and 40,000 family members to taking care of about 20,000 kids and

mothers.

The elections were held, and the Sandinistas lost, to everyone's immense surprise including theirs, and things began to come apart pretty quickly. The Hondurans then said this is an elected government and we want this thing out of here. So the planning shifted to how to wind this thing down completely and that meant how do we take care of the kids? My staff put together a plan and the plan was to turn this over to the UNHCR. That was decided at a higher level, but we provided the recommendation, plan and all of the information necessary and we made it clear that this was the time table. The UNHCR regarded this as what AID regarded it as earlier. They were literally bludgeoned into taking this, so I worked with a UNHCR guy in Honduras who was going to take this over. They sent some people in and we literally devised a strategy on how to do this, which was sign everything off. We donated everything to the UNHCR, we donated the food that was left over, the vehicles, anything that we had bought was donated with some exceptions. The medical corps of the Contra said "Look, this hospital equipment is pretty sophisticated and expensive stuff" so in a clandestine way we organized the helicopters. Right after the elections, the Hondurans put up a road block, they wanted to now control the road. They were obviously taking a look at what they had in there to see what they could grab. One weekend I called together the two helicopter pilots and the three helicopters and said let's do an air lift. We made about 50 trips, we would go down, load up the helicopters with as much as we could carry and bring it in and store it at the airport. The airport by the way was another interesting aspect of this thing. Once a week a military U.S. Army C-130 would land right in front of the main terminal.

Q: *This is in Honduras?*

ENEZIA: Yes in Honduras. And it would land in the morning when there were about four other airplanes all lined up to leave, so you would have this enormous glut of passengers leaving Honduras staring at this C-130 unloading military uniforms (we supplied a complete military uniform to everyone of the Contras), meals ready to eat sometimes and some other gear. We would load it onto trucks and take it to our warehouses, right in front of everybody. I could never understand how this was done, but it was. It was all organized before I got there in terms of the Hondurans. The Honduras secret service was deeply involved in this or they were aware of it anyway.

After the elections were held, I was told to wind it down. We donated everything to the UNHCR and the Hondurans then said what about all of these disabled? We had these center's for the disabled, and some of these people were paraplegics. I got the word from Jim Michel who was the LA Bureau AA as Ted had passed his responsibilities to the LA Bureau. Everything was shifting back to normal. So I was told you can't leave until you get these people back into Nicaragua and I thought "Oh my God, okay." I wanted to get out of there, I wanted to come home Enough was enough. As I wrote in my EER, I will never again fly a single engine helicopter over a triple canopy jungle. I did that several times a week and I could just see myself going into a triple canopy jungle

and never coming out again. The day I was supposed to go into Nicaragua to arrange the transfer of the disabled, the Sandinistas closed the airport. The unions struck. It was kind of a reprise back to Istanbul where I was going to go somewhere, I didn't care how I got there. They canceled the commercial flights and I couldn't take my own helicopters into Nicaragua because they weren't authorized to fly. So I called up the General who was in charge of the U.N. who was stationed in Honduras and (I'd done him a few favors) I told him that I had to get to Nicaragua. "It's connected with the disabled, I have a meeting set up, can you get me down there?" He had helicopters. Since the main Sandino airport was closed, we landed out at Mercedes which was a military training airport, small strip right outside of Managua. It was an old cropdusting operation and the Sandinistas were using it to train their pilots. There was also a large warehouse from the Ministry of Interior and I suspect it held lots of stuff that was being sent to Salvador and other places. We landed and the guy dropped me off. I was with a young officer from the Honduran Embassy, who was the liaison with the Contras and he was coming down with me. We walked up to a Sandinista soldier and we told him that we would like to go to the American Embassy (this is in the middle of nowhere) his name was Robert Taylor. He was from the north coast of Nicaragua, the English speaking side and his name was Robert Taylor and he spoke English. He never asked us where in the hell we had come from, what we were doing there or anything. He arranged a car for us from this little business that was at the airport. The driver of the car never asked for anything, we drove through all kinds of check points between there and Managua and we were never stopped. He drove us up to the front gate of the American Embassy and I gave him a five dollar bill, he drove away and we walked into the Embassy. They knew we were supposed to come in commercially, but they couldn't figure out how we got there. I told them how we came in and then I gave them my passport and I asked them to figure out what to do with it. So they took it down to the Sandino airport and sparks flew forever. They said "How did these people get into this country?" and nobody would tell them. So they stamped my passport to show that I had entered the country.

I went and talked to the Red Cross, the Swiss had been working with the Sandinistas and they had their own prosthetic operation and they had their own rehabilitation center, so we went and talked to them. Then I took a helicopter from Managua down to the Contras camp which they had set up in the southern part of Nicaragua, near the Coast Rican border. They had moved all the way down into that area and that's where the Command was. So I went down and saw the Commanders, I knew them all. I told them "Look, we're going to have to move your people out of Honduras. They're going to have to go somewhere and you've got to help." They were very unhappy, they thought that we were abandoning the people and I told them that we were not throwing them out, that it was the Hondurans. I went back and we in effect, set up a PVO operation in Managua to receive these people. We then shipped them in, we rented trucks and ambulances and literally shipped them into Nicaragua into these centers that were set up by the PVO. I remembered that we had this hospital equipment worth millions of dollars just sitting in our warehouse in Honduras so I packed it up and donated it to an organization in Nicaragua that was a joint commission between the

church, the Contra leadership, and the government. The Hondurans never even knew that the equipment had left the country, we just shipped it in. Actually, we had moved all of the equipment from our warehouse, (I thought that our warehouse would be taken from us) and we stored at this moving company and they kept it for us and then packed it up, inventoried it, and then shipped it to Nicaragua. I have no idea what happened to it after that. My job was done and I went home.

Another memory of that time will also stay with me. I got a call from the back room of the Embassy that a SAHSA plane had just crashed on the outskirts of Tegucigalpa, and could I take my helicopter to the site to assist in taking out the wounded. I was at the airport in twenty minutes, and we were airborne within the next ten, and so we arrived at the site about one hour after the crash. The plane had come down in the clouds too soon and hit a mountain with its tail, which broke off, and then skidded along to a stop. There was a shortage of aviation fuel in Honduras, so they had tanked up in Managua. A few people in the front of the plane got out, along with the crew, which were never held responsible for clear pilot error, before the whole plane went up in flames. When I arrived at the scene, there was this open clamshell of the plane with all the rows of seats still intact holding the completely charred remains of the passengers. Later, I literally walked down the aisle, still smoldering, and all I could think of was Kentucky Fried Chicken, that's what they looked like. Several AID employees were on that plane, a few who got out, the others died, I hope quickly. I thought I would have nightmares about that episode.

Fred Schieck had asked me if I would come back to Washington. Fred was the Deputy head of the Department and he told me that he wanted me to take over the LA/DR Operation and I told him that I had done that on the Asian side and that I wasn't sure that I wanted to go back to Washington, I had been in Washington for all of these years. He told me that he really wanted me to do this job, so I said okay. I didn't have any other offers. There was a Mission Directors meeting for Central America in Costa Rica and they told me to go to Costa Rica and sit in on the Mission Directors meeting. Because it would be good experience and I'd get to meet the Mission Directors (I knew most of them already) and I could get back into the swing of normal business. I went to San Jose, I got in late and walked into the hotel and I saw Jim Michel there and he said "Let's go have a drink." So we went into the bar and we were sitting there and he said "Look, we've had a change in people moving around and Carl Leonard is going to Bolivia, would you like to be Mission Director in San Jose?" and I tried to give this a millisecond of consideration and I said "Well, yes, I could probably do that, I should probably talk to my wife first." So I came back home and made arrangements and then took off for Costa Rica and became the Mission Director for Costa Rica. Another circle closed.

SOUTH EAST ASIA

LAOS: Rural Development and Refugee Work—1965-1966

Excerpt taken from an interview with Ernst Kuhn

KUHN: I arrived in Laos to work in September 1965. I was assigned to the Rural Development Division (RDD). Under the RDD there were mainly three different sections or subdivisions within that division. One was the cluster program. A cluster program was straight community development work. Working with groups of villages, hence the name clusters, anywhere from three to five villages. The AID employees, or in many cases they were IVS (International Voluntary Services) people, lived in one of the villages and worked in the cluster.

The second major office in RDD was the Forward Area Program. These again were either AID or IVS people who lived in one village which was in an area of general intermittent fighting or least civic or military tension. Hence the term, forward area, they were a little bit forward of the mainstream Lao village security.

Q: *What province was this?*

KUHN: Well, these were all over. There were cluster and forward area people in Sayaboury, in Savannakhet, outside of Saravane, the Pakse area, Muong Soui, generally all over.

Q: *Did you move around from one to the other?*

KUHN: I wasn't in the Forward Area Program, but they didn't really move around. They would be in one village basically conducting political, social and agricultural programs and things like that. Those people were in a more exposed area than people who were working in the clusters which was just general rural development work.

The third section, the one that got all the raised eyebrows in Vientiane, and we were all suspected of not being AID employees. In fact, people would say to our face, "You people are all CIA agents and not AID people." That section was the refugee relief program. This was the program that by 1966 was almost driving the AID program there. The refugee relief program was broad and included the whole school system, the medical system and, of course, the relief part. After the cease fire of 1973, the attention turned from relief to more resettlement. So by the early seventies we were sort of half relief and half resettlement and by 1973-74-75, we were strictly trying to resettle people. But the refugee relief work was the most dangerous, the most exposed. We had at Sam Thong at various times, where I was assigned, anywhere from three to five people; Luang Prabang usually had one or two people and Ban Houei Sai had either one or two. Later on, people

were assigned to Savannakhet and Pakse in refugee relief. When I got there the primary emphasis was in the north. The program had been started by a man by the name of Edgar "Pop" Buell. Pop, along with whatever support he could get from the CIA, whatever support he could get from any source available, really started the refugee relief program and, of course, later on AID picked it up and it became a huge operation.

Q: *Was he still in the country when you arrived?*

KUHN: Oh, yes. I was interviewed by Pop and hired by Pop. He was the one who had the final say as to who was sent to Sam Thong. He was there until Sam Thong fell in March 1970. Later on, he retired but still stayed in Vientiane until 1975 when he went down to Bangkok. He died in Manila visiting a mutual friend there. So, Pop was quite the character.

There were two people who were widely instrumental in promoting the refugee relief program and really making it a success, at least we considered it a success at the time. The other man was Dr. Charles Weldon, "Jiggs" Weldon, and his wife, Dr. Pat McCready, the Field Marshal. These two people along with Pop were able to put together an integrated program with medical relief, educational facilities, agricultural programs that was really quite remarkable for its breadth and scope, the number of people that we served given the conditions that we served under.

Q: *Do you have any general number of people you were serving?*

KUHN: Well, there were times when we were feeding well over 300,000 people. Now, of course, that included people in the south, too. I suppose in the north at any given time we probably had upward to 200,000 or more people. Those people were mostly served by air. We had an extraordinary system using both Air America and Continental Air Services. People don't really give much credit to Continental because the popular perception is that Air America was the CIA airline and did all the work. But, in fact, a major part of the work was done by Continental Air Services. Bob Six who was the owner of Continental Airlines had started up this subsidiary to get a piece of the pie. Bob Six and his wife, Audrey Meadows who played the wife of Jackie Gleason on the *Honeymooners*, took a personal interest in the program. In fact, they would themselves come over to Sam Thong and even donated a jeep to Pop back in the days when AID was not giving him any support. So Continental was a major player.

Later on, there were other smaller airlines, helicopter airlines. I can't think of names right now but there was a series of little airlines who got contracts with AID. The way these contracts worked both with Continental and Air America was on a cost sharing basis. Even though Air America was a proprietary airline somebody had to pay the bills. So, once or twice a year there were these huge meetings where the AID contracting people and the Air America contracting people, the Requirements Office, which supported the government troops, and the CIA representatives all sat down and tried to figure out

who was going to pay what portion of the bills. It got sort of arcane and bizarre because at any given air drop, at any given location we might have SGU troops which would get support from the CIA, we might have refugees who got support from AID, we might have dependents of FAR troops who would get support through the RO (Requirements Office). So these things became rather bizarre in trying to split up the costs of the aircraft.

Q: *This raises an interesting question. How much of these costs were actually secret? Presumably the AID budget was all public.*

KUHN: Many of these things were simply lumped under the category of refugee relief, AID. I honestly don't know what was published in the way of air costs, if anything. That was something I wasn't ever involved in and as long as the planes kept flying and the rice kept dropping, I was happy.

Q: *Who was the AID director at the time you arrived in Laos?*

KUHN: When I arrived there, it was Joe Mendenhall. Ambassador [William H.] Sullivan had just arrived not too long before I had gotten there. I guess Doug Blaufarb was the station chief.

Q: *He later produced a voluminous document on counterinsurgency in Laos.*

KUHN: I have seen it so many times referenced but have never gotten a copy of it yet.

Q: *It is practically unreadable. It is so technical. Not the sort of thing you would read at bedtime.*

KUHN: Okay, I didn't know anything in Laos was all that technical.

Q: *Well, organizational rather than technical. A whole series of acronyms, etc.*

KUHN: Oh.

Q: *So Sam Thong was your first assignment in Laos?*

KUHN: Yes, I was there until medivaced out in January 1970 with a suspected ulcer.

Q: *Can you say a little bit about what was there at the time you arrived?*

KUHN: Before I answer that, let me go back to one other point in terms of the refugee relief program and being hired. I was instructed by Pop...and this is how relatively secret the program was supposed to be...I was told by Pop that there were only four people whom I was ever to talk to about refugees or military operations.

Q: *These did not include journalists, I presume.*

KUHN: These did not include journalists, no. One was Joe Mendenhall, the director; another was, of course, Ambassador Sullivan; one was Alex Mavro, who was AID executive officer; and the fourth person was whoever the station chief was in the embassy. Everything we did upcountry was to be considered classified because no one was allowed to come upcountry and this is why whenever we came down to Vientiane and would sit in the ACA (American Community Association) and have breakfast or lunch or beer in the bar, etc., if there were more than one of us we would talk shop... "Oh, I was up at Lima Site 215 last week" or Lima this or Lima site that¹ and the FAR (Forces Armées Royales), the SGU (Special Guerrilla Unit), so that anyone else listening to our conversation full of acronyms would assume that we were talking in this gobbledygook for some secret reason. In fact, we weren't, it was just a convenient, shorthand way of talking.

But Sam Thong, when I got there was still relatively primitive. There was no housing for the Americans, with the exception of one small house for the public works man who had been in charge of putting in the airstrip and building the buildings. We had one Quonset hut which on the ground floor housed the office, which consisted of a big Mark 4 single sideband radio and a backup sideband, a desk and some other junk. There was a little kitchen area in the back where we could cook. There was a big fireplace and upstairs there were three or four rooms that some of us used when we came back to Sam Thong. Often someone slept in a sleeping bag on the floor in front of the radios. We tried to monitor the single sideband 24 hours a day. Anybody who was back at Sam Thong--somebody usually took turns sleeping on the concrete floor. We would sleep on the floor with the radio on in case somebody upcountry might need assistance.

In fact I had brought all my clothes from Thailand and my mother had sent me some things. I had them just in cardboard boxes in the second floor of the Quonset Hut. I came back one time and found that the room was empty. I didn't know it, but Pop Buell used to solicit used clothing from any source and he stuffed everything in the same room where all my belongings were. While I was gone somebody came in and distributed everything out to the refugees. So I came back and all I had were the clothes that were in my knapsack. I was pretty well ticked off as you could imagine.

When I got there in September, 1965, the hospital had just been built so we had a fully functioning hospital with operating room, the nurses' quarters for the Lao nurses had just been completed and they were graduating their first or second class of nurses. This

Airfields in Laos were designated on air navigation charts by numbers with the prefix Lima. Thus, Vientiane was Lima 08, Pakse was Lima 11, Savannakhet was Lima 39, Séno was Lima 46, Luang Prabang was Lima 54, and so on. Smaller landing fields, basically STOL strips, were designated by numbers with the prefix Lima Site. Thus, Khang Khai was Lima Site 08, which was shortened to LS 08.

was a tremendous social upheaval in northern Laos to take 15-, 16-, 17-year-old Lao, Meo (Hmong) and Lao Theung girls out of their villages and bring them down to Sam Thong and try to teach them some sort of rudimentary skills to become nurses.

Q: *Who were the teachers?*

KUHN: Well, one of the first persons up there was a woman by the name of Diana Dick. She, along with personnel that the public health people, Dr. Weldon and Dr. McCready, sent up did the training. We had a Lao doctor, Dr. Kameung, who was an outstanding doctor, who did a lot of the work. And we had air commando doctors and medics. They were not involved in teaching, but certainly as full fledged doctors the nurses were there and could watch and observe what was going on. Many of the things that local nurses did were just the basic things of looking after a patient, but in fact many a patient died in the middle of the night because the nurse had forgotten to adjust the flow of medicine or saline solution, or the person developed complications during the night and the nurse on duty may have gone out with her boyfriend for the evening. It was pretty primitive but the first time something like this had ever been developed. So it was a showcase. Every time someone came up to Sam Thong, all the nurses were paraded out in their little white uniforms and it was quite a sight.

In order to give some continuity to the Lao government in Sam Thong, there was a house built for the governor and there were khoang offices built so we had a fully functioning khoang. All the different muongs had offices there.

Q: *The khoang being the province and the muong being the district?*

KUHN: Yes. So we had a fully functioning government, as such. Also at Sam Thong we had an ENI, a teacher training college, where village men and women who had some education were trained to eventually go back and teach in their own villages. In fact, that is where my wife was teaching, in the ENI, when I met her.

General Vang Pao was the commander for Military Region II, but his deputy commander, Colonel Chansom Pakdimonivong actually lived at Sam Thong. While Long Chieng was considered more the headquarters for the Armée Clandestine or the SGU special forces units cum CIA, Sam Thong was considered more as the administrative headquarters for the FAR troops. Colonel Chansom had his office there and all his G-1, G-2, G-3, whatever, were all located there.

Q: *Military Region II covered Xieng Khouang and Sam Neua provinces.*

KUHN: Officially, MR II was Xieng Khouang and Sam Neua, but authority and operations, in the early days, bled over into Luang Prabang, Sayaboury, Phong Saly, and Borikhane if it involved the Meo. When you get up in the border areas it was a little bit fluid depending on who the ethnic groups were. Based out of Sam Thong I covered a lot

of activities in Luang Prabang and Phong Saly. Even though they were under command of Chao Sayavong, who was the commander for that region, when it came to the tribal movements, they looked to Vang Pao as much as anybody.

Xieng Khouang province, itself, was predominantly an ethnic group called the Phuan and Chao (Prince) Saykham Southakakoumal himself was the son or grandson of the last ruling prince of Xieng Khouang. He was also the appointed governor of Xieng Khouang. In addition to the Phuan in the lowlands and the valleys, there were also the Meo who were predominant around the Plaine des Jarres towards the Vietnamese border and on the northern part of the Plaine. And then there were several different Lao Theung groups and quite frankly I don't know the specific designations which were simply lumped together as Lao Theung. I visited different areas and can't tell you all the names. There were also lots of so-called tribal T'ai--T'ai Dam (Black T'ai), T'ai Daeng (Red T'ai), and some T'ai Khaw (White T'ai) up north. Most of the tribal T'ai tended to be under communist control, not that they were necessarily communists. For instance, Sam Teu (LS 02) was a T'ai Daeng village and made numerous overtures for arms from Vang Pao, but he never trusted them.

Misplaced Emphasis on the Meo The one misconception...this really bothers me...most of the literature that is written about the special guerrilla units in northern Laos emphasize the Meo and implies that the Meo were the only people who were doing any fighting. I would like right up front here to say that I disagree with that completely. There were entire SGU battalions comprising solely various Lao Theung ethnic groups. There were T'ai Daeng groups amongst them. The officers were almost uniformly Meo, but of the first four SGU units, and each one had approximately 300 men, at least two were predominantly if not fully Lao Theung. Later on, SG 9² was a completely Lao battalion recruited from Savannakhet and brought up to the north. So the Meo were not the only people fighting. And also the Lao get very short shrift when it comes to being fighters and I have very strong feelings about that because Lao troops when properly led were as good a fighter as anyone else and probably could fight just as well as the Meo if not better. When they had commanders such as Colonel Khongsavan, who was commander of BV 24³ in Xieng Khouang and Colonel Douangtha Norasing, commander of BV 27 in the north, these were outstanding local commanders. Of course, one of the most tragic things for both Laos and the United States was when Colonel Thong Vongrasamy died from wounds trying to rescue an American pilot. Colonel Thong was a charismatic leader who got the best out of his men. Unfortunately, the stereotypical Lao officer was venal, he was corrupt, he was more interested in getting money by padding payrolls, etc. But when

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The French acronym for Volunteer Battalion.

you did get a good commander...I remember Colonel Douangtha telling me when I was sitting down talking to him one day, that in the previous two years he had gone through three complete battalions of people through casualties, either dead or wounded. So, the Lao put up one hell of a fight and don't get much credit for it.

Q: *And they made a lot of sacrifices.*

KUHN: They made an awful lot of sacrifices and get very little credit for anything that they did.

When I first arrived at Sam Thong, I came up from Vientiane in a little small single engine aircraft. The night before I had been at the American Club having dinner and drinking, there was a little fat guy who got totally stoned and was throwing beer bottles up against the wall and generally making a great ass of himself. He was finally carried out about 11:15 and disappeared. The next morning I walked out to the airport at 5:15 in the morning to come back to Sam Thong and here was the same guy sitting out there checking the fuel and the hydraulic pump, etc. He was the pilot who was taking me up to Sam Thong that day. That pilot had a tremendous capacity for staying up half the night drinking, getting stoned drunk and five or six o' clock in the morning being in the cockpit and ready to go and you would never know that he had had so much as a ginger ale the night before.

When I got to Sam Thong, things were relatively quiet. There was an area down south of the Plaine des Jarres where there had been some heavy fighting at a site called Ban Peung (LS 95). It had been overrun and several officers had either been killed or captured and missing. One of the missing was one of the original Thai PARU, Captain Daychar. A word about the PARU. The PARU (Police Aerial Resupply Units) were a group of 90-some Thai who had come to Laos a few years before, recruited by the CIA, to work with the ethnic tribes and meld them into some kind of fighting force. Captain Daychar was a Muslim from south Thailand and was an outstanding officer. Three months later he turned up alive. He had been hiding in the jungles for three months before he made it back to friendly lines. Unfortunately, a few months later he was in a Helio that was overloaded and crashed near Muong Hiem (LS 48A). Captain Daychar died attempting to rescue other crash victims.

But things were relatively quiet. Pop sent me immediately to Hua Muong (LS 58) in Sam Neua and I had no idea what I was getting myself into. It turned out that Hua Muong had just been captured two days before. I was in the first airplane to land on the strip since it had been recaptured. The T-28s were bombing off the ridge line south of the airstrip. I thought to myself, "What am I getting myself into here? This is not where I thought I was going to be." But I had a load of used clothing and a couple of other planes had loads of clothing, and I waited there the entire day and Pop never came. So I organized the refugees that were coming in and distributed the clothing. Just before dark Pop came in and appeared to be highly agitated with the fact that I had already passed out

the clothing. We sat around the early part of the evening eating cucumbers and then Pop decided that I had better go back to Site 36 (Na Khang), which I did. So I flew back to Na Khang and spent the night. I found out later that this was one of the things that Pop does to people who are new. He puts them into exposed areas or into situations where they have to sort of sink or swim on their own and if you don't handle it right then he knows you are not the person for that area. So I guess everything worked out all right and I survived that little test. Pop got an acute case of food poisoning or stomach disorder of some kind which he blamed on the cucumbers and that put him down for several days.

Na Khang was an old French base from the French Indochina war. There were two or three big Phuan villages in the area. Basically a rice paddy area, flat rolling hills, very little vegetation in terms of trees. The Lao commander was having a big party that night so we proceeded to get totally smashed. That was my first introduction to some of the more clandestine operations in Laos. One of the people at Na Khang was an air commando named Jack Tighe. Jack Tighe's father was a congressman, I believe from Texas or Louisiana. Anyway, Jack was an air commando sent up to help coordinate air strikes. This was now September 1965. Mike Lynch was a CIA case officer. Mike's father was the lieutenant governor of California. Mike had a brother who had a rock band and he used to tell the story that if anybody would ever ask his mother how many children she had, she would always say, "I don't have any children," because one was working for the CIA and she couldn't tell people what he was doing and the other son was the head of a rock band and was too embarrassed to admit that he was her son. The third person up there was Jerry Daniels who became a legend in his own right through years of working with the Meo and years later died in Bangkok of gas poisoning. So there was a pretty good crew working at Na Khang when I first arrived there.

Another American who eventually was really covering that area, was a young American named Don Sjostrom. Don had also been in the Peace Corps in Thailand and came to Laos about the same time that I did and we became very good friends. We worked together a little bit in Sam Neua in the beginning and then later on he covered Sam Neua and I went over and covered parts of Luang Prabang and southern Phong Saly until January 1967 when Don was killed during an attack on Na Khang, but that is still somewhere in the future and we will get to that later.

The people at Na Khang, their function was basically to supply the airstrips and the outposts in Sam Neua province and anything north of the Plaine des Jarres. So what happened was airplanes...C-123s and Caribous, two short takeoff and landing planes could land at Na Khang. They would bring in ammunition and supplies which would be offloaded to helicopters or small Helio Couriers or Pilatus Porters. These smaller aircraft would then take the supplies out to a smaller strip someplace and drop it to the troops. So Na Khang was really a resupply point. Also, too, by the time I got there in 1965, the Air Force was beginning to use Na Khang as a daytime deployment for their rescue helicopters for planes that might get shot down over north Laos or North Vietnam. The

Jolly Green Giant rescue choppers were on station there, which meant there was also these World War II planes called AD-1s or Sandys that were constantly flying cap all the time so in case a plane had to scramble for a search and rescue, the AD-1s then could provide ground cover if the chopper came under attack.

Q: *This was a major operation.*

KUHN: It was a major operation. It was embarrassing, though, because most of the rescues were made by Air America helicopters. Air America choppers would just come in. They didn't give a damn...the pilot was down, they had him spotted, he had a radio they got a signal. Nine times out of ten, unless there was really heavy ground fire, they would just go in. Whereas the Air Force had all these rules of engagement that they had to abide by.

When I arrived they had just gotten their first Bell Huey, it was the short version of the Huey which only took four or five people and a small amount of cargo. A year or so later they were using much larger Hueys. However, most of the USAID work was done with the old Marine H-34 helicopters. These Air America pilots were really good and knew what they were doing and were willing to put their necks on the line and try to pick up people.

Q: *Regardless of whether the downed flyer was Air America, or Air Force or any other service, they would go in?*

KUHN: I would say almost a hundred percent were Air Force or Navy. I can't recall any Air America planes that would have gone down in the early years. If an Air America Helio or Continental Porter went down, the pilot went down with the plane. The planes were too small for the pilots to wear parachutes. An Air Force jet was equipped to eject the pilot. The crews in the Caribous, C-123s and C-130s did carry parachutes.

Q: *They would have more of a chance of surviving.*

KUHN: If there was a C-46 or C-123, yes, they could parachute out. But I don't recall at the time any of those aircraft being shot down. It was all Air Force planes being shot down.

I am kind of jumping around but I am trying to put my thoughts in order as to what happened. I think it is important to know that what I am going to be talking about are the operational nuts and bolts of what happened. I am not somebody who was sitting in Geneva. We are not talking about high policy...

Q: *Or even Vientiane.*

KUHN: Or even Vientiane...

Q: *On the cocktail party circuit.*

KUHN: No, the circuit that I was part of was more like the saloons. I think the operational end of Laos is not well known. The books and the things that are written are the major histories that give the broad scope and, of course, there were daily incidences going on that are unrecorded and are soon going to be lost. So, I want to make it quite clear, if I bore anybody that is too bad, but these are the nuts and bolts, what the program was. [W. Averell] Harriman could talk about ceasefires, etc., but we had to do some implementation on the ground, and that is where I came in.

In the early days it was not an easy job. I had a deferment from the draft board. The USAID director would write yearly to the draft boards of all of us who were of draftable age and explain what we were doing over there and we got deferments. It wasn't that I was trying to get out of any kind of danger, in fact, within weeks after I arrived in Laos I was sent over to a little village inside of a bowl shaped valley to check on some refugees, over near Site 95, south of the Plaine des Jarres, and while we were there during the day the chopper was supposed to come back and pick us up in the afternoon but it never came back. We spent the night there. While we were there that night the outpost perimeters around the area were attacked. Several people came in who were wounded and the enemy was pressing clearly in an attempt to take this bowl. The next day, still no helicopters came in and it was not until late in the afternoon, when again it was evident that the fighting was getting close to where we were that a helicopter came in at extremely high altitude and dropped something. It was a cloth wrapped with a small stone. There was a message inside that said, "Ernie, if you are still down there...in those days we didn't have any radios for communication...wave your t-shirt or make some signs so we know you are there because the place is under attack all around you and we have orders not to get low unless we know you are there." So I made some signals which apparently satisfied the pilot and he came in and picked me up. It turned out that the helicopter that tried to pick us up before never even got to us because he was hit by ground fire coming in and the crew chief had been wounded and evacuated back down to Udorn. I got back to Sam Thong and Pop said that they were lining up T-28s and AD-1s at that time because if the chopper couldn't get in to pick me up the second day, they were going to have flare ships and propeller driven T-28s and AD-1s in the area all night because they didn't think the place would last. As a matter of fact, the next day the whole area did fall.

So, I have been in several villages where I have been under attack and had to walk out. So it was dangerous work, but highly exciting because here were Don Sjoström, myself, two or three other people, 24, 25, 26 years old, doing work that was not only dangerous, but it required a lot of onsite decision making. I played God more times than I would like to think about. I would go into an area and there would be refugees coming in. I had to make a decision...do we keep the refugees here, do I try to move them, what do I do with them, who gets fed who doesn't get fed...and a lot of people died, quite bluntly, on decisions that I made, or Don Sjoström made, or Bob Daken made or any

number of the other refugee officers who were out there made. We had to make quick decisions. We had to send pilots into areas where we knew it was dangerous. We, ourselves, had to go into areas where we knew it was dangerous. I tried to develop quite early on a trust and rapport with the pilots of Air America and Continental, because I knew I had to depend on them to get my job done and perhaps to save my life. I would never send them into an area unless I was along with them on the first trip and they appreciated that because other Ops officers and CIA people did not do that and a lot of planes would get shot up and the pilots would get very upset because they thought they were being sacrificed. But if you worked with the pilots yourself, you could get an awful lot of work out of them. So, it was a very heady period of time. We were fast moving and making lots of decisions.

A Day Off Looking at some of my letters recently, I found a note saying that Pop Buell finally sent me down to Vientiane for two days rest, I hadn't had a day off in six weeks. This was a common occurrence when you were working in the refugee program, especially during the time of the year when the enemy was attacking or we were on the offense. You were working 16, 17, 18 hours a day, day and night sometimes. So, it was a very fast moving operation which required a lot of quick decisions.

There were other times when we were able as so-called refugee relief operations officers to expand our own roles and I think it maybe would have gotten us thrown out of the country if the ambassador found out about it. I was lucky because Ambassador Sullivan had given Pop Buell carte blanche to let me go wherever I wanted to. The understanding was that if anything happened to me, it was Pop's responsibility. It was going to be carried out one step removed from the ambassador. The ambassador didn't want to know anything about it except the good things that happened. If anything bad happened to me, I was on my own and it was Pop's neck and not Ambassador Sullivan's. This was kind of funny because the CIA people were not allowed to RON (remain over night) anyplace outside of Luang Prabang or Na Khang. So, I was free to go wherever I wanted to and could spend the nights, etc.

I am going to relate something that is not important really in the sense of the war effort, but again the kind of things when you are young and foolish you do. Just south of the Plaine des Jarres the Vietnamese and PL [Pathet Lao] had built a road up near a BV 24 position. I had become good friends with a Lao officer, Major Khongsavan. He had a 75 recoilless rifle and some other little assorted things. We got together on Thanksgiving night 1966...to digress a second...this man was outstanding and later wounded in an attack with an American attaché on the Plaine des Jarres. Anyway, at that time he was a photographer and in his bunker he developed film and printed pictures...in a bunker with candle light. In fact, somewhere around here I have a couple of pictures of myself that he took of me. Anyway, we moved the 75 recoilless rifle and rockets over three mountain tops after dark and set everything up. At night, when the Pathet Lao brought their trucks in to the edge of the Plaine there...

Q: *Because they would move at night.*

KUHN: Yes, they didn't do anything during the daytime. We shelled these trucks with this little 75 recoilless rifle. At the time it was exciting and fun. It didn't make a rat's ass difference in terms of the war. But, it also showed the Lao battalion that the night was not all that frightening, that they could go out and attack the enemy at night just as well as the enemy attacked them. It was interesting that the Lao could do that if someone was with them and pushed them a little bit.

In those early days we didn't have much support. When we went out on a field trip for one night or any number of nights, we had no radio, no communications, if we got out someplace where we got into trouble we just had to hang in there until somebody would come in the next day or a couple of days later to pick us up. By 1966 we were beginning to be equipped with more efficient communications systems. All operations officers were given small little radios called HT2s. They had two fixed frequencies. One usually was 119.1, which was what Air America and Continental Airlines used as their standard operating frequency, and the other frequency was usually 123.7 or 118.1, which were alternate frequencies. The unfortunate thing was that although all the radios had 119.1, but not all of them had the same alternative frequency. But, at least you had something if you got into trouble and could hopefully flag down a passing aircraft to relay a message. At night it was much more difficult to find aircraft monitoring 119.1.

And then, one of the most outstanding pieces of equipment we had was a single side band radio which was about the size of two Britannica Encyclopedia books stacked on top of each other. It was a single side band with multiple frequencies. It came with a kind of bizarre antenna which was modified basically to two wires that went out about 30 feet on each side. We just tied them on tree limbs. That little Stoner weighed about 9 pounds, was portable, could be put into your knapsack and carried on your back. It literally saved my life on more than one occasion. It had a tremendous range. You could talk all over northern Laos, even down as far as Udorn and occasionally pick up places in Thailand.

The story goes that Stoner had developed this radio and asked the CIA if they were interested in using it. He wanted them to buy some to test. They said, "Well, if you want to give us some to test, we will test it. We are not going to buy anything for testing." So, Stoner didn't do any business with the CIA, but AID came in and bought a lot of these radios. The ironic thing was that the CIA portable radios that their guys carried when they went out took a truck battery...a great big 12 volt truck or car battery...which they had to lug along with them, and make sure there was water and everything. I had been out with General Vang Pao at various places at night when he needed to get some communications and he couldn't get his radio to work at all. Whereas I would get my Stoner and called Sam Thong, catch whoever was the night duty officer and say that we need to talk to Long Chieng. They would call Long Chieng on the telephone and they would come up and use the USAID radio because CIA portable radios

were nothing but a piece of garbage.

Q: *Quite a piece of equipment.*

KUHN: Yes, these little radios were quite a life saver. Sort of chronologically, a few things that were happening at this time. The general perception was that Sam Neua was communist. During the last election it had voted communist and it was a communist area.

Q: *Of course, in the wake of the Viet Minh invasion of Laos in 1953 the Pathet Lao established their base area in Sam Neua where they were in close touch with the relevant Viet Minh command, training and logistical headquarters just over the border. Sam Neua province was one of two regrouping areas for the Pathet Lao specified in the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Laos signed in Geneva in July 1954. Thereafter, there was sporadic skirmishing between the royal army and the Pathet Lao for control of small outposts along the border of North Vietnam. But the Pathet Lao walked back into Sam Neua town itself in 1960 as an aftermath of the Kong Le coup when Phoumi's [General Phoumi Nosavan] troops abandoned it. When the war escalated and bombing began, the Pathet Lao operated out of fortified positions in the Sam Neua countryside, some of them in deep caves. That is why Sam Neua became known as being communist.*

KUHN: I am glad you said that because that is all true. It is also true that on the ground huge areas of Sam Neua were not controlled by the Pathet Lao at all, were in fact controlled by either FAR or by the guerrilla units of Vang Pao.

Q: *Despite the fact that it was right on the border with North Vietnam? It was kind of an enclave sticking right into North Vietnam.*

KUHN: Yes, it was.

Q: *Which shows the tremendous importance of geography in such a situation.*

KUHN: It may have just been a question of priorities or something that the Vietnamese had higher priorities in the earlier years, etc.

Q: *Well, they couldn't control every mountain top or position.*

KUHN: That is true. Well, the only point I was going to make was that it would not have been impossible, really, to have by ground...walking or by truck...to have gone from Vientiane all the way up to Nong Khang, Lima 52, way up north of Sam Neua city. It would have been possible to have gone on the ground that entire way.

Q: *And not be detected by the communists.*

KUHN: That's right. And not even be in an area where you were in any great danger because there were enough contiguous areas. This didn't last very long because by 1966-67 many of those little enclaves had been overrun. But, even when Vang Pao in later years whenever we would lose Sam Neua would go back and try to take it, many of these areas had become friendly again for a short period of time and then they would be overrun again and try to knock us off again. So there were rather strange little pockets of support for the Lao government.

Q: *So villages would change hands quite frequently?*

KUHN: Villages would change hands. In some cases villagers would stay there in the village and in other cases once Vang Pao's troops were there if they were going to be overrun the villagers would pull out.

Again, there has been a lot written about villagers coming over to the Lao side because they were afraid of bombing. That I think is true to some extent, but also many of the areas we are talking about were not areas that were under extensive US bombing. Again, there were certain areas in Laos that were overbombed, there is no question about that. But, there were also vast areas that never saw a U.S. plane and never saw a bomb. As a matter of fact, I think the people in many cases were voting with their feet. They did not like the communist system, did not like the harsh rule that they were subjected to and genuinely were disposed favorably towards the government and wanted to be under government control. I am really quite confident in that.

There were a lot of defectors too. A lot of people who were Lao schoolteachers, minor officials, who were simply tired of the whole system, didn't like the way the system was run. I think in your book you quote Win [Edwin T.] McKeithen in your references...

Q: *Yes.*

KUHN: ...he interviewed several people. I interviewed people that did not get published like Win's did, but basically they were the same thing. They were conscripted as coolies, they were doing things they didn't want to do.

Q: *Yes, and these were civilians who had actually experienced life under communism. So they knew what they were talking about. It wasn't a theoretical thing for them.*

KUHN: That is right. I don't think this is mentioned often and I think it is an important aspect of the political situation at that time, in 1965-66.

Also, too, little known are the operations that were being conducted up in Phong Saly province, another area that was basically assumed to be under Pathet Lao control or Chinese control depending on whom you talked to. We didn't have the extensive operations in Phong Saly that we had in Sam Neua. But when I got there there was a

contiguous band of sites from the southern portion of Phong Saly, across from Dien Bien Phu down towards Luang Prabang that were friendly. So the first area I was assigned to was in fact that nebulous area of southern Phong Saly and northern Luang Prabang. We had sites up there like Lao Ta, Lima Site 121, very close to the Chinese border and right down from that was Chuk Chung, Lima Site 138. These were two very, very important bases.

In January, February, early March 1966, the “enemy,” whoever they were, the Chinese, Vietnamese, Pathet Lao, whoever, began to take a more serious interest in the area and one by one these sites were overrun. We began to get large numbers of refugees accumulated, particularly at Site 138. I was at Site 138 for several days when the weather turned bad and we had about five thousand refugees there at the time. We went several days with no rice drops. There was a Thai PARU team there who had been training some of the villagers as militiamen. I had said that if the refugees didn't have anything to eat, I wouldn't have anything to eat either, which sounded good at the time but after the second day and the beginning of the third, I was getting pretty hungry and the weather was just absolutely down on the deck. So the Thai PARU late in the afternoon came over and said, “Ernie come down to our bunker, we have something for you.” So I went down and they had a few little handfuls of rice that they had saved and I decided I was supposed to be the one who was getting their food through rice drops and I had to be alert enough to do some work, so it wouldn't hurt if I had a little bit of rice. Well, also on the plate was a bunch of other little things that I couldn't tell by candlelight what they were. Finally I realized they were grubs and worms and various things. So, I thought, “Gee, it is either that or nothing.” I didn't watch everybody else eating very carefully and I picked up one of these little beetles and looked at it and closed my eyes and popped that little sucker into my mouth like a kernel of popcorn. I crunched down on it and these beetles must have legs that have ten thousand sawtooth jagged things on its legs and its shell was like eating an egg shell. Well, to make a long story short I then began to watch the Thai eat these things and they very carefully peeled off the hard shell and with their finger scooped out the soft underbelly and threw away the shell and the legs. Well, it must have taken me 15 minutes to chew that beetle and swallow the shell, legs and everything. I felt so utterly foolish. But those were situations that were not uncommon where refugees would not get fed, the weather would get bad, we would try to get help and you couldn't.

Carrying Arms Another little aside. Going up into these areas where we were again exposed to possible enemy action, I always carried a weapon. I carried a 38 Colt in a shoulder holster. And I also carried an AK47 because Ambassador Sullivan would not allow us to have any American weapons. I did it for one reason. Before I got there, there was an American who was working up in Laos and he did not believe in carrying guns, he was there to help people and everybody loved him and Pop loved him. He was absolutely well known and a great young man. He was in a village one night that was overrun. He said he suddenly realized what a burden he was to the villagers he was staying with because the last thing they wanted to have was an American in their village get killed or captured and he had absolutely no way to protect himself. He had to rely

upon them to protect him. He said at that time he realized that you are putting a burden on the villagers. So, for that reason I always carried a weapon. I never had to use it, thank heavens, but I always carried one with me so that if I ever did need it I could protect myself, I didn't have to have someone else worrying about me very much.

In late 1965-66, northern Luang Prabang and southern Phong Saly sites were falling and pressure was building. Pressure always built around Na Khang, Lima Site 36 above the Plaine des Jarres, the big supply base for Sam Neua. The perimeters around Na Khang were probed nightly. They had flare ships up there at night to try to give some protection at night. Finally, Na Khang did fall, was overrun. General Vang Pao went up there to see what was going on. I don't know whether this story is exactly correct or not, but Don Sjoström, who worked with me in AID, was up there. He said they went out to a chopper pad with General Vang Pao and they saw a Vietnamese who was still alive and coming up the backside of the pad. They flipped a hand grenade down over the side, hit the guy and it blew his head off and his head came flying past Vang Pao. General Vang Pao saw the head and when it came to a stop he walked over to examine the head, supposedly, and a sniper fired a round at him. He was hit in the elbow and grazed his neck.

Q: *I remember that, it was a famous incident.*

KUHN: A very famous incident. In fact, General Vang Pao was somewhat concerned that one of his own men might have tried to hit him. This was January 1966. He was evacuated. In fact, a year or two later he had to go back to Hawaii for an operation on his arm.

During this attack on Na Khang, I have in my notes at the time that this was the first time that the Air Force used napalm in Laos in trying to blunt the attack on Site 36. Allegedly there were over five or six hundred Vietnamese killed during this attack. We can't verify that, but the refugees, at least the people who lived in the villages around Na Khang who became refugees, reported that for over six hours the Vietnamese on stretchers and litters carried out wounded and dead Vietnamese troops. So whether it was true or not I don't know, but even though they captured Na Khang I think it was a big cost to the Vietnamese. The troops and refugees had retreated back towards Muong Hiem, Lima Site 48 Alpha. Muong Hiem was a Neutralist strong point. Souvanna Phouma's nephew was commander at Muong Hiem.

Q: *Maybe we should point out here what some people may not know. The Neutralist army was separate from the Rightist army up to fairly late in the war and regarded themselves to be basically loyal to Prince Souvanna Phouma, who was the prime minister, rather than to General Phoumi Nosavan and his followers.*

KUHN: At both Muong Hiem and Muong Soui there was pretty bad blood between the Neutralists and the Rightist troops. This was quite surprising when Souvanna

Phouma's nephew actually offered to help. In fact they actually brought up two hundred Neutralist troops from around Saravane to bolster the Muong Hiem troops in case the Vietnamese decided to push on up the Muong Hiem valley. But jets came in and totally destroyed the little base there at Na Khang. Everything was burned, the fuel dump was blown up, the headquarters was destroyed. I went in there the second day of the attack and a bunch of Thai T-28s came up with...Thai pilots used to fly planes in Lao, as you know, with Lao markings. A group of Thai T-28s came up and there were no Thai or Lao speakers in the area, so I took a Porter up and marked the targets for the T-28s. This was one of those little things that were not in your job description but one of those things you had to do in the course of a day's work. The unfortunate thing about the attack on Na Khang, I think, is there were three old villages..Na Khang, Nakut, and I forget the name of the third. They had been there for several hundred years and had these beautiful big old Phuan houses.

Q: *Made out of what?*

KUHN: Made out of wood. I have some cross pieces from the ends of a house. Later on after the village was burned down, a year or two later, when Don Sjostrom and I joined Daniels one day, I cut off the end pieces, they were elephant heads, I have them in the room, of these beautiful old houses. A week or two before the attack Don Sjostrom and I had been walking down through one of these villages and the people were so friendly and invited us to spend the night in the village. So, we decided to spend the night there since we didn't have to return to base. They had a little party and everything. About 9:00 at night we were getting ready to go to bed and there was a commotion out on the back porch of the house. One of the old village elders came in and said they had several village girls lined up for us so that we could choose whichever one we wanted. We thought this was not exactly building the hearts and minds of the people there so we explained to them that we appreciated the fact...we didn't want to embarrass the girls because we found out that the Phuan were pretty loose in this area and in fact the villages were a source of amusement for all the Lao troops at Na Khang during the night. We didn't want to embarrass any of the girls by refusing them nor the village leaders, so we told them we appreciated it all, etc. And they said, "Well look, it is okay because back in the days when the French had a base here they used to come out here and they always wanted a few girls, a few pigs, a few chickens and we always let them have what they wanted. When the Vietnamese went through after the French left they wanted mostly pigs, but if they wanted a girl or two, we gave them a girl. Why don't you accept our hospitality?"

In early 1966 I spent more of my time up around the Phong Saly area. Over the next month the various sites up there one by one fell and there was never any real attempt after that to try to take back anything. At this time, the contracts that Don Sjostrom and I were on were due to expire in March. So Pop Buell in the meantime had sent word back to Washington that he wanted both of us to come back to work as direct hires. Word came back from Washington that we were going to be hired and that we should take a

vacation for a couple of months and report to Washington the last part of May, which we both did. Unfortunately, I contracted some sort of unknown disease and spent most of the summer in and out of the hospital, although ultimately I was diagnosed as having schistosomiasis, which was treatable to the point where the medication became worse than the disease and I would begin to fall down and bump into things. The doctors finally realized what was happening and took me off the medication and observed me for a while and said I was okay and shipped me back to Laos. By the time I got back to Laos it was the end of summer of 1966 and I was all set to go, to get back to work. Unfortunately, things were a little bit slow during the end of the summer there and I was a little bit disappointed in the way things were going. I was all charged up and the program wasn't charged up.

Q: *Were you out in the field or were you in Vientiane?*

KUHN: I was always stationed all the time at Sam Thong right up until it fell in 1970. Pop was in and out and Jack Williamson was pretty much in charge for a while. Sam Neua was relatively quiet. It was decided to put another person in Luang Prabang. Tom Ward had been there and it was decided to put someone else there permanently, so that sort of took the Phong Saly program away from Sam Thong. So during the fall of 1966 and late 1966, I was hopping around in different places. There really wasn't much continuity in what I was doing, I thought.

During this time, though, several things happened. A Helio crashed near Sam Thong with one of our chief nai khong,⁴ Nhia Ying, aboard. He died of burns suffered in the crash. As I mentioned earlier, another Helio crashed at Muong Hiem, resulting in the death of Captain Daychar, the Thai PARU whom everybody really respected and liked. Another Porter was shot at while it was coming right over Sam Thong and a bullet hit the pilot in the foot. We have no idea who that was or why. There were a lot of little strange things going on at the end of the summer. Somebody had picked up some broadcasts in the Sam Thong area in a combination of Lao and Vietnamese and first someone thought they were being broadcast to Vietnam. The CIA sent in some of their radio experts and they did all kinds of triangulation exercises. Guys were running around with little radios disguised as cigarette packets to try to triangulate the radio transmitter. They spent weeks there trying to track this transmitter down and finally realized it was coming from the FAR headquarters because the sister of Colonel Douangtha had been trained in Hanoi back when there were relationships between the Lao and the Vietnamese. Her "fist" and everything had some sort of Vietnamese pattern to it, etc. That was a big fiasco with a lot of people running around Sam Thong trying to locate this alleged clandestine transmitter. It was a waste of time.

The term comes from the French, who appointed Meo to quasi-official positions with the title "Nai Khong." See page 46, below. (ECK)

Rice Drops In terms of the AID operation, we were at this time still pretty much doing what we had always been doing. We were still running the refugee relief program with the rice drops. I really haven't explained what the rice drops were.

Q: *No, please explain what they were.*

KUHN: Refugees, at least in the early days, were primarily in the north and were virtually 100 percent in areas that had no road access. The only way you could get into them was by air. So the Air America and Continental contracts that we had were for rice drops. We used the plane called the C-46, which was a plane that had been developed during World War II to fly over the Hump, over the Himalayas, from India to China. These planes, interestingly enough, were not certified to fly in the United States because they used the short electrical propellers. They were tremendous aircraft, easy to handle, easy to get on and off the ground and tremendous drop planes. I think, if I recall, a C-46 would usually carry 4.8 tons of rice at a time. The rice would be put into jute bags at first and at the very end we used polypropylene. Into jute bags would go 40 kilos of rice. And then there were two other bags sewn over that bag. The rice was stacked up on big wooden pallets, eight bags on top of one another, side by side, so there were 16 bags to a pallet. Inside the C-46 there were tracks onto which the pallets fit. They had kickers in back of the aircraft who would push the pallets right up to the door of the aircraft and then tip the pallets outside and the rice would then fall down. An optimum altitude for a rice drop was 800 feet. On the ground the villages would...each village or military position had a signal, which might be a T for tango, and A for alpha, whatever, and on the daily drop sheet for that day that the pilot got when he left Vientiane, it would list the location he was to go to with the coordinates and the signal. If he got up to that location and circled and did not get that signal he was not to drop because he would know there was something wrong down below, presumably enemy activity, etc. So they only dropped when they got the proper signal. There would be a field somewhere next to the village where the signal would be put out and the plane would come in at 800 feet and make the drop, circle around again and drop more rice, repeating this until all the rice had been dropped.

We used two methods. Originally the rice on the pallets was rolled out to the edge of the plane and then the pilot would ring the bell to drop and the kicker would kick the whole thing out, pallets and all. The pallets were highly prized because they were thick plywood and people used to build their houses out of them. Whole villages would be built out of pallets. But they were also tremendously expensive, so later on, towards the end of the program in the early 1970s, there were ways devised so that the pallet was simply tipped over on the plane and the rice slid off, but the pallet was brought back into the aircraft.

All the rice for the big sites was airdropped like that. Then, of course, if we had smaller sites with just a few hundred people or even less, we would sometimes then take a Porter (could take about 12 hundred pounds) or Helio (could take about 6 hundred

pounds) of rice and re-drop rice to isolated areas. If it was some place where we really had trouble getting into, we might take out a helicopter of rice.

The commodities that we gave to the refugees were primarily taken from Vientiane up to Sam Thong by Caribou or C-123 cargo plane and stored in warehouses and from there we would shuttle them out either by Porter or by helicopter. We did make a few commodity drops, things like blankets, pots and pans, which were mildly successful. It was better to land the commodities themselves. We also gave out P.L. 480 [U.S. Public Law 480, no relation to the Pathet Lao] cooking oil. We actually had classes for people to learn how to cook bulgur wheat. These were disastrous. People were used to eating rice all their life and you try to feed them hard wheat, they have a lot of stomach problems. Cooking oil, vegetable oil, was highly prized.

Q: *That is how they cooked their food, mainly frying.*

KUHN: If they didn't have enough of their food they could always fry up some greens of some kinds and vegetables that you could find out in the woods.

Q: *Being a kicker on a C-46 must have been a dangerous occupation. Wasn't there a kicker who fell out and was captured by the Pathet Lao?*

KUHN: Yes. There were occasionally crew members who fell out of aircraft. I vaguely remember what you are talking about...

Q: *They must have worn parachutes*

KUHN: Well, they did not at first. Even then, later on, they didn't wear parachutes, but they did wear harnesses. They were strapped in and could go only to a certain point in the plane and couldn't physically go any further.

The rice drops probably killed more people. The rice drops that were done with the Porters and Helio. It was a small plane, the pilot would go into the village and there would always be some young soldier there who would either want to or was designated as the local kicker. So this guy would get into the plane not really having the understanding of the G forces, and if the plane tips and you are at the door, and all kinds of things. There were a lot of young men, and even old men, who went out as kickers from individual sites and would fall out. In fact, there was one story that went around that there was a commander from one area who was going back up to where he was from and the pilot got instructions a little bit screwed up. This guy was lying in the back of the plane...in the back of the Porter there was a normal floor, but you then lifted out a square in the floor and there was a set of drop doors under that, so when the pilot got ready to drop he would pull a lever and those doors would open like a little bomb bay in an airplane. Well, they had loaded this plane for drop rice and this local commander got into the back of the plane and fell asleep lying on top of the rice sacks. The pilot forgot the

guy was back there. They get to this outpost and see the signal and come in, pull the switch and down went the rice including the commander. That night there was a message sent back to Na Khang to the effect that rice drop and one commander received this afternoon. I don't know if that story is true or not but occasionally people did get dropped out of aircraft. There were no safety precautions of any kind to save anybody.

Quonset Hut Fire Probably the biggest crisis that occurred in late 1966 happened right about the end of November, the first part of December. It was about 2:00 in the morning...I had said previously that we had no quarters at Sam Thong except the Quonset hut. Sometime in the middle of 1966 two or three sort of communal bunkhouses were put up at Sam Thong and Jack Williamson and I were sleeping down at one of them near the hospital. At about 2:00 in the morning I was vaguely aware of somebody shouting but wasn't really fully awake. Then I realized somebody was pounding on my door. It was Jack Williamson, who was the acting AID coordinator because Pop wasn't there. Jack shouted, "Ernie, Ernie, get up, get up, the Quonset hut is on fire." So we got dressed real quick, grabbed our guns, because we didn't know what was happening, and jumped into the jeep and drove down to the Quonset hut real quick. We had some little Lao Theung orphan kids living in the warehouse in the Quonset. So Jack kept on in the jeep and went up to Air America because Air America planes were parked adjacent to the Quonset hut and all the way back up to the Air America mess, a distance of maybe 50 meters. So Jack took the jeep up to Air America to try to get some of the pilots to move the planes real quick. I ran into the Quonset hut to see if the orphan kids were okay. They were coming downstairs and were all right. The smoke was getting pretty bad but I managed to get out two of our single side band radios that were in the back, and carry out some of our rice drop records that we needed badly. By that time smoke was just too bad and I couldn't get back in again. The Quonset hut held the office, all refugee relief supplies, all the rice we dropped, all the medical supplies for all of north Laos and a small office of USIS, United States Information Service. The whole nine yards. We figured we lost over a million dollars worth of medicine alone in the warehouse. The next day, flying over it from the air, it looked like a huge dirigible had collapsed. The whole Quonset hut just fell in on itself. For the hospital we had just gotten that day several hundred tins of kerosene and several propane and butane tanks to run things in the hospital. As these things exploded they would shoot up two or three hundred feet in the air. It was like a rocket going off, these big tanks of gas and tins of kerosene were exploding all over. We never found out what happened. We all pretty much assumed it was bad wiring because the wiring in the place was terrible, it was all ad hoc and that sort of thing. The conspiracy kinds of people said it was a plot from the Le family that is trying to overthrow Vang Pao and burned down the Quonset hut to make him look bad and the Americans to look bad. There were all kinds of rumors going around, but we never really found out what happened.

Also, too, right about that same time was a day that I call "black Tuesday" where in one single day we had a Caribou come in and land and break a nose wheel. I took a

Porter to a small strip to the east of us and on taking off the strip was a very steep angle with a lot of stumps along the side, the pilot hit a stump on takeoff and we ripped off the whole tail wheel and part of the aileron in the back of the plane. We got back to Long Chieng safely. I got back to Sam Thong and heard on the radio that an AD-1 Skyraider had been shot up and the pilot was trying to land at Sam Thong. I got on the radio and got the pilot, I thought, lined up with the runway and he came in and overshot the runway. He tried to make a go around again and came back and missed the runway and crashed. We went over to get him and he was pretty much shot up, he was dead. Then a Jolly Green Giant helicopter lost its hydraulic system at Sam Thong and almost crashed on top of a Caribou. And then that evening at Long Chieng another Jolly Green Giant was carrying lumber up to the king's house and lost its power and crashed. So in one day we had about six aircraft crash in one sort or another. It was an unheard of set of calamities. People were superstitious anyway, and when this happened, it was really bad.

Then, about the same time in late November, John Perry, the area AID coordinator, had his two sons home from college in France and were ready to go back to France the next day. John decided he wanted to give them a ride someplace and put them in a helicopter that was going up to Nam Bac, a valley north of Luang Prabang that had been heavily contested for some time. The helicopter came in and sat down and the chopper pad had been overrun. The pilot either hadn't seen the signal and landed anyway, or the communist put the signal out to lure the chopper in. When the chopper landed they took over a hundred rounds and John Perry's older son was hit, dying instantly on the spot. So, it was again one of these really stupid things.

Backtrack about a month or so, during the summer of 1966, the commander of the Lao air force, General Ma, had been relieved of his command. General Ma was from an ethnic minority from the southern panhandle of Laos. He was sort of from the same mold as General Vang Pao. Ma, as commander-in-chief of the air force, liked to lead his bombing raids. The stories are that in his early days some of the new pilots went out on missions with him and planes came back to base. One of them was just shot full of holes. The pilot was fairly new and he thought he was going to get reamed out by General Ma for getting the plane shot up. The plane right behind him came in without a hole in it, in perfect shape, and the pilot was real confident having come back without a scratch. General Ma landed his plane, came over, took the pilot who had gotten his plane shot up and put his arm around him and said, "What a great job you did. If you are going to bomb the enemy you have to get right down on the deck. If you don't get down on the deck you are not going to kill any enemy and you are not going to get shot at. You did a great job." He went back to the plane that came back without a hole in it and really chewed out the pilot. He said, "Obviously you were too high. If the enemy can't hit you from the ground then you are too high, you have to get down where the enemy is and hit him." This was the kind of man he was.

General Ma's Visit General Ma had been hospitalized for general fatigue in the fall of 1966. It happened this was the 20th of October when this incident occurred. I happened

to be the only American at Sam Thong at the time. We had an air commando doctor who was stationed at Sam Thong and once every two weeks he went down to Udorn and Korat to bring back supplies of fresh plasma. That morning the doctor had gone down to Udorn and Korat to bring up blood and wouldn't be back until the next day. I was in the office at Sam Thong when I looked up and the door opened and there was General Ma coming into the office. I had met him several times before...as an aside...one time myself, Don Sjostrom and John McLean, who was a USIA officer at Luang Prabang, accidentally all met at the lobby of one of the hotels in Luang Prabang one day and started talking. The ironic thing is that of General Ma, Don Sjostrom and John McLean, I am the only one that is still alive. Don was killed, General Ma was killed and John McLean was killed in a plane crash.

Anyway, General Ma was at the door and he looked very agitated. He asked me if the American doctor was there and I said, "No, but Dr. Kameung, the Lao doctor was there, if he had any problems." He said, "No, no, no, he had to see the American doctor." I said, "Well, I'm sorry. Why don't you spend the night here and he will be back tomorrow morning." He said, "I haven't got time, if he is not here now, I can't wait one minute." He left, got into his jeep and drove back to Long Chieng. Well, of course, the ironic thing is the next day he led a group of six or seven pilots out of Savannakhet, up to Vientiane in an attempt to bomb the headquarters of General Kouprasith [Abhay]. Of course he did bomb Kouprasith's headquarters, but Kouprasith wasn't there. There were 30 or 40 people killed. The planes went back to Savannakhet where word came out from the embassy that they were not to be rearmed, reloaded or refueled. As a result six of the pilots fled into Thailand in exile.

A little footnote to history...If the American doctor had been at Sam Thong and had a chance to get his hands on General Ma, would he have said, "General, I am going to put you in the hospital right now. You are showing all the signs of fatigue that you were hospitalized just two weeks ago for." Would this have prevented the attack? Because the loss of General Ma in effect meant the loss of an effective air force. The Lao air force lost much of its effectiveness.

I guess, to backtrack even further, what brought everything to a head with General Ma and Kouprasith and, of course, with General Ouane Ratthikoun, was the use of Lao air force transport planes, C-47s, which Ma wanted to use to supply troops with equipment, supplies and ammunition in the Nam Bac and other forward areas, Ouane wanted to use those same planes to run opium in and out of Ban Houei Sai and oranges out of Nam Bac. They wanted to use the planes for commercial purposes for their own gain and Ma said, "Look, this is not right. These are air force planes and we should be supporting our troops with them." That is one of the reasons that led to his confrontation with Ouane and with Kouprasith and then later his attempt to bomb Kouprasith's headquarters.

Q: That is very interesting. Why did General Ma want to see the American doctor? Was he a particular friend or did he realize he needed some medical attention?

KUHN: I think it was because he realized he needed some medical attention and he just probably...I don't know if he knew Dr. Kameung, the Lao doctor, or not. Whether he felt he couldn't trust Dr. Kameung in what he might do or say, but did feel he could trust the American doctors. It was probably the American doctor or another American doctor who had probably insisted on his hospitalization earlier for battle fatigue. So it was a tragic thing and, of course, General Ma was later killed two or three years later.

Q: *There was another coup.*

KUHN: Yes, I think it was in 1973. He crashed on the runway at Wattay and I saw photographs of his body and I think it was probably true that he was injured and wounded and General Kouprasith, the man he had tried to kill in the previous coup, stood there and simply bayoneted him to death with a bayonet. The wounds in his chest and stomach were big gash wounds like a bayonet might make. Whether or not it was really Kouprasith, I don't know, but General Ma came to a very sad ending. I thought he was a very outstanding man.

In December, 1966 something else happened that was a tragedy in terms of the war effort in southern Laos. The CIA had developed a series of road watch teams which were small groups of men who went over along routes 6 and 7 and observed truck traffic and reported back the number of trucks that were involved. Later this escalated into calling in air strikes on trucks that were passing up and down the road. The program was developed around a young man by the name of Moua Chung. His call sign was "The Tall Man" because he was exceeding tall for a Meo. He established a base on a mountain called Phou Pha Lang which was just south of Sam Neua city. In fact, from the top of Phou Pha Lang on a clear day you could actually see the little Sam Neua city valley. He established a base there from where he ran his road watch teams from and was sending back a tremendous amount of intelligence. He was also becoming quite a popular individual, both locally and back at Long Chieng and Sam Thong. We had a minor problem between CIA and AID in the field in that the road watch team on Phou Pha Lang was known to all the local villagers. The villagers wanted to get away from the communists and saw that their way of escaping communism was to come to Phou Pha Lang. Well, that was soon going to destroy the secretiveness of the base, not that the enemy didn't know there was anybody up here because we used to land helicopter up there, but it was going to become an unwieldy situation. So there was a new CIA case officer assigned to Na Khang who told me that I was no longer going to be allowed to go into Phou Pha Lang to do any work. Fortunately, another case officer I had worked with for a long time was this person's boss and overruled him and I was able to freely go in and out of there. We tried to get the civilians out as people came in so they would not be a burden to Moua Chung's operation.

Well, one night, about the first week of December 1966, Moua Chung was coming back up the mountain to the peak where they had their headquarters. It was a foggy, rainy day and as they were coming up the trail, they were ambushed, assassinated,

whatever, and attacked and Moua Chung was killed. Now, the people on top of the mountain claimed that they didn't know it was Moua Chung, that they thought it was the enemy coming up the trail. So, without trying to find out who it was, opened up and Moua Chung was killed. Two or three Meo who sort of admitted responsibility for it were brought back to Sam Thong and as they were hauled off the aircraft, mobs of people descended on them and just beat these guys senseless until finally the military police came in and rescued them and hauled them off. I think they were in prison for several months and eventually released. There was no way to prove that it was a deliberate assassination. But, there again, Sam Thong and Long Chieng, all the time I was there, were rife with rumors. Somebody was after somebody else constantly. There was this clan against that clan, and somebody trying to dethrone Touby Lyfong; the Les trying to dethrone the Vangs; somebody else trying to do something to someone else, so there was constant turmoil. This sort of fit right in with all these theories that were going around about coups, etc. It was about this time also that the areas around the southern rim of the Plaine des Jarres, some of the big Lao villages like Tha Thom, a big area, were lost. These places were later recaptured but the government was never able to control them.

Laos: In Laos as Mission Controller—1968-1970

Excerpt taken from an interview with Charles Christian

CHRISTIAN: I was transferred to Laos to be Controller at a mission that was really in the midst of a hot, secret war that was going on. USAID's contribution was basically for building roads, providing food for the war refugees and keeping up the viability of the Kip by supplying enough foreign exchange that the Kip didn't float too far one way or the other. It was basically when Charlie Mann was the de facto prime minister of Laos. He was the USAID Director, but the local wags gave him the honorary title. He came to Laos for his second stint shortly after I got there.

Q: Was there an ambassador there?

CHRISTIAN: Ambassador Bill Sullivan was there at the time of my arrival. He was one of the best orators I have come across in my day. He was also the ambassador when I got to the Philippines later on.

Q: What was our role in Laos? What were we trying to do? What policy was USAID supposed to be supporting?

CHRISTIAN: We were to furnish the infrastructure and financial support for the Laos government that was friendly to the US in an active war. But you could call it a "civilized" war. They had reasonable hours for the war, and they took off on holidays. They usually shut down at night. The Laotians were the most quiet and low-key of all the Asians I have met. They are the country cousins of most of the other Asians. We had a public works division there that would be the envy of many small

towns in the U.S. The U.S. Bureau of Reclamation was working there. Our public works division built roads into the interior presumably to assist farmers in getting their produce to market, but the roads could also be used by the CIA sponsored Lao troops to get here and there. We had education and training programs there, as well as a small agriculture staff.

Toward the end of my two year tour, the Controller of AID came out to Laos in January 1970. The agency was making the decision in Washington to split off the auditor from the Controller and to make the Auditor General a separate office with the auditors not reporting through the controller or through the Mission Director. The object of the Controller's visit to Laos and other places was to determine how the staff should be split under the realigned responsibilities; the people who should go with the Auditor General, and the people who should stay with the Controller; in other words, the percentage of time the auditors worked on audit or on financial analysis. Out of the six U.S. direct hire auditors on my staff, I was able to make the case for five of the six to remain with the Controller office to continue to perform financial analysis work. Of course they had to replace many auditors to build up the big audit staff, but we had that much work to do in financial management in Laos.

Q: Was it a big financial management task?

CHRISTIAN: We had a very large airline contract there with the wings of Continental and Air America. We dealt with them as though they were independent contractors. They were, as far as USAID funds were concerned. We had to keep close scrutiny on all of the work they were doing. They were dropping rice from the sky on pallets. They would fly over in small aircraft. There is a whole generation of Laotian that think rice comes from the sky not rice paddies. During the visit of the Controller out there, before the division of the audit function, we took a flight up to an airstrip whose code name was Hotel India. In landing there we flew over the "Plains de Jars" where these huge jars are located; back in ancient time they were used as funeral urns. How they got there (they came from China) is a big mystery to archaeologists. We were the last Americans to visit that area and land on that strip. The next day the Viet Cong came back, usually it changed hands whenever the rainy and dry seasons changed. However, this was the last time the American-financed forces held it. This was the beginning of the end of the U.S. presence in Laos. I guess it took five years for that to finally happen.

Q: How big a program was it?

CHRISTIAN: At that stage it was second only to Vietnam. It was a lot smaller than Vietnam, of course. I would have to dig into the archives to get an actual magnitude in numbers.

Q: Anything else on the Laos experience?

CHRISTIAN: We handled, as the liaison part of our official function, funds for

bombing mistakes of "friendlies." We would receive the money in a box from our counterpart agency and deliver it to the "friendlies" when we had our payroll runs to the countryside.

Q: What are payroll runs?

CHRISTIAN: USAID/LAOS had casual hires then who we hired to help build roads. We had a few different categories like that which we did not have in other country programs. We had to send out our Laotian cashiers to pay the people working on the roads. They went out weekly. We had more loss of funds in that program than with anything else. There were reports of robberies, but I don't know how legitimate they were. I remember in making a case with the people back here once, stating that we were handling more currency than the Riggs bank downstairs from the Controllers office in Washington, and so we were bound to lose some money. There were also deaths when planes went down. The first week I was at post I attended a Laotian Controller employee's funeral who was on a "payroll run" when the plane crashed. There was a huge pyre with a fire that the body was being cremated on, surrounded by hundreds of Laotians with the atmosphere of a festival or celebration of life and death.

Q: Were there any other operations or financial processes that you thought were unusual?

CHRISTIAN: I am trying to bring back the acronyms. We had the "invisibles" program and the FEOF Program (Foreign Exchange Operations Fund). The purpose of the FEOF Program was to maintain the viability of the local currency, of the kip. We had to supply enough dollars for that fund so that the Kip would not fluctuate wildly and bring the economy and maybe the government down.

Q: Where did the dollars go?

CHRISTIAN: To the purchase of imports.

Q: Did the dollars go to a central bank?

CHRISTIAN: The office for this program was in the central bank, but it was managed by a FEOF manager that we hired. So was it in the central bank? We had to make certain that it worked.

Q: And you would allocate the dollars for import purposes?

CHRISTIAN: The Lao government did not have enough hard currency to meet all of the dollar requirements for the Lao embassies and training abroad, as well as their imports. We also contributed to the so called "invisibles" program. That had to do with the non-commodity imports like the cost of training people abroad. It wasn't an invisible

fund, it was related to invisibles in that the economic transaction did not involve materials or commodities. I do not recall entirely what was the intended purpose other than what I have mentioned. But we did have a chief economist there in the mission with a staff of one or two who was responsible for "riding herd" on this activity. Garnett Zimmerly, Zim, was a program officer in Laos when I first got there who I later crossed paths with in the Philippines. There is quite a story to relate when we get to the Philippines. Gordon Ramsey followed Zim as the program officer. Charlie Mann was Mission Director with Jim Chandler as his deputy, and Harry Carr as the Executive Officer. They all stayed on and on, except for Zim and myself, for ten years or more, rather than the normal two, two-year tours. Things worked there, basically because the Americans were doing things; we were very operational. You didn't wait for the Laotians to do it; it was considered very important to avoid delays.

Q: How was the living situation?

CHRISTIAN: There was a large compound called KM6 where most Americans lived. I was fortunate to get assigned to a place outside of the compound by the MeKong River, two doors back of the Russian complex. I didn't see much of them, however. I did hear them playing volleyball behind their compound wall.

Q: Was the compound arrangement very satisfactory?

CHRISTIAN: The compound arrangement was probably quite satisfactory from the standpoint of reasonable living conditions, with a large swimming pool for the families and an American school there. It was just that as part of my foreign service experience I wanted to mingle with the foreigners that are out there as well as the Americans whom I worked with. I had 30 some years of the KM6 compounds when I lived in this country. My wife and I wanted to broaden our exposure to other cultures if we could.

Q: Did you get to know Laotians?

CHRISTIAN: Yes. But they were not as forthcoming and probably did not have the wherewithal to mix as readily on a social basis as some of the other places I've been. They were certainly receptive to invitations to your home, and a lot of Americans I know have sponsored Laotians when they came to this country. The Americans that had stayed there for extended periods did a lot of sponsoring Laotians that were not particularly treated hospitably by the Pathet Lao when they came into power in government.

Q: Were you working with the government? You said that the US was doing most everything.

CHRISTIAN: The Minister of Finance basically worked with the Mission Director. (I played tennis with the Prime Minister occasionally!) There didn't seem to be as much interchange for my office with the Laotians as in other places, because we were doing so

much of it ourselves. There wasn't as much satisfaction in that direction as there had been in other posts. It was a little bit like what it was like with the regional offices in Africa where you were not relating to a host government.

CAMBODIA: Assignment in Phnom Penh—1971

Excerpt taken from an interview with Miles Wedeman

WEDEMAN: Phnom Penh, in Cambodia. The country at that time was known as the Khmer Republic. My assignment there was from early 1971 until late summer 1973.

Q: *So you got there before the bombing?*

WEDEMAN: After the bombing of eastern Cambodia, yes, in 1970. Sihanouk had been overthrown in March of 1970. Even before he was overthrown the U.S. had resumed diplomatic relations with Cambodia. The U. S. had a charge d'affaires in Phnom Penh beginning sometime in 1969. When things heated up after the change of government in March 1970 an Ambassador was appointed and he arrived in early 1971 (Emory Coblenz "Coby" Swank). Our assistance program started in February 1971.

Q: *And you were there in what capacity?*

WEDEMAN: My title was Economic Counselor, a State designation. I did not have an AID title. It was not a separate AID Mission. We were the Economic Section of the Embassy. I don't know how frank you want to be, but I did not have an AID title because I could not get political clearance from the White House. Beginning in 1969 this became a problem for a number of AID people. If you were not true blue Republican, or more particularly if you were a Democrat, you were not going to get a job at the top. So it was decided in my case I would carry a State title, not an AID title. You had friends around who would help you in this regard. So I was an Economic Counselor, but it was the same thing as an AID Director, except I had, as I said, a State title. The AID office was not the AID Mission but the Economic Section of the Embassy.

Q: *But it carried out all the functions of an AID Mission?*

WEDEMAN: Yes, exactly the same thing, although when I arrived there was one slight difference. The same situation existed in Korea, as a matter of fact -- one person was already in the Economic Section, not an AID person, who was a CIA representative. In Phnom Penh, I made sure after a very short period that the CIA person was moved elsewhere. I think it does not help to carry out an aid program when it is known that someone from CIA is listed as being on your staff.

Q: *And what were the particular problems and issues that you were addressing at that*

point?

WEDEMAN: The problems were enormous: Cambodia was in the midst of a civil plus international war, which had started immediately after the overthrow of Sihanouk in 1970. The basic question had nothing to do with development, but rather how could Cambodia survive economically in the face of ballooning expenditures for military purposes and the cutting off of foreign exchange earnings.

The principal sources of foreign exchange had dried up. Before 1970 Cambodia exported a very poor grade of rice - "brizures" i.e. broken rice - to a market developed for the Cambodians by the French - Senegal. Almost immediately after hostilities broke out in the summer of 1970, the transport route from the rice export growing area of the country, Battambang, the westernmost province of the country, to the port of Kompong Som (before 1970 "Sihanoukville") on the Gulf of Thailand was not secure. Furthermore, for whatever the reason, the rice could not be moved through Thailand. Battambang's rice did help, though, to feed Phnom Penh until the land route was definitively cut in the summer of 1973.

Before the war in Vietnam intensified in the mid-1960s, Cambodia was a producer of crude rubber which was exported through Sihanoukville. However by 1969-1970 the rubber growing areas were either under the control of the North Vietnamese or were the scene of fighting. Except for a brief period in 1972 - 1973 the movement of rubber for export stopped.

There was concern as well that not only did funds have to be provided to keep the economy going, in terms of imported requirements, but also to maintain the economy on an even keel to avoid inflation, if that was possible. The whole purpose of the AID program for at least a year and a half was economic stabilization. The AID money initially went entirely into a commodity import program. Later on, AID funds were used for refugees as well. That's what it was, pure and simple, a commodity import program.

Q: *So this was a dramatic change from your Africa experience, and from your Korea experience.*

WEDEMAN: Yes, but for some reason, it didn't seem all that different because being in Korea, I began to move in an atmosphere where there were more politico-military matters which you were aware of, and even if you didn't participate directly in them, you were aware of them, and knew that AID was part of the mosaic of the American presence. In Cambodia, it was more apparent, even though there were no American military forces other than a MAAG Group. So to that extent, it was quite a difference. I had not been in a war situation since the second World War. This was real war. It was dangerous. There was a war going on and you knew it all the time. And it was a war that was not being won by our side.

Not long after I arrived in Cambodia, it was quite obvious the war was going to be lost. There was no way the Cambodian Army was ever going to be able to win it. Slow, downhill, all the time. Now the Ambassador bore the major brunt of this problem. Very, very difficult for him. And he was not, how would I put it, he was not part of the team that ran the American effort in Vietnam, the country right next door. Ambassador Swank was a member of a group that wanted to preserve Cambodia by means of diplomacy and aid in a different way, and without an overwhelming American military and civilian presence. After a while, Congress imposed restrictions on the number of official Americans that could be in the country on any one day.

Marshall Green, then the Assistant Secretary of State for East Asia, was the organizer of the American effort in Cambodia and its guiding light. He was not a "hawk." I think he was very apprehensive about our involvement in Cambodia and wanted the American intervention carried out in a way that would result in the least damage to ourselves and the Cambodians. However, as the Cambodian military position weakened and the Government of South Vietnam lost ground, the hawks became more and more influential. I said then and later that as Cambodia and South Vietnam went under, all but the super hawks in the American government had fled. The doves had long since been banished from the scene.

Q: And to what degree was the war in Cambodia a direct reflection of the war in Vietnam, as opposed to being a Cambodian civil strife?

WEDEMAN: It was both. The civil war, in a sense that it had started long before. Parts of the country had been restless in the 1960s, even in the 1950s. Beginning in about 1965, 1966, Sihanouk was having more and more difficulty with the opposition. The more militant opposition eventually became known as the Khmer Rouge, the Cambodian communist party. After Sihanouk was overthrown in 1970, a new government came in largely composed of his alienated relatives and anti-Vietnamese personalities. The Khmer Rouge then became the heart of the domestic struggle against the Phnom Penh government supported by the United States. The Khmer Rouge was not the tool or close to the North Vietnamese, but they were actively supported and supplied by them, and maybe to some extent by the Chinese. Cambodia had been terribly important as a conduit for the movement of supplies from Sihanoukville, built by its namesake on the Gulf of Thailand, to the Vietcong and North Vietnamese forces operating in Vietnam and in eastern Cambodia, the period of the Ho Chi Minh Trail. I won't say a deal had been struck, but Sihanouk had consented to this arrangement, even though I think he didn't like it. Many people felt that by 1970 he didn't really know what to do, that he could see the country slowly falling under North Vietnamese and Vietcong influence. At the same time relations with the South Vietnamese were pretty bad. Thus it was both a civil war and an international war. If, let's say, the government in Saigon had been successful, then the government in Phnom Penh, which in effect was our government, would have survived. I think there's no doubt about that. Once you realized that the war was not going to be won in Vietnam, you knew it was extremely doubtful that the government of Phnom Penh could make it.

Q: *I would like to return to a point that you were making earlier about the Ambassador's views; his view of policy and relationships with what was going on in Vietnam, and wondered if you might elaborate on that a little further?*

WEDEMAN: I wanted the opportunity to speak about it because I didn't cover at all the question of the staffing of the Embassy and later the Economic Counselor's office in the Embassy in Phnom Penh, because it was guided by a particular principle. The Embassy reopened in 1969. This was when Sihanouk was still in power. The course of affairs changed drastically in 1970 when he was overthrown. I might say, not overthrown by popular revolution, but by a result of a struggle within the ruling groups in Cambodia, including some of his influential but alienated relatives. Coby Swank was appointed to be the new Ambassador to the Khmer Republic, as it was known. This was the first diplomatic representation at that level since 1966, when diplomatic relations had been broken off.

I won't call it a governing principle, but certainly the hope was to staff the Embassy and the AID program in terms of leadership, with people who had had no exposure to Vietnam. In the case of the East Asia Bureau at State, the bureau was interested in having people whose views had not been influenced by experience in Vietnam. Coby Swank had been the DCM in Moscow; previously he had been a special or executive assistant to George Ball when Ball was Deputy Secretary of State. Coby was a Soviet expert, a Sovietologist, in the words of the trade. He had had no experience with what had been French Indochina. His first diplomatic post during his foreign service career (he was a career officer) had been in China, his second in Indonesia. He had also served in Romania. In any event, he came to Phnom Penh in late 1970 or early 1971, I don't have the exact date, as our Ambassador. He arrived after the United States became heavily involved in Cambodia—we have discussed the incursion of American troops into eastern Cambodia in the late spring of 1970. These troops were withdrawn partly because of domestic political pressures in the United States.

Q: *That incursion was largely to interdict the movement of supplies.*

WEDEMAN: I guess so. It's hard to say. It was certainly to try to prop up the new government which came to power after the overthrow of Sihanouk. The incursion was not successful and the American troops were withdrawn. From that point on you knew the Khmer Republic was going to lead a very uncertain existence.

Q: *So this incursion was an attempt in some fashion to bolster the new government of Cambodia; not so much to do with the trend of the war in Vietnam.*

WEDEMAN: Both. Perhaps nobody realized what a weak weed we were leaning on in Cambodia. When the war spread more openly and widely in Cambodia, the situation became even more difficult for the United States. To get back to the staffing question: Ambassador Swank did not represent any views with respect to Southeast Asia in terms of

background. I was appointed Economic Counselor of the Embassy. I certainly did not have any experience with Southeast Asia. The State Department wanted things run so it would have a team in Phnom Penh not influenced by experience with Vietnam.

The State Department wished to have a fresh view with respect to Cambodia. The people in State responsible for Cambodia were not great enthusiasts for the war in Vietnam. I would not describe them as doves necessarily, but they were not hawks, to use popular terms of the day

I arrived in Phnom Penh in February of 1971 to direct the AID program officially characterized as "economic supporting assistance," or whatever the term was at the time for aid serving a political/military purpose. It consisted of one program, if you can call it that, which was commodity imports. General commodity imports. The goal was economic stabilization of the Khmer Republic. The country was in a difficult economic situation in that it did not have a strong economy to begin with. The years of war had not been helpful to Cambodia, and as a result of the bringing of Cambodia into the war as a whole, it lost its ability to export. As I mentioned earlier Cambodia had two significant exports. The first was a low grade of rice, "brizures," i.e. broken rice, all of which was exported from Cambodia to Senegal. Why Senegal? This was a market which the French had arranged for low-grade Cambodian rice. Second, there were rubber plantations north and east of Phnom Penh, between the Mekong River and the border. They had been fairly profitable before the war. But the plantations were in an area in which the North Vietnamese and Vietcong had based many troops. There was some fighting in that general zone as well, so that rubber production virtually came to an end for quite a while. There was a slight revival when I was there, but it really didn't amount to much.

Under these poor conditions the purpose of the American AID program was to try to assist in the economic stabilization in Cambodia. Another player in this effort was the International Monetary Fund. The United States persuaded the IMF to appoint a resident representative in Phnom Penh to try to oversee or influence the fiscal management of the government. At that point it was very rare for the IMF to do such a thing. It appointed a man from Iceland, interestingly enough, who was in Cambodia for the entire time I was there. And we worked very closely with him in supporting his efforts to get fiscal management improved. I say improved, because the government was virtually starting from zero. It was a daunting task to get fiscal management improved and to make some sort of sense in trying to keep the economy manageable. This meant pushing to reduce the rate of inflation, which, even during the time I was there, was not uncomfortably high. Also to improve tax collection. This did not happen. As I mentioned earlier the AID program consisted entirely until sometime in 1972 of a commodity import program.

For at least a year there was one big oddity about that program. In the East Asia Bureau of AID in Washington the Assistant Administrator, Rod O'Connor, became convinced that it would be undesirable to allow a normal import mechanism to operate in Cambodia. He felt that relying on normal commercial channels would be an invitation to

fraud and corruption. Therefore, a decision was made to have the General Services Administration buy everything that was to be financed under the commodities import program. To put it mildly, this was difficult, and it was a mistake. It proved to be, as many had predicted, awkward and unworkable.

Q: *USGSA?*

WEDEMAN: USGSA. GSA had no experience in buying commodities to be imported and consumed in a foreign country. GSA wanted to purchase everything by competitive bid. On the other hand, the Cambodians had a habit of importing many products by brand name, not too surprising a commercial practice. For example, the most popular American brand toothpaste in Cambodia was Ipana. Well known in the United States before the war, it was no longer produced in the United States. Keep in mind that everything that was financed for that program had to be produced in the United States. This was a Buy American program. When we looked at the list of what the Cambodians wanted to buy, naturally there was Ipana toothpaste. GSA basically didn't know what to do. Even so GSA wanted to put toothpaste out for bids. This made no sense in terms of how business operated in Cambodia. You didn't even know to whom these shipments would be consigned.

The situation was complicated by a very odd Cambodian import-export regime, if you can call it that, in operation before 1970. Sihanouk was very suspicious of the merchant community in Phnom Penh, which was largely expatriate or overseas Chinese. He didn't want them to control imports, nor did he want them to determine what the balance of trade would be. So before the beginning of the calendar year, the national bank and perhaps other agencies of the government in Phnom Penh would draw up an estimate as to what they thought Cambodia's foreign exchange earnings would be for the coming year. Another agency of the Cambodian government, SONEXIM, would look at that calculation, and would prepare a list of what the country wanted to buy using that foreign exchange calculation. The one who finally approved that list, item by item, was Sihanouk himself. Everything was imported for the account of SONEXIM. One of the thoughts behind using GSA was that SONEXIM as the sole importer could deal with a single American exporter, namely GSA. In reality, the import regime in Phnom Penh did not operate this way. The buying was actually done by the private importers in Phnom Penh.

This Cambodian import/export regime had begun to atrophy once Sihanouk departed. One of the things his opposition disliked was the clumsy way he attempted to run the economy. To make a long story short, having GSA operate as a procurement agent for the Cambodian program simply didn't work. But it took a long time to get that decision undone in Washington.

Q: *The whole first year essentially you were there?*

WEDEMAN: The first year I was there. It was finally undone. I came back to Washington in December of 1971 to try to get this arrangement stopped. The consequence had been almost nothing had been imported into Cambodia under the program. Even then it was several months before the new, more normal commodity import regime could be brought into being. That time was lost.

Q: *That was a shift to commercial channels?*

WEDEMAN: It went through commercial channels. I should mention that the war in Cambodia was very unpopular in the United States. There had been student riots, student closings of universities in June of 1970. This was at the time of the American incursion into Cambodia. Congress took a great deal of detailed interest in whatever went on in Cambodia, including the import program, and we had one or more visits from the staff of the Government Operations Subcommittee of the Senate Appropriations Committee that dealt with foreign aid, to look over in detail what we were doing.

For example, the staff of this subcommittee got the idea that we were importing bidets into Cambodia and some others were starting to make a certain amount of political hay out of this. You may or not remember that several years before, in the case of the Dominican Republic, when the United States had intervened, the Mission Director spent a lot of his time warding off charges that AID had spent money on champagne glasses, which was not true. In the case of Cambodia, it wasn't true either in the case of the bidets. As I testified later before that subcommittee, we did not finance pink bidets, blue bidets, flowered bidets, or what have you. But this is emblematic of the kinds of problems you had to deal with. That same subcommittee later produced a report later on the execution of the commodity import program, and I was called to testify on that. The subcommittee had a long list of items we had bought. When you went down the list, you found something labeled as "hose," h-o-s-e. I was asked by Senator Inouye, "How can you defend the purchase of women's hose?" I said, "We never financed the purchase of women's hose. It would be absolutely out of the question." "Well," he said, "that's on the list." And I looked at the list and said, "What we financed were h-o-e-s, garden hoes, and that particular procurement was monitored very, carefully."

This was the hostile atmosphere in which we operated. There was opposition to almost anything we were doing in Cambodia. I can remember later on, the Ambassador and I participated in a ceremony to mark the beginning of a refugee program in Cambodia. This was televised and rebroadcast in the United States, and it showed the Ambassador drinking a glass of champagne, a traditional custom in the country for such occasions. Immediately, criticism arose about the U.S. living, in effect, "high on the hog" in Cambodia, and "there's the Ambassador - what's he doing? He's drinking champagne." You had this kind of situation all the time.

Another problem, although not of that character, was the fact that even a commodity import program as AID would ordinarily conceive it, was probably not well

adapted for Cambodia. I recommended more than once that it would be far better simply to give the government a cash grant and monitor what they were doing with money, with the help, or with the active participation of the IMF. I said this would be a far better way to help Cambodia than to have a staff in place in Phnom Penh trying to carry out a commodity import program ill adapted to the circumstances in the country. What I was told was, "Oh, no, that is politically unacceptable." I found it interesting that by the late 1970s, this was a not unknown device as a means for providing assistance to countries in which the U.S. had a very strong political interest. That was done by cash grant. If the cash grant had been used in Cambodia, we wouldn't have needed an Economic Counselor, and would not have had to go through the awkwardness of administering an ill fitting commodity import program. Considering the fact that before the war, before 1970, Cambodia imported almost nothing from the United States, this was not too surprising. Cambodia was in the French sphere of economic influence, and commercially Cambodia looked to France and other parts of the world, but not to the United States.

Q: So, in the execution of this in this peculiar fashion, what kind of staff did you have to try to monitor and implement this?

WEDEMAN: We had a comptroller, Don Sohlin, whom we recruited from the Mission in Bangkok. A large amount of accounting had to be done on the commodity import program. He was a very experienced man and I had known him before. We had a commodity specialist and a procurement specialist. These three were the ones who ran the program. Later we got into refugee assistance, but that was something else again. It was a staff that was entirely concerned with the management of the commodity import program, centered on a comptroller, a commodity specialist, and a procurement specialist, all of whom had had experience with commodity import programs. It was a very small staff, about eight altogether.

Q: When you finally broke out of the GSA procurement mode, you got into what was supposed to be essentially commercial procurement, but you still had difficulties because there were too many people looking over your shoulder.

WEDEMAN: People were looking over our shoulder, particularly on the Hill. But the root problem was "tied" procurement; tied, that is, to procurement in the United States. Thus, inevitably there were going to be all kinds of problems. The Cambodian merchants had little or no experience in buying in the United States. A cash grant could have been tailored to performance by the Cambodian government in fiscal policy, and in general economic policy. Cambodia had almost no economists. It had very few skilled people. The person with whom I dealt for about a year and a half, who was in charge of economic planning, was the first Cambodian who had ever been trained as an engineer, with a "license," the French equivalent of a bachelor degree. And that occurred only in the late 1960s. A number of people in the country had been participants in the AID training program in the 1950s and early 1960s. Whether economists had been trained under this program I do not know. An economist (not American trained) did head the

national bank. He was competent, but the bank didn't have a "working" staff. A not unknown Cambodian habit was non-attendance in government offices. I remember going to the national bank on almost any day of the week, and room after room, empty tables, desks, chairs, with nobody there. One employee was almost always present, an expatriate Finn married to a Cambodian, who dealt with the whole range of issues of economic stabilization. She was the only one and almost frantic to get out of Cambodia (she later joined the World Bank). There was nobody else.

The level of technical expertise was about the same as I had observed earlier in Africa. There was very little difference. Why the French had approached Cambodia in that way, I don't know. In staffing the colonial administration, they had relied heavily on Vietnamese. The colonial administration in Phnom Penh under the protectorate had been largely Vietnamese. In 1970 the population of Phnom Penh was one-third Vietnamese, one-third Chinese, one-third Cambodian. It was not at heart a Cambodian city.

Q: So, in terms of relationships between Cambodia and Vietnam, this sort of secondary colonialization by Vietnamese of Cambodia had something to do with the strained relations?

WEDEMAN: The strained relations between the Khmer, as they usually called themselves, and the Vietnamese, go back hundreds of years. It's not anything new. It's been there a long time. If you go back to the years, 800-1200, the Khmer empire was the largest political unit in what later became known as Indochina. It gradually weakened for a variety of reasons. You had the Thais on one side, and the Vietnamese on the east, who were gradually moving south, from the area of Hanoi down to what became known as Cochin China, the extreme southern portion of modern Vietnam. The Vietnamese had ousted the Khmer from Cochin China, including what became Saigon, by the end of the 18th century.

Nevertheless, a substantial Khmer population remained in this region. They were called the Khmer Krom, i.e. the South Khmer. One day when I was going from Phnom Penh to Saigon on business and I mentioned this to the fellow who was in charge of economic planning. And he said, "Saigon is ours; it isn't theirs; it belongs to us." He was right in a sense. The Khmer had been in control of the area of modern Saigon until pushed out by the Vietnamese by 1800. In 1970 two million Khmer Krom lived in the southern "bulge" of Vietnam. They had provided troops to the Diem government in Saigon. When the war expanded into Cambodia, and the United States became more directly involved, the Khmer Krom wanted a "piece of the action" in Cambodia.

Their leader had been the first prime minister of Cambodia in 1945, when the Japanese left. He was pushed aside by Sihanouk, who had earlier been crowned king. After 1970 the South Khmer really wanted to run Cambodia if they could, and were always demanding a larger share of political power in Phnom Penh. While they were Khmer, the rest of the Khmer in Cambodia tended to look at them as more Vietnamese than Cambodian. The Khmer rather feared the Vietnamese, north or south, although they

did draw a distinct line between the northerners and the southerners. They very often would refer to the northerners as "Les Dents Noirs," or the "Black Teeth," because apparently Vietnamese in the north would often lacquer their teeth black, hence, "Les Dents Noirs." The Cambodians thought the North Vietnamese were worse than the South Vietnamese. They didn't like the South Vietnamese either, and yet the United States was somewhat insistent that they cooperate with South Vietnam. One of the weaknesses in Sihanouk's position as the years went on was the fact that he was cooperating with the Vietnamese, in that case the Northerners, and that was no way to endear himself to the Khmer. Relations between South Vietnam and Cambodia were never good. Vietnam had an Ambassador resident in Phnom Penh who was a target of at least one bomb attack. I called Indochina the Balkans of Southeast Asia. The Khmer or the Khmer-Mon as they are sometimes referred to, the Thais, the Laos and the Vietnamese for thousands of years have been jostling with each other for control, never with any clear winners, and the only clear losers being the Khmer.

Q: So if you then look at the second year, was there any improvement in the effectiveness of the commodity import program as an instrument to improving the economy?

WEDEMAN: I think it began to work better. The major difficulty was that the military situation was deteriorating. In reality it started going downhill after the incursion came to an end in the summer of 1970. Later that year Lon Nol became the leading figure in the government. He had been minister of defense under Sihanouk, and had profited enormously from a trucking concession, or something like that, that moved supplies from Sihanoukville, later Kompong Som, on the Gulf of Thailand, to the North Vietnamese troops which were along the North Vietnamese border. He became the dominant figure, certainly by the end of the year. He then had a serious stroke, which left him, I won't say incapacitated, but certainly his physical condition was much weakened, and his mental capacities were as well. He considered himself an authentic general, he ran the war, and he wasn't very good at it. In March of 1971, the government conducted a major offensive against the Khmer Rouge in North Central Cambodia. It was a total failure. I think everybody knew even then, that things were just going to get worse, and that, absent some sort of miracle, sooner or later the government in Phnom Penh would fall.

So you had in the background a military situation that was always deteriorating in one way or another. The central government over time controlled less and less territory. By the time I left in August 1973 it controlled Phnom Penh; the Mekong River from Phnom Penh to the Vietnamese border; the area that ran from Phnom Penh southeast to Vietnam; most, but not all of the provinces lying between the capital and Kompong Som; and the extreme western portion of Cambodia. And it controlled a number of towns. But otherwise, the Khmer Rouge was in control or free to roam. In some ways, I kept wondering if this was really different from what had been true under Sihanouk, because even then the writ of the central government didn't run to the remote villages of the

country. With this unraveling military situation, you also had a deteriorating political situation. You had more and more restlessness with the government. You were always aware of one group or another that wanted to replace Lon Nol. At least one armed attempt was made to overthrow him, which didn't succeed. He remained in Phnom Penh until the very end in 1975 when he was evacuated by American forces. Thus, even though the commodity import program might have been working better in late 1972 or at the beginning of 1973, the political and military situations were becoming more perilous. Ominously, as a consequence of the unsettled conditions and warfare in the rest of Cambodia, we were getting more and more refugees in Phnom Penh.

Q: And, I presume, in the broad sense, this was also complicated by the impending greater certainty of U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam?

WEDEMAN: Yes, although it's very curious in a way. I think I mentioned that we had a small U.S. military assistance group in Phnom Penh, whose chief was a general who had served in Vietnam. He brought with him officers who had been in Vietnam – always referring to "our war," meaning the American war. It was a war to be won. I think even when the situation began to change drastically in South Vietnam looking toward the end of the American military presence, they still believed there was still a chance that Cambodia could survive and that it wouldn't go under in the way that you knew sooner or later Vietnam was going to go under. Although everybody lived with the fiction that things were going to stabilize in South Vietnam; that we were going to bring the South Vietnamese forces, ARVN, as they were known, up to snuff; and we would continue to aid them economically and they would be able to survive. I won't go into the situation in Vietnam, but it didn't happen. I think many knew that once the American troops were withdrawn, there was no possible way that South Vietnam could survive.

Q: So as you look back on that Cambodian experience, would you regard it as one of the toughest nuts you ever had to deal with?

WEDEMAN: It certainly was tough. There were no solutions, which was the problem. The Ambassador, whom I came to know very well, said, "Every day is a little worse than the day before." He was talking about the total situation, political, economic, social, so on and so forth. After March of 1971 when a major Cambodian offensive failed, it was downhill. There would be occasional successes by the Cambodian Army, but not much.

The United States continued to bomb in Cambodia, and that was stopped by Congress. Congress also decreed the maximum number of official Americans who could be in the country on any one day. The first thing the Ambassador did every morning was to look at the staffing pattern and number of official visitors present in the country. If the total was over the permitted number, the excess visitors had to leave by the end of the day. I remember I had had to tell a couple of people, "You've got to go." They were AID people who were from an AID regional mission in Bangkok. They were very

interested in Cambodia, and had been so for a number of years. They wanted to come over to be helpful. And I had to tell them, "You've got to leave today." And their reaction was "Well, we'll speak to the Ambassador about that." I said, "You can speak to the Ambassador, but there's nothing he can do because every day he has to account for all Americans who are here, and he has to make sure that the ceiling imposed by Congress is not exceeded." They left.

Q: *So, one in, one out.*

WEDEMAN: That's right. Gradually, Congress imposed its will on bombing. I can well recall the last day of the bombing. At that point, the Cambodian situation was particularly bad. I made a courtesy call on Lon Nol that day, just before my final departure. U.S. aircraft were bombing a town about 10 miles to the south. The windows in Lon Nol's office rattled as the bombs dropped on that town and our conversation would be interrupted every few minutes. Other mistakes were made such as bombing a town down the river, Neak Long, crowded with civilians. Many casualties resulted. The U.S. got a black eye out of it. The war in Cambodia was probably even more unpopular in the United States than the war in Vietnam, if that's possible.

Q: *Tell me a bit about your personal existence in that awkward environment.*

WEDEMAN: I hate to tell you but living was very comfortable. Phnom Penh was a very pleasant city. I lived in a house and the Khmer were a very nice people. You faced several problems, one being the endless security problem. There had been one attack on the Ambassador's life sometime in May of 1971; later there was an attack on the DCM.

My car was armored. Now, what was armor? It consisted of vinyl that was woven into a kind of coat of mail, sandwiched between the steel panel of the car and the inner shell. It was installed in all four doors. Clear acrylic shields were fitted just behind all four side windows, the windshield and the rear window. A dark curtain ran around the back window and would come forward so nobody could see who was in the car. Personally, I don't believe AID was intended as a target for terrorist attacks. The political side of the Embassy was, of course, meaning the Ambassador and the DCM. Even so, the country was not safe. Phnom Penh was not safe, because there were infiltrators from the "other side" as it was referred to.

I can remember one incident very, very vividly. After I had been there several months, my wife and my three sons came to Phnom Penh. Before this they had been in what was known as "safe haven" in Bangkok. Every Sunday afternoon the boys went to a local soccer field to watch the Marine Guard and Embassy civilians play baseball. The game always started at 2:00 p.m.. The Sunday I am describing was my youngest son's birthday. In the morning we went out and swam in the Ambassador's pool. The pool was not at his residence and was some distance away. We came home back for lunch and had

a birthday party for him, his next older brother (his oldest brother had gone off to school in northern India) and two friends. After this I said, "Now what would you like to do?" And my son said, "We think we'll go back to the pool." I said, "You don't want to go back to the pool, you were there this morning. Why don't you go to the ball game?" "We don't want to go to the ball game." So they went back to the pool.

If they had been at the ball game, they would have sat at home plate as they always did. They would have been killed. That afternoon, there were a couple of guys from other side on bicycles with sacks of plastique, a malleable explosive. They threw the sacks from their bicycles into that ball park. The plastique exploded right at home plate. I think eight people were killed. The end of that afternoon for me was spent helping to ship the body bags back to Saigon. The boys missed the ball game. It was sheer accident that they did. That kind of threat was always present.

As time went on, you had another kind of threat which turned on how close the Khmer Rouge and the North Vietnamese could come to Phnom Penh. If they were not too distant you'd get rocket attacks on the city. My children thought it was exciting. I said, "There's nothing exciting about it." Everybody in the Embassy had a safe place in your house you would go in the event of rocket attacks.

I remember another incident of infiltration, which was more than just shooting rockets at the city. My wife and children were in Phnom Penh. It was another Sunday afternoon, and we decided to take a ride outside the city. Not easy to do since if you went beyond 20 kilometers from the city you could run into some chancy situations. So we drove north from Phnom Penh along the river, presumably a safe area, and saw some interesting Buddhist temples. I believe it was Buddha's birthday. Long, brightly colored streamers fluttered from the temples. We came back after a very pleasant afternoon.

That night, the Khmer Rouge attacked that area and also blew up what was known as the Japanese Bridge. This was the only bridge crossing the Mekong in Phnom Penh and had been built with Japanese aid money before 1970. To blow it up, they had to come right into the city. In this same attack, the invaders also destroyed the country's major oil depot. Although they were driven back this attack sharply increased the sense of insecurity and the knowledge that something like it could happen again.

Another time, the Khmer Rouge came very close to Phnom Penh. They were on the other side of the river. Yet the reaction of the Khmer to it was startling. Down on the river bank was a broad esplanade, on which were people just sitting during the afternoon and watching the fighting literally going on on the opposite bank of the Mekong. A little fellow was going around with his cart selling colored ices, and that sort of thing. That was probably the closest the Khmer Rouge got to Phnom Penh while I was there. I left in the summer of 1973.

There was always that element of danger. I must say, I'd been in dangerous situations in World War II, and I had the same reaction in Cambodia I did in the Philippines, which was the longer I was there the less safe I felt.

Availability of food was no problem. The river was still open, and they were still importing Evian water from France. Nothing had changed in this regard. Excellent restaurants continued to operate. The main hotel in the city, the "Le Royal," which later became the "Le Phnom" -- where I lived for about three months in, I don't know how many different rooms -- had a first class French restaurant. That sort of thing continued for as long as I was in Phnom Penh. As the security situation worsened and attacks increased you would see outside the restaurants patronized by foreigners wire mesh grids over the entrances. This arrangement was designed to deflect grenades or what have you thrown at the restaurants.

The security situation was getting worse and worse in the city and in the countryside still controlled by the Lon Nol government. I can recall not long before I left the country watching from the Embassy the Cambodian army staging what was called a victory parade after a semi-victory it had won down the river somewhere. Looking at that army I thought the end was in sight. Some soldiers were children of about 10 to 12 years of age and the entire procession included their families who traditionally traveled with the army. They were all threadbare - men, women, and children. Even though the Cambodian army had been armed by the United States to some extent, it still was not well equipped. I thought, "If that's the victorious Cambodian army, it's not going to be terribly long before the whole thing comes to an end." Which, of course, it did.

On another occasion, I went with the Ambassador to Kompong Som, just to spend the day. A hotel there had been built by Sihanouk, including a movie theater. Monseigneur, as he was sometimes referred to in order to recognize his royal pedigree, fancied himself a movie producer and director, and built a movie theater at the hotel to show his productions. Phnom Penh had a similar theater to cater to his whim.

While at Kompong Som we were invited by our military to watch an exercise in the training of Cambodian recruits at a new camp outside the town. There we stood at the top of a rise, on which had been erected two or three wooden towers looking something like forest ranger towers in the U. S. About two or three hundred feet, maybe more, sloping gradually down from the top of this rise, had been cleared. A forest lay beyond the slope. On the slope were laid rows of barbed wire, maybe three feet above the ground. Machine guns with fixed trajectories were mounted in the towers, restricting fire to no lower than two feet or so above the top of the rows of barbed wire. An exercise was underway. Recruits under constant machine gun fire crawled on their bellies under that barbed wire from the woods at the foot of the rise to the top of the hill. Naturally many of them were absolutely paralyzed with fear. I hardly blamed them. When the remainder who were not scared to death scrambled to the top, the senior Cambodian officer asked the Ambassador to review them. He did so. It was a real shock.

Most of the soldiers, I would say, were boys 12, 13, 14 years of age, perhaps even younger. They were just children. You wonder why children. This was not an unknown phenomenon in that part of the world. They were the sons of career soldiers in the Cambodian army. The fathers simply took the pay of the children. No one else would join the army in his right mind. We saw a few older "recruits" but they appeared to be in less than top notch physical shape. They could have been forced physically to join the army.

Once again, you were looking at a situation which told you in glaring terms there was never going to be any success for the regime in Phnom Penh. It was doomed to failure and collapse.

Q: *So would you say that this was the least developmentally oriented duty you ever had in AID?*

WEDEMAN: Yes. It had nothing to do with development - it had everything to do with the political survival of the Lon Nol government! Cambodia was in such chaos that it was simply a matter of trying to hold on in the hope that something would turn up. It didn't.

Q: *In the extreme.*

WEDEMAN: And that was it. Toward the end, as I said, we were beginning to get refugees, and started programs to help them. Occasionally we would get messages from the Mission in Saigon, wanting to send technicians to look at the possibility of increasing rice production. They did send up two agriculturalists. They went out to Battambang province, came back and made recommendations. I asked them when we could we see any results in terms of higher rice production. Their response was there wouldn't be anything for at least two years; it had to be a long-range effort. I said, "But this country doesn't know whether there's even going to be a tomorrow. Anything that's to be done in Cambodia to improve or increase rice production has to be something that you can start now and get results within six to nine months." Sound as the recommendations might have been they simply didn't address the crisis Cambodia was in.

The whole exercise had nothing to do with development. Cambodia was not a country that had been active in development even before the war. This was to some extent a place of milk and honey. It didn't take a lot of effort to get by. You could raise almost anything in Cambodia with ease. For example, conditions were particularly well suited for aquaculture. I won't say it flourished, but did very well under wartime circumstances. But there wasn't a great deal of energy behind it.

I wouldn't generally be optimistic about development in Cambodia, but I have another view—not every society wants to develop, or necessarily is going to develop, and I think this is one that is not.

Q: *I think that perhaps you have more specific things you feel need to be touched on and maybe one of them might be this refugee issue. Refugee in this context, I presume, means internal refugees.*

WEDEMAN: Yes, they were all Khmer. They were coming into Phnom Penh from the countryside. The Khmer Rouge was very brutal. Not much was known about what they were doing in the areas they controlled, but some information indicated that when they came into a village they would immediately kill the Buddhist priests. Reportedly they would often kill people indiscriminately. People were frightened to death of them. I don't know whether intentionally or not, but driving the refugees toward Phnom Penh simply increased the burdens of a government that could hardly cope in the first place. In the end I guess there may have been 500,000 to one million refugees in Phnom Penh.

Our refugee program was carried out by two American religious organizations, Catholic Relief Services, which had experience with this sort of problem, and World Vision, if you know World Vision. The two of them ran the program, which I thought went pretty well. We provided the funds for them. I did not get the impression there was any amount of proselytizing that went on. Cambodia is a Buddhist country. I don't think I ever met anybody who wasn't a Buddhist.

World Vision was efficiently organized and had good ideas, particularly in regard to housing. Catholic Relief Services somewhat less so. One interesting thing about Catholic Relief Services was the man who ran it in New York. He was a real marketer and promoter. He came out to visit, and I told him I thought World Vision was doing a good job, perhaps better than CRS. He said, "I'm not worried about that kind of competition." To dramatize CRS' interest he had Mother Theresa make a one day tour of Phnom Penh.

Buddhism was divided into two groups. They were not theologically divided like Catholics and Protestants nor did they apparently compete for souls. Each had a chief bonze (priest). They were fairly well informed of what was going on in the world and had read in a Bangkok newspaper that the senior bonze in Bangkok had been invited to Rome to call on the Pope. They felt put out that they had not been invited. The Resident Representative of the Asia Society in Bangkok, who was both an American and a Buddhist, was asked by the Cambodian bonzes to come to Phnom Penh to discuss the papal slight. They desperately wanted to be invited to Rome because they said, "We're more important than the Thais are." They weren't invited and so had to endure being considered inferior to their counterpart in Bangkok.

My overall conclusion is that Cambodia was a mistake and a terrible tragedy. We never should have been involved.

Q: *But involvement in Cambodia was essentially a by-product of being involved in Vietnam?*

WEDEMAN: Yes.

Q: *And so the issue was joined in Vietnam, and what happened in Cambodia was an inevitable result, is that right?*

WEDEMAN: I think the result in Cambodia was inevitable; but American intervention in Cambodia was not. I think if the U.S. had been more sophisticated, it would not have intervened in Cambodia. It would have left Cambodia alone. The leadership of the State Department did not like Sihanouk, and . . .

Q: *Thought of him as a neutralist?*

WEDEMAN: He was a neutralist, no doubt about that. But I think there was also a certain amount of personal animus between the man who was running policy, Kissinger, and Sihanouk. The Cambodians who wanted to overthrow Sihanouk probably should have been told by the United States, "You do this at your peril; there's nothing we can do to assist you." I don't know what would have happened at that juncture, but his fall from power was not a foregone conclusion.

Q: *These people wanted to overthrow Sihanouk, other than the Khmer Rouge . . .*

WEDEMAN: He was overthrown by members of the ruling group in Phnom Penh. They were literally frightened to death of him. But I think either we could have arranged for Sihanouk to remain in power, or at least to have said to the people who wanted to overthrow him, "We will not intervene. If you do this, you do it at your own peril."

Q: *And yet Cambodia was under Sihanouk, and maybe subsequently to some extent playing ball with the North Vietnamese?*

WEDEMAN: Yes.

Q: *And wasn't that what drew the U.S. into the intervention?*

WEDEMAN: You can deal with countries you don't like. Sihanouk was caught in many ways. I don't think he liked the North Vietnamese any better than he liked anybody else. But Cambodia was weak compared to North Vietnam. They didn't have the military power to deal with the North Vietnamese. The North Vietnamese had occupied a good deal of eastern Cambodia in the late 1960s, and he was fearful of losing control of the country. There had been also internal political developments unfavorable to him. He finally got around to having a fair election to the local parliament in 1966 and he didn't do too well. What later became the Khmer Rouge showed electoral strength. Sihanouk's reaction was to lock up the leaders of the Khmer Rouge, who were later released. Even so, his internal political situation was not strong, but I think he didn't know what to do

about it.

To some extent he had cut off his line of retreat with the west. The U.S. and Sihanouk hadn't gotten along for years. By the early 1960s the French, traditional and cultural friends of Sihanouk, were not going to intervene in the region again. Absent support from the U.S. and/or the French, no great power was going to help him. He was on fairly good terms with the Soviets and had gone there in 1970 to get some support from them. It was while leaving Moscow that Sihanouk was told of his overthrow in Phnom Penh. They never lifted a finger for him. Perhaps they were the ones who found a place for him to live in Pyongyang in North Korea. So he was caught. I'm not saying the U.S. had to intervene or should have. This is my view of Vietnam as well. That was avoidable. It was my greening. Do you know that phrase?

Q: *Any other thoughts on Cambodia?*

WEDEMAN: No, it was an experience never to be forgotten.

Q: *And hopefully never to be repeated.*

WEDEMAN: Never to be repeated, but I don't have that much confidence.

Q: *The time in Cambodia came to an end, and you moved onto what next?*

VIETNAM**International Rescue Committee in Vietnam—1955**

Excerpt taken from an interview with Robert Macalister

MACALISTER: My next job stemmed from a contact I had made in India. Another part of my activity in India involved scheduling American visitors who came under the USIS program. The young ones, who were American youth leaders, would travel around with me in South India. One of these leaders was a fellow named Ernie Howell with whom I am still in touch. In 1955 Ernie was asked by the International Rescue Committee— a refugee assistance agency— to go to Vietnam. This was right after the Geneva Agreement of 1954 and the first refugees were coming down from North Vietnam. This was the end of the Indochina War between the French and the Viet Minh. As a result of the Geneva treaty, you had the seventeenth parallel demarcated between North and South Vietnam.

The International Rescue Committee, among other American PVOs, had decided to go in there and try to do something to help the refugees. So Ernie Howell gave them my name and my wife and I decided to go. The International Rescue Committee is a very interesting refugee assistance agency because it was started by Albert Einstein for refugees, particularly from the Nazis. And we worked with refugees like Willie Brandt, Thomas Mann, the man who wrote the “Song of Bernadette”, and Marc Chagal. Traditionally, it specialized in intellectual and political refugees. And so we worked with students and professors and other intellectuals who had come down from the north.

While I was in Vietnam, we had an opportunity to work with a group of young Vietnamese who had no respect for Bao Dai, who had been the principal Vietnamese leader under the French. However, they did have respect for the Presidency of Ngo Dinh Diem, who was made President of South Vietnam after the Geneva Agreement. These young people had formed an association. in providing services for students and intellectuals who had come down from the North. They called it the Popular Culture Association. They offered night courses to people. I guess we'd call it “continuing education”.

Q: *The reason they left the North was because of the communists?*

MACALISTER: Yes. They were anticommunist and had not come back to South Vietnam while the French were still there because they were anticolonialist. So that was another exposure.

Q: *How long were you there?*

MACALISTER: We were there about a year and a half which gave me an

opportunity to work with some very interesting people including Andrew Biddle Duke, who recently died. He was President of the International Rescue Committee and I got to know him fairly well. Toward the end of our stay in Vietnam, I decided that I wanted to get some graduate work.

Q: Before we go to that., what kind of impressions did you have of the Vietnamese people that you worked with? How would you characterize them?

MACALISTER: Very hard working people. People who had a great respect for education. It was my first direct exposure to refugees. Most of them were Catholic. Whole villages came down. They saw this as an opportunity to escape the Vietcong, Viet Minh. It was my first opportunity to see first hand a people uprooted from their livelihood and what that means. Of course, I had dealt with it second hand by having college professors who were refugees, mostly from the Nazis.

I was intellectually of the persuasions that Asia and later Africa should have their freedom from colonialism. As noted previously, I had the opportunity to live and work in India right after they had gained freedom, and the opportunity to live and work in South Vietnam right after they had obtained independence. I was struck by the different approach that the French and the British used. I came away much more of an Anglophile in terms of the British approach to colonialism. The British had left a civil service. They had left a court system. There were Indians with training and experience. I remember, when I first came through Saigon on the way back from India, there were Frenchmen at the airport checking the customs. Obviously that wasn't the comparison with India.

In Vietnam I also had the opportunity to work very closely with a Filipino group called Operation Brotherhood. Working with them gave me an opportunity to compare first hand the effect of American colonialism in the Philippines with the French approach. Another important part of my Vietnam experience was the opportunity to be associated with newly independent countries. I was extremely disappointed by the road that Diem took in South Vietnam and the ultimate collapse of a democratic alternative to the Vietcong.

Q: The road he took was what?

MACALISTER: The road he took was a very authoritarian one. Initially, I dealt quite a bit with Diem because the person who actually went out to open our office in Vietnam, a man named Joseph Buttinger was a member of the board of the International Rescue Committee (IRC). He was a socialist in Austria. A refugee from the Nazis, who had been very active in Austrian politics. One of the great things about the IRC board was that it spanned from very conservative republicans to people like Joseph Buttinger who were democratic-socialists. And they all worked together for something they believed in. But in any event, Buttinger went out first and established a very close rapport with Diem and I had many opportunities to talk with him.

Q: *What was your impression of the man?*

MACALISTER: In the beginning, it was favorable. The fact that he was a decent man. For a short time Diem had been in exile here in the U.S. He was a very devout Catholic. One of his brothers was a Catholic priest. I thought he really wanted to make a positive difference to his country. In contrast to Nehru, he did not have the human resources, infrastructure, or the tradition that India had even in terms of provincial legislators, free press and an educated core group with which to start. He did not have the tradition of British parliamentary democracy.

You had the whole Mandarin tradition in Vietnam. Diem became more of a recluse, adopted more and more authoritarian methods, and ended up with his brother Ngo Din Nhu. Ngo Din Nhu and his wife became more and more the architects of intrigue and repressions which I think ultimately played into the hands of the VietCong. As a result, I saw the great tragedy of people as refugees a second time. People, with whom I had worked in Vietnam and who had already been refugees from the French, who had come back to try and build a democratic country free from French colonialism, had to become refugees again.

VIETNAM: Programming U.S. assistance—1959

Excerpt taken from an interview with Jim Howe

HOWE: I stayed with DDP until 1959, when I took a job overseas in Vietnam as the program officer. It was the program officer who put together the annual program for each year. It also had the training program assigned to it. This sort of cut my eye teeth on what we do overseas because Vietnam was a big program - 230 or 240 million dollars, as I recall in those days, a big part of which was the program to import commercial products to be sold on the market in Vietnam to generate a local currency to be used to support the military effort. I remember that I got into a difference of view with the military because it was very clear that we were importing more than our need for local currency. The reason I said that was because we used an exchange rate, if I remember correctly, of 35 piasters to a dollar. All other markets were '70s and '80s and the black market was over 100. But for us, it was 35. Why? Because we had agreed to it. Now, what did they do with the dollars? The folks who imported goods with them were able to sell the commodities and what did they do with the local currency? They converted some of it into dollars. Their third largest export after rice and rubber was of US dollars to Geneva and such places to put it in bank accounts. We could have had the same effect, I remember arguing, if we had just changed the exchange rate to 70 or 78 or so. We still could have generated the local currency that they needed at half of the cost to us. But that idea didn't sell well in those days. This was an aid program totally dominated by the military effort that we were slipping into.

So, I stayed there for a couple of years. Other formative things or major events that loom? I did become exposed to the different view that one takes in the field from what one takes in Washington. I remember feeling desperately the need for AID in Washington to rotate their people out to the field so that they would have that point of view. Some of the views in Washington, I thought, were terribly unrealistic. That was a thought which grew in my mind in the subsequent assignments, both in Washington and overseas, this wide gap between the world view from the field and the world view from Washington. You'll hear more of that, I'm sure, as we talk on.

Q: I recall a comment you made to me once about technical assistance. You said all the planning was fine, but the thing that really mattered was whether you had a highly competent advisor on the technical assistance side.

HOWE: Yes, that really was the critical thing. Most of our planning went into our files and I don't think there was a large transfer of knowledge from that to the host country. Of course, that was the purpose of technical assistance, the transfer of knowledge, and the host country didn't pay an awful lot of attention to the paperwork side.

Q: Were there any people there or any individuals, US or other, that you recall with particular favor or interest?

HOWE: Well, there was Hanging Sam Williams, who ran the MAAG, the Military Advisory Assistance Program. He used to say, "When I look into the morning and I am shaving myself, I say to myself, 'You're going to meet General Giap (the military chief of Vietnam). You're going to meet him on the field of battle. You're going to meet him on a field of battle with tanks and planes and all those things. You're going to have to take him.'" This showed how completely General Williams misunderstood his assignment. But I have other, better impressions than that, like Ambassador Durbrow, who was a great guy, and Arthur Gardner, who was our Mission Director there, and a variety of people. One doctor, Doctor Boyton, who was from Maine, put together a list of pharmaceuticals which, taken together, couldn't do any harm, but were designed to treat some of the more common ailments. He would give them to his barefoot doctors. They would go out on the trail. He taught them the rudiments of how to diagnose these very common disorders and how to treat them. I thought that was very effective. It didn't have any long-term, lasting thing, but it certainly served a very acute humanitarian need at the time.

Q: You remembered something which I thought was very important to get into the record because of its singularly personal impact. So, without further ado, we will rewind to Vietnam and when you were there in your first overseas assignment.

HOWE: One of the places that we had in Vietnam was a pretty decent golf course about four or five miles out of the city. I would go there on Saturdays and play golf. One day, we were playing golf. We had played the first nine holes and then, as was

traditional, being hot weather and all, we would go into the little clubhouse there and drink an orange soda or something to quench our thirst and visit the men's room and go back out and go on with our golf. Well, we had gone through that ritual and we were standing on the ninth tee, which was about 80 or 90 yards from the clubhouse when the clubhouse blew up, right straight up in the air it blew. It turned out that some little guy was hired by the Viet Cong to go down and put a plastique bomb under the men's urinal. Then he had left. So, in the aid program for a couple of days after that, people go around asking other people, "Did you hear how far Jim Howe was from the plastique bomb?" They would respond with a gesture, "About this far. No, about that far."

While we're on the subject of personal danger, I didn't have any intense personal danger, but another episode-

Q: That was very close.

HOWE: That was a close one. We had four kids there, little bitty ones, and we had taught them that, in the event of any gunfire, they were to hit the ground quickly. Well, there was the attempted coup against the president, Ngo Diem Dinh. There was a lot of gunfiring near our house and we were up the bedroom, Carol and I. We raced downstairs and here were our kids, all flat on the floor, just as they had been told. One of them was on the stairway and he had dropped right there on the stairway, as he had been told. That was an interesting episode, too.

Q: Indeed. They had learned their lessons well.

HOWE: They had learned their lessons well.

Still on Vietnam and the personal danger sort of thing, we did lose a number of people. We lost one of our malaria technicians, who had been shot by the Viet Cong.

Overseeing agricultural programs in Vietnam—1967-1968

Excerpt taken from an interview with Vernon Johnson

Q: Where did you go from there?

JOHNSON: From the War College I went to the Vietnam Bureau. USAID had set aside funds for a separate Vietnam Bureau and I headed agriculture in the Bureau at that time. Jim Grant was the chief and our work was to back stop agriculture programs in Vietnam. I went out there twice and worked with the Mission in the field.

Q: What were we trying to do in agriculture?

JOHNSON: It was mainly security oriented; secure the villages, etc. All had a military purpose. For example, the agricultural programs were involved in the business of pig raising and pig feeding within the construct of a fortified village. We imported the first improved rice seeds that were produced in the Philippines and carried to Vietnam. I was in the Philippines when we were loading the ships. These were improved rice varieties. I understand those varieties of rice are the prominent ones in Vietnam even now.

Q: What other agricultural endeavors were you trying to promote in Vietnam?

JOHNSON: The general objective of agriculture was to improve village activity as I recall. Most of the people outside the cities were, of course, farmers and rice was the critical crop. Vegetable production was another element of activity and Taiwan was responsible for this work. You may recall that, at one time, particular countries were responsible for research in the development of particular crops. Taiwan was responsible for developing vegetable research and production; Mexico for wheat, etc. There were extension people assigned to Vietnam villages during the war. As for the Vietcong... their feeling was that of non-interference in the production of food because they would probably get a share of it.

Q: What years were you back-stopping the work in Vietnam?

JOHNSON: This was in 1967-68. I was in that job there about a year and a half.

Q: Did you have any particular feelings or views about U.S. policy towards Vietnam at that time?

JOHNSON: Not really, I thought we should have been there and we should do what we could do. The war wasn't a pretty thing to see, however, but, I suppose, most Americans thought we should have been in Vietnam and being government employees we helped do what we could. The cold war was at its height and that was one of the main factors—with

the Soviet Union supporting the North and, of course, with the Americans supporting the South. I had just left the country when the Tet attacks occurred. This was one of the main offences from North Vietnam into the South. AID was there in great numbers trying to assist with food needs and, in general, to support the people of the South Vietnamese Government while they were trying to win the war.

Q: So it wasn't long term development?

JOHNSON: It wasn't long term development at all, no. It was, as I said, emergency work, doing whatever was needed in the villages that still were accessible day by day. A person might be assigned several villages and was expected to make his rounds. Each morning one checked with security about security in his village areas. If Viet Cong were in the area, our technicians stayed away.

Q: Do you think there has been any effect of this work in Vietnam that was lasting?

JOHNSON: The Vietnamese were very industrious people, anyway. I think this was probably be true whether it was north or south. So with minimal help for survival, they would make it. They worked assiduously. I don't think that long term institutional building was intended, but some of the improved varieties of rice and vegetables that we took in are, no doubt, still being used; I'm sure the legacy of that is still there.

Q: Are any of the philosophies or American approaches to agriculture preset there?

JOHNSON: Not as such; for one thing, the farming there is dominated by traditional Asian methods of rice production. The best thing one could do was to provide the Vietnamese with those things that improve their own performance rather than give technical advice. So it was mainly a supply program more than anything else. And this was under unique and unusual conditions, so you would have not expected the typical A.I.D. organization and A.I.D. program, although there was a food and agriculture office, a Mission Director (always a top administrator, a very well thought of person.) The Director during my time had come from Nigeria—Don MacDonald.

Vietnam viewed from Washington—1971-1974

Excerpt taken from an interview with Maurice Williams

WILLIAMS: I spent several weeks in Vietnam to review our program and the situation, but I can't say I had any real involvement. It was nothing I worked on to try and change. I saw the program on the ground, traveling throughout the delta. It was a dangerous time.

Q: What view did you develop about our effort there and our program?

WILLIAMS: Some of our best people were in Vietnam. Bob Mossler, for example, was Mission Director. It seemed an impossible task, trying to encourage rural development under warlike conditions. Security was very bad. The war was going on. You had to move around with great caution. I traveled by boat, road and helicopter. It was dangerous even with a military escort. Our people in the field were courageous, and their presence may have been a positive influence in encouraging South Vietnam resistance, but for achieving effective development under the circumstances, that was very limited.

Appointment as Assistant Administrator for Vietnam - 1970

Excerpt taken from an interview with Robeert Nooter

NOOTER: John Hannah came to AID early in 1969, and somewhere around the latter part of 1969, he offered me a position as Assistant Administrator to run the Vietnam operation since Jim Grant was departing. I accepted in spite of the fact that I had serious reservations about the U.S. Government's Vietnam policy at that time. It seemed to me obvious that the people of the United States weren't prepared to support that war anymore, and our best policy was to get out. However, it was the Nixon administration's policy to withdraw from Vietnam, and therefore I thought I could work on the Vietnam program in good conscience. I didn't think it was a bad idea that we would give the South Vietnamese, who had taken a lot of their current positions because of the U.S. role, a chance to run things themselves if they could, if they had proper equipment and training. Therefore turning the war over to them in an orderly way in a reasonable period of time was a sound policy and one that I could support.

So with that in mind, I accepted the job as Assistant Administrator for Vietnam. I started working on it about February 1970, although my clearance and confirmation process still had to go forward, but I nevertheless began running the program. Just a word on the confirmation process might be interesting. In all administrations Presidential appointments had to go through the White House. Some administrations took that down even to mission director and lower level positions, but in any event all of them required political clearance for Presidential appointments because that had to go through the Senate and be cleared, among others, with the Congressmen in the states where these people came from. So my nomination went forward sent by John Hannah. John had two presidential appointment selections that were not career, but because he was relying so much on the career staff, he was having trouble getting his clearances through the White House, who wanted to put a number of political appointees into the system. To my experience the Nixon administration was not as insistent on this as the Kennedy administration, and the Johnson administration was quite good on career people also. I thought that actually the Kennedy administration was more political than either of the other two.

Q: That's interesting because certainly the Johnson administration was very supportive of the bureaucracy and the staff of professionals and career people. The Nixon administration in my exposure to it was much more political, and pushed much further down the line in terms of being sure people were political.

NOOTER: Now that you remind me, it got more political the longer the administration went on. Now most administrations are the most political up front, then become less political during their tenure. But in the Nixon administration, maybe they were just a little bit sloppy at first, but they were fairly loose at the beginning, then toward the end it became more difficult.

Q: I got caught up in the subsequent period I guess...lower levels.

NOOTER: In any event, when they looked at my background, of course I had come in at a fairly high level in the Kennedy administration, and my whole record didn't look so politically pure to the White House. So they held it up for some time, and finally after about six months of John Hannah pushing and pushing trying to get it through, a senior political person, I think his name was Bell, in the White House, called me up one day. He said they were reviewing the request for my clearance and he asked how I had voted in the 1968 election. I didn't hesitate very long before I told him that I had voted for Hubert Humphrey, thinking this was pretty much the end of my appointment. For whatever reason, my nomination was approved the next day. Now a lot of things happen in the government that I don't understand, but this is one of the most puzzling.

Q: Maybe he already knew who you voted for, or thought you were an honest man.

NOOTER: I don't know whether he gave me credit for honesty or what. I don't know, but for whatever reason he approved it, and it went on up to the Senate and I was approved with no particular problem.

The Vietnam operation was enormous. I think we had some 2200 people in that Bureau either in Washington or the field, most of them of course in Vietnam. AID provided staff for two kinds of programs. One was the more or less regular economic programs: agriculture, various kinds of technical assistance, and infrastructure programs. The other program was the staff that we provided to the CORDS organization in Vietnam. CORDS was a mixed military/civilian operation and it was headed up by someone in Vietnam who reported to the ambassador. He was not under the military and he was not directly under AID although roughly half of his personnel came from AID. AID wasn't directly responsible for the CORDS operation in the field, but we nevertheless kept an oversight of it and were kept informed about it, and played some role in it. It also did link to some extent with the more traditional AID programs that we had such as in agriculture and refugees because the CORDS people in the field would be actually involved in working on some of these programs in the field.

During the course of the next several years the staff size came down immensely. I don't remember the exact numbers, but we were in a phase-down mode. I think we had 400 people in Washington when I first started and in a couple of years we reduced that to less than half, and the same in the field. I don't remember the exact numbers. As I mentioned, the policy of the government at that time was that we were in a withdrawal mode, that we were helping the Vietnamese get on their own feet to take over the war in a military way, and we were trying to help them straighten out their economy with the notion that the U.S. would withdraw in some period of time.

I ran the program from 1970 to 1974 when AID reorganized, and I'll get to that later. It was run as a separate Bureau until 1972, at which time the program had been reduced in size to the point where there was a reorganization and all the programs that were funded with what was called Supporting Assistance were merged into a single region. At that time it included Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and also a program in Jordan. I don't think we had a program in Israel yet, but if we did that also would have been included.

Q: So it was an economic support bureau?

NOOTER: It was called the Supporting Assistance Bureau. It administered the money that had a political motive -- an economic purpose but a political motive -- and it was a separate line item in the foreign aid bill.

Q: But it was not regionally oriented?

NOOTER: It was not regionally oriented. It was administered on a world-wide basis, but the only areas we were involved in at that time were southeast Asia and a little bit of it to the Middle East. Then occasional bits of Supporting Assistance went to other places such as Malta under a base agreement that I'll talk about later.

But between 1970 and 1972, which is the period that I'll cover first, I was running just the Vietnam program. Of course what I found when I started going to Vietnam on visits, and I did visit every part of that country over the next several years, was that the atmosphere was dominated by the U.S. military upbeat style which doesn't really brook the thought of defeat. While there was no explicit rule about this, one quickly got the sense that things were off limits. It was simply an unspoken atmosphere which partly, I guess from my own military experience and partly from experience in general, I sensed immediately when I came out to Vietnam. Things that were thought of as going badly or not working maybe could be mentioned but always in the context of how they could be improved to make them work, never in the context of the fact that you shouldn't be doing them at all. And this led to unreality in some parts of the Vietnam program. When people go back and wonder what happened, this atmosphere, which has a lot to be said for it in a situation where you are winning, was one of the reasons that created some unrealistic situations. I thought the *Best and the Brightest* by David Halberstan and A

Bright and Shining Lie by Neil Sheehan capture this very well.

I also met John Vann, who was almost a larger than life character, very well described in the Neil Sheehan book. I don't know if the audience to this oral history will know who he was, but he was a military man who had been in Vietnam up until 1963, I believe as a Lieutenant Colonel. John became an outspoken critic of the tactics that were being used in Vietnam because he thought they were ineffective. He resigned from the military as a protest. He had been a close friend of Daniel Ellsberg, who released the Pentagon papers. And John left Vietnam and the military in protest to the policies, and became an outspoken critic of the program. He worked for Martin Marietta for two years, and then was hired by AID in about 1965 and went back to Vietnam as a civilian in the CORDS program.

By this time he had some audience of people who listened to the things that he said, and he did have some influence on the policies at the time and caused them to become more effective. But ultimately, John also was committed to helping the South Vietnamese to prevail. I think John never could quite accept that the South Vietnamese weren't going to prevail as a separate entity from the North.

But anyway, he was quite a charismatic character, and in many ways very unlike me but oddly we hit it off very well. And I must say I learned a lot from John. I went on tours of the countryside with him in his area. At the time I came out he was in charge of the CORDS program in the Delta. There were four regions of the country, and he was in charge of the Delta region. I remember I shocked him and all of his staff when I first went down to the Delta. They began doing what was standard procedure there, which was to take you into a Quonset type hut and give you a military-type briefing with statistics of what was going on. And after the first briefing I said to John, "No more briefings on this trip, John," because I felt I wasn't seeing anything. I was seeing the inside of a Quonset hut and seeing some figures, but I wasn't seeing the countryside, I wasn't seeing the people, I wasn't getting a feeling for what was really going on. And so while that threw the schedule into a turmoil initially, John could appreciate my response, and he spent the rest of the tour showing the Delta to me in quite a different way.

He liked to take you in his helicopter, which he piloted himself most of the time. The way to see how good the rice harvest was was to fly about 20 feet above the houses in the helicopter and look down in the yards to see whether the piles of rice in the yards was big or small. I had a lot of admiration for John, his views and what he thought, and I learned a lot from him.

Q: He obviously had a very definite strategy he followed in what he was trying to do. Can you describe that, what he was trying to bring about?

NOOTER: I can't remember so many of the details about the program, but I think for one thing the earlier policy had been to have villages that were encompassed in barbed

wire and were cut off from the surrounding country, making them into enclaves. John didn't agree with that, among other things. He believed in his CORDS people being out in the countryside and not simply letting the Vietcong take over at night, but being out where they could dominate the landscape at night as well as in the daytime.

I recall he disagreed very much with the Agent Orange program which was an attempt to defoliate the forests so the Vietcong couldn't hide in them. In retrospect this was one of the most stupid things you could imagine doing, not to mention the environmental effects that have come from it. He thought that it was absurd, and was one of the few people to say so at the time. Other than being enormously energetic and trying to get down to the grass roots and understand what was really going on, and working with the people at the level where they lived, I can't remember anything else.

Q: Do you have a sense he was trying to understand the Vietnamese frame of mind or attitude or culture?

NOOTER: Yes, that would be true, and trying to support them and get them to take the lead in running things and securing their own defense. Of course ultimately I think he would have been unsuccessful had he lived. He died in a helicopter crash just before the collapse. He was at that time in charge of II Corps, which is where the North Vietnamese principal invasion came through. I always used to say, half in jest, that Vietnam would never fall so long as John Vann was alive, and in retrospect, that's about the way it went. It collapsed not so long after John died.

Q: He wasn't responsible for all of the CORDS operation but just one area, is that what you're saying?

NOOTER: Actually, in his last tenure in II Corps, when the U.S. direct military involvement had decreased and we had less U.S. military there, he was put in charge of not only the CORDS people but all of the military people who were in that Corps. That was considered kind of a revolution to have a civilian in charge of military units, even though he'd been a former military officer.

Q: Okay, we can continue with Vietnam.

NOOTER: Ellsworth Bunker was the Ambassador at the time that I was there, and he was in charge of the CORDS program as well as the AID mission there. I found him to be a most remarkable person. I guess he was about 76 at that time. He had the natural instincts of the true administrator, to my mind. He never seemed to get involved in unnecessary detail, but he always seemed to know the important things that were going on and what to become involved in. He had an ability to separate the wheat from the chaff in a way that was more profound than any executive I'd seen. I thought he was also extremely sensible, level-headed, and never had any illusions about the job that was there to be done, but also did everything he could to carry out his assignments in the best

possible way.

Bill Colby was in charge of the CORDS program. He later became head of the CIA, and we'll go into that some more later. Bill also was extremely reasonable and sensible and good to work with. But as I say, nobody wanted to hear anything out there about how things weren't working or how they might not succeed.

Q: That included Colby and Bunker too?

NOOTER: Less so, but it permeated the whole atmosphere. I recall as the withdrawal was going on, in 1972 I was out there on a visit and Colby had arranged a dinner for his senior CORDS staff. There were about 20 of us sitting around a table and at the end of the dinner I suggested we go around the table and ask each person at the table what they thought would happen after the U.S. withdrawal was complete. They did this, in this case in a very frank and open fashion, and two things of note stand out: one, at that time both Colby and I were reasonably optimistic about the chances of the South Vietnamese pulling it off by themselves. But I noticed that the people who were the most pessimistic were the ones at the lowest levels who were out in the countryside and had the closest contact with the people. It was more possible to be optimistic in headquarters than if you were out in the hamlets. And of course they were the ones who were correct. The other thing was that after the meeting one of the people at the dinner came up to me and said "This is the first frank and open discussion I have ever heard in Vietnam the whole time I've been here." I guess maybe with the U.S. withdrawal having reached the stage where it was, it became more acceptable to be open and candid. Colby had no reservations about this openness whatsoever. It was not he who was imposing this lack of openness in the prior period.

Q: What were the people from the lower levels who knew the hamlets, what were they saying about the situation there being pessimistic -- what did pessimistic mean?

NOOTER: I can't remember the details, but I guess they were aware that while a lot of Vietcong had been killed in the TET offensive, the Vietcong sympathizers and the North Vietnamese were still there, they were in the countryside, and once the U.S. pulled out they doubted the South Vietnamese ability to pull it off, to retain the leadership.

There was one incident that convinced me that it was going to fail, and that was a military exercise later in 1972 when the U.S. by this time had fully trained and equipped the South Vietnamese army. They were all ready to go and so the U.S. military and the Vietnamese army planned an attack by the Vietnamese army up near the 39th parallel to cut the Ho Chi Minh trail. They were to go in and do that with some U.S. air support, but the ground forces were to be entirely South Vietnamese. They would actually be going into Cambodia, I guess, and/or Laos, but it would be Vietnamese troops.

I happened to be up in Hue at the time, near the 39th parallel, when we got the

reports of what happened in that engagement. It was clear that the North Vietnamese, when faced with a threat to the Ho Chi Minh trail, mounted a stiff resistance that completely beat up the South Vietnamese troops, who left their equipment and came running back across the border. I remember seeing General Abrams, who was in charge of the U.S. military forces at that time, shortly after that in Saigon. He was another realist. I liked Abrams very much, a very sound fellow, which was certainly not true of all of the military that had been there. He confided to me that the South Vietnamese had been soundly whipped. It seemed to me that if they couldn't sustain themselves in the face of a real confrontation with the North Vietnamese troops when they were fully armed and equipped by the U.S. and still had U.S. air cover, they certainly weren't going to do it after we left.

In any event, we did spend a lot of time during '70, '71, and '72 on the economic program. Charles Cooper was working in State on the economic program for AID and State, and later went out to live in Saigon running the economic program on the U.S. side. He was quite excellent.

We had a good Vietnamese counterpart, the Minister of Economy, named Ngoc. He was very sensible. I give the credit to Chuck Cooper and Ngoc, who developed a good macroeconomic policy, where they devalued the exchange rate enormously, even though this meant that temporarily it reduced the flow of U.S. financial resources that the U.S. military had to pay for its operations there that were being bought at an overvalued exchange rate. But nevertheless it was healthy for the economy to change the exchange rate and put it on a sound basis. And believe it or not, even with the war going on, the period following the TET offensive was relatively stable, and the Vietnamese economy began to respond and we began to get some good results. This came from the countryside, that is at the rural level. But of course ultimately that got disrupted as the political and military situation deteriorated.

Q: Who was the AID director during this time, do you know?

NOOTER: First Don McDonald and then Bob Mossler. They were both extremely capable people. I think it was in that order. Anyway, those were the two in the time I was there. They were both very competent and ran good programs.

We had one interesting program there in the Mekong Delta. It is a rice-growing area where rice is grown as the flood of the Mekong river recedes. Once the rice crop is grown there's a dry season when nothing was grown traditionally until the next flood. The AID mission introduced a crop of sorghum that could be grown in the dry period, and within two or three years an enormous quantity, it seems to me like several hundred thousand tons a year, of sorghum was grown in the Mekong delta at a time when nothing had been grown before. I thought if one wants to look for interesting and startling successes in the AID program, that would be one example. I would be fascinated to know what happened now that the North Vietnamese have taken over, whether that

sorghum crop remains as a cultivated crop. My guess is that it did but I don't know for sure.

Q: What about, we were involved in doing any of the rice developments at all?

NOOTER: Yes, we introduced the IR-8 rice variety. We spread the use of IR-8 rice, but that was already in place when I took over. I think the big issues had to do with the pricing of rice, the availability of rice markets, and how the South Vietnamese collected the rice. Sometimes the rice wouldn't come to market before the exchange rate was devalued; prices were unduly depressed, and so the government was inclined to go out and collect it at the point of a bayonet. We argued that that was not a good way to run an economy.

I think the issues related to rice at the time I was there were more related to policy issues and marketing rather than technical issues. Part of the recovery of the economy was in rice production. As the rice prices rose, more rice was grown and came to market. If the price is reasonable, farmers will grow it and sell it. But under wartime conditions, the South Vietnamese first instincts were not to handle it on a market economy basis. But Minister Ngoc understood that and agreed, and went along with us to implement the policies that brought things around.

Q: Were there other programs of significance? We spent a lot of money. What were we doing mostly?

NOOTER: A lot of the program was what you would call just general program support -- providing foreign exchange so that goods could be imported, which doesn't really promote development. In fact, it can be an impediment to development under certain circumstances even though it will keep people fed and clothed in the short run. There was a big balance of payments component to the program. The technical programs were heavily in agriculture.

Q: What were the AID people doing who were out in the rural areas?

NOOTER: Most AID people in the rural areas were CORDS people. They were involved in rural development programs, for example. If there was a sorghum program they would help see that the crop was introduced and that farmers understood how to grow it.

Q: So were the AID people kind of backstopping the CORDS effort?

NOOTER: The AID mission located mainly in Saigon supported the economic part of the CORDS program in the field. Generally it worked reasonably well even though the organizational arrangement was not very centralized. But the cooperation was pretty good.

Q: What was your sense of the Vietnamese people that you worked with?

NOOTER: As I said, the fact that they could produce a minor economic miracle in the middle of the war convinced me that they had the potential to be another economic tiger once that economy got straightened out if the war were ended. And I guess the present Vietnamese government is beginning to loosen things up and let some market response take place. If they carry that far enough, I have little doubt we'll have another tiger in east Asia.

Let me add one more thing. In this whole period we had a series of refugee programs. It was a very major and active part of the program, feeding and housing and dealing with the refugees that were generated by the war, and of course that varied from time to time. Actually it would be better to talk about this in the context of Cambodia and Laos, when I took over those programs, because the refugee programs were even more important in Cambodia than in Vietnam. But that was one activity of the AID mission that was important.

Q: How about the dealings with Congress on Vietnam, and the public opinion about that at the time? Were you caught up in the general hysteria about the situation?

NOOTER: First, on Congress let me take a minute to talk about that. I began testifying before Congress in 1969 after John Bullit had left, when I was acting Assistant Administrator. Within the AID system, the Assistant Administrators always went up to defend and try to justify their portions of the program to various committees within the Congress. John Bullit was a master at testifying. He'd been a New York lawyer and was a good judge of human nature. He was more successful in dealing with Otto Passman than anyone had ever been before. I had the advantage of John's counsel and advice before I had my first testimony before Otto Passman, who was in charge of the Subcommittee on Foreign Assistance of the Appropriations Committee in the House.

Otto was alleged to hate the foreign aid program, although perhaps he didn't hate it quite as much as his reputation alleged, but he certainly used his chairmanship position to humiliate all the witnesses who came before him. In 1962 when I had just joined AID, Ed Hutchinson had just been made Assistant Administrator for Africa. Ed was a rather feisty, very dedicated, very serious individual and very competent. But Ed refused to take Otto Passman's bullying and would try to fight back. The result of that was that he was up there testifying for 28 days for testimony that would normally take one day or two days at the most, because Passman simply wouldn't let him get in the last word.

On the other hand, John's counsel to me was simply to not fight the problem. Just accept the fact that Passman was going to dominate the situation, and the best thing to do was simply to make it as brief and painless as possible, although not letting him put something totally erroneous on the record, but short of that, to simply get on with it, because much of what Passman dealt with was minutiae and details that were part of what

he wanted to build as a record but wouldn't affect the overall appropriation level much.

I followed that advice reasonably successfully. From those experiences I developed the Passman five-to-one rule: that is, what I learned was that whatever you said favorable about the program, Passman would put five times that much on the record that was unfavorable. If you talked for a minute he would talk for five or maybe ten. If you talked for an hour he would talk for five hours. So you might as well save your breath. The ratio would always remain the same. And that's what Ed Hutchinson had trouble accepting.

On the other hand, my first testimony before the House Foreign Affairs Committee was a high point. That committee was quite a serious and sensible committee, and was trying to learn something as well as paint records. It had quite a diverse membership from all the spectrums of the political scene, and they were prepared to enter into a serious dialogue with a witness and have some sensible dialogue that would reflect facts and opinions and had some value. I had an extraordinarily good session with them during my first major appearance before a Committee.

Q: Do you remember who the Chairman was at the time?

NOOTER: Clem Zablocki, who was a fine man. He was kind of a Chicago ward healer, but in the Harry Truman sense of rising above his background when he got into a responsible position. And Zablocki had a serious interest in the AID program, which didn't mean he was in favor of everything but he wanted to do it in a responsible way. He ran a good committee with a good staff and good membership. That got my Congressional testimony off to a good start, and while Congressional testimony was always difficult, I enjoyed it with the exception of Otto Passman or Clarence Long who succeeded him and who was just about as bad.

Q: Did you get involved in any public debates on Vietnam?

NOOTER: Yes, one of the difficulties, of course, of being in charge of the Vietnam program was that popular discontent was growing by leaps and bounds. There were frequent demonstrations in Washington against the war. I had five children at that time, most of them teenagers, who were all actively against the war, as were most of my friends. So it was an extremely difficult period on a personal level. My family was all very good about it in many ways, I guess, because they knew I was against the war, too, even though my job caused me to do certain things in connection with it, which I hope I did in a responsible way, but that didn't mean that I favored our being there. What I favored was our withdrawal, and I guess that fact made it a little easier within the family. I don't think my children ever resented my role in it, nor did my wife, who was equally as much against the war as my children.

I do remember some good friends coming from St. Louis for an anti-war

demonstration once and asking if they could stay at our house. In fact, there was a big crowd of them and we let them sleep in their sleeping bags in our basement. I remember saying they were perfectly welcome to do that, and some of my family went to the demonstration, but the only thing they couldn't do was put a Vietcong flag in the front yard.

Q: What about the public in general and the press? Did you have a lot to do with them?

NOOTER: I didn't have many dealings with the press but I did have one or two press conferences at the request of State. I remember one of these. I was naive in dealing with the press. The economic situation at the time, probably in 1971 or 1972, was coming along pretty well and State thought it would be useful to give a briefing on the economic situation. So there was a press conference arranged in which I made a statement and then answered questions. The whole thing went on for 45 minutes or an hour. I remember after it was over when I came out everybody was very pleased with the way it had gone and what I had said and the impression it had made. I said, on the other hand, that I was horrified because out of that 45 minutes or an hour I realized that the reporters would pick one or two sentences and that would be their story, and I didn't know which ones they would pick.

And it turned out that the only thing that made any significant story was a reporter from one of the wire services who had asked about the level of aid that would be needed over the next ten years. I think at that time it was \$750 million a year, and he interpreted something I had said to mean that it would be necessary to maintain that level for ten years, which I hadn't said but that was his impression of what I'd said. Therefore, he quoted me as saying that seven and a half billion dollars more in economic aid was needed for Vietnam. When I saw the wire service story and called him to try to get him to correct it, he refused because that would mean he would have to admit he had made an error. And so that was the story that was generated out of this wonderful press conference. Generally I took a low profile with the press, which was fine with me.

Q: Did you do any speech-making? Were you asked to go out and...?

NOOTER: I did not actually; I was spared that. I didn't have a role in trying to make a public case for the program.

Q:presenting the administration's position to the public and all that?

NOOTER: At a personal level I remember helping to arrange a meeting one time with some anti-war people. One of them had been a shipmate in World War II of Bill Sullivan who was the senior person in the State Department running the Vietnam program, to talk about it, but I didn't make any public appearances in that respect.

Q: Did you have any direct dealings with the White House at that time?

NOOTER: Henry Kissinger was the NSC chairman, and the economic and military programs were really run out of the White House. Within the State Department, Kissinger's link to the State Department was Bill Sullivan who was a Deputy Assistant Administrator. They didn't go through the Secretary; they didn't even go through Marshall Green who was the Assistant Secretary. It was a direct link to Bill Sullivan. There was a committee that met several times a week of which I was a member which Bill Sullivan chaired, and there were several people from Kissinger's staff who came over along with people from the military and the CIA as well as myself from AID. This was the nucleus of the planning and the policy implementation within the government for the Vietnam program.

Q: Was it simply a strategy for withdrawal that you were talking about?

NOOTER: That came, of course, out of the political campaign. It was Nixon's policy even before and certainly after his Asian mission with Marshall Green, the whole policy of withdrawal and more restrained U.S. commitments abroad.

Q: But the assumption there was you withdraw, at the same time the aim was the South Vietnamese would be capable of carrying forward independently without us...

NOOTER: Exactly -- it was to give them a chance to make it on their own by helping to arm them and equip them and helping strengthen their economy. Then we would pull out and it would be up to them to make it on their own.

Q: And they presumably had the capacity to do so?

NOOTER: That's right, or if they didn't that would be the end of it, which of course is what happened.

Q: And there was a recognition at that time that that was a real possibility?

NOOTER: I believe that only became a realization as things got farther along, especially after the attempt of the South Vietnamese army failed to carry out a successful military operation on its own. In a way I was surprised the North Vietnamese held back as long as they did after that particular engagement, which was about 1972. They didn't really mount much of a serious attack until about '74. I guess they decided it would be less costly in lives to wait till the U.S. pulled out and they'd be able to take it as a pushover, which of course is what happened.

The thing for me personally that was uncomfortable was that while I was comfortable with the policy of withdrawal, the rate of withdrawal was so slow. It was slower than I anticipated when I took the position. I came to believe, though I never had

any proof on this from anybody, that the withdrawal pattern was set to be sure there was not a collapse before the 1972 election. There were enough U.S. ground troops there until 1972 that it would not fall before that time. I am fully convinced of that although, as I say, you have to accept that only as my opinion. I can't quote statistics or even direct quotes from anybody to say that that was the basis of the policy. But certainly if you saw what was going on and the rate at which withdrawal took place...

Q: And you were involved in the strategy session...?

NOOTER: Not in everything. We really weren't involved in the rate of the military withdrawal.

Q: Not on the military side, but I would think on the economic side there would be certain assumptions about what you were trying to accomplish?

NOOTER: There was no question that on the economic side the Vietnamese could handle it at any time. They had gone through their changes in macroeconomic policies in 1971, and they were able to handle it after that.

There was one ironical event when I was away on a trip somewhere -- a mission to Vietnam or a vacation somewhere in about 1972. I came back and everybody was in a tizzy because the Defense Department had sent a letter to the Secretary of State saying that while the military program seemed to be progressing well, they were seriously concerned about the state of the economy, and couldn't State do something to fix that. In fact it was totally untrue, but it caused an enormous flap. It was generated by some economist the Defense Department had hired to look at Vietnam and work on it, and who had somehow put Secretary of Defense Laird, who had been a congressman from Wisconsin, up to writing this letter to the Secretary of State.

Q: Did you have any meeting with Kissinger or any dealings with...?

NOOTER: That's interesting. I was going to mention that while I met regularly with this working group, I never did meet Kissinger until about 1972 when President Thieu came for a visit to the United States. The agreement was that he would meet Nixon at San Clemente, and so all of us involved in the Vietnam program went out to San Clemente, Nixon's residence in California, and met with the Vietnamese there. And there I met Kissinger for the first time. I came back and told my wife that it was an irony that I'd been working in the program for two years and had never met Kissinger, and finally met him in the men's room. The meeting at San Clemente was interesting in that I remember Kissinger telling us ahead of time that by all means don't bring up any economic subjects because Nixon hated economic discussions, and the fact of the matter was that all the Vietnamese wanted to talk about was the economy.

The other thing I recall was Nixon talking with us ahead of time, making the

rather cynical statement that the substance of the meeting was absolutely of no importance whatsoever, the only thing that was of importance was that Thieu and Nixon be seen as meeting by the press and by the public. And that was his perhaps absolutely correct but cynical view of that meeting.

I haven't given a real flavor of the tenor of those times. It was during that period when the Pentagon papers were leaked, when demonstrations were frequent and volatile and Washington was swamped with demonstrators.

Q: I get the impression that you were a little bit isolated or insulated from this somehow...that you weren't directly attacked or confronted on this.

NOOTER: It was certainly all around us - demonstrators out in front of the State Department and so on. When I first joined AID, the State Department was completely open, there were no guards, anyone could come in off the street and walk the corridors of the State Department. It was only when there were some bomb explosions, maybe a bomb blew something up on the first floor, that they began putting in guards. After that it was quite a different Government, and it was in fact quite a bit more enjoyable previously. I remember somebody saying how surprised John Bullit was when he heard I accepted the Vietnam job, I guess because I'd been vocal in my opinion that we should pull out of Vietnam well before 1970. But as I say, I felt I could support the withdrawal policy, but I would have done the withdrawal in two years rather instead of four years or five years.

Q: What about the attitude of people within AID toward the Vietnam bureau and that operation?

NOOTER: There was enormous pressure for AID people to go to Vietnam at the time when there was a huge staff there. Many of them didn't want any part of the war, and had joined the Agency because they were interested in economic development. They didn't see Vietnam and certainly not CORDS as economic development but as war support. When I was in Liberia, for example, people would be called to go to Vietnam and they would deeply resent it and try to find ways not to go. AID actually had to have a policy of forcing people to go at the threat of dismissal because the requirement for staff was so huge compared to the amount of people who would be willing to go without being forced.

Now the ones with whom I worked, once they were assigned to it, to my knowledge all did their jobs as earnestly and as conscientiously as they could. There was no holding back or anything like sabotage or anything even approaching it, nor do I remember people complaining about it once they had the assignment. Once they were there and working, they did their job.

But there was a lot of tension and a lot of feeling in the Agency about Supporting

Assistance, that this was really more political than economic. I'll talk about that later when I get into other Supporting Assistance programs. My own view, not so much on the Vietnam program but in general, was that if we could get Supporting Assistance, it could be used for economic development. It didn't make any difference to me whether it was called Development Assistance or Supporting Assistance, we should use it as best we could to achieve economic development. And if it was easier or better to get it by calling it a different name, that was all right with me. At the same time I did feel an obligation that it be used in a serious way and not, for example, for buying fake opium.

Q: What, maybe this will come later, did the Vietnam situation have an impact on AID, or its perception of what AID is about in terms of congressional views or support? At that point we had, what 18,000 people on the rolls, and Vietnam was a factor that took a large staffing, and then it started going down as we phased out, but what was the image of AID or was it affected, did you have any sense, by the Vietnam domination of the AID operation?

NOOTER: My view is that the development part of the program went forward pretty much the same, although later, for somewhat other reasons that don't necessarily just relate to Vietnam, certain political programs got protected at the expense of the development program. But I don't think that was so true in the Vietnam years.

Q: There was the Fulbright view, or other view, that economic assistance got us involved in a country and in a situation which we then...and therefore he set up these limits, that only so many countries could have only so much of this and so on?

NOOTER: I guess you're reminding me of a view that became popular. I didn't think it ever had any credibility but the fact that Mr. Fulbright thought so was of some significance.

Q: There was the issue there of having economic assistance and development assistance in the same country, and people were very upset because development assistance, I think, was being used in Vietnam for purposes that were not development. I've forgotten the issue now but...

NOOTER: My view at that time, and I remember saying this in staff meeting, was that 80% of the support for the foreign aid program was for cold war reasons and 20% was for humanitarian reasons. And if you had to rely on the humanitarian alone, if you want to use that term for the purest kind of development assistance, you would get about 20% of the funds you would get if there was a communist threat in the world. I remember believing that at that time and I am inclined to think that it was true.

But now what has been interesting to me, as things have developed now with the breakup of the Soviet Union and so on, is that in a sense aid has become more ensconced in our thinking than it was in 1970 because I think in spite of the fact that the aid budgets

are being cut, there is a recognition that there is a U.S. role providing foreign assistance even in spite of the absence of a communist threat. And this support is somewhat larger than I would have anticipated 25 years ago. We haven't seen this fully played out yet. We don't know what it will look like in 5 years or 10 years.

What I'm saying is that the support even for the development assistance part of the program was based on political reasons to a fairly large extent anyway. It was just that Supporting Assistance was more directly related to a situation that was politically important than the average situation in the developing world.

Q: Well, we'll come back to that later. I think the specific point, and I can't remember precisely...did you ever meet with Senator Fulbright?

NOOTER: Oh yes, many times.

Q: Was the view that economic assistance particularly was getting us in situations where we had then to get more and more involved, and that therefore certain legislative restrictions or processes were starting to be built in, limiting where we could provide this Supporting Assistance, and you couldn't have it in the same country where there was development assistance and so on. Because there was something at the time trying to use Supporting Assistance in a way that he thought was contrary to what Congress' intent -- I can't remember the issue?

NOOTER: Yes, I do remember that but I don't think that was very broadly accepted except by Fulbright himself. What did happen was that before Vietnam, aid was something that liberals would support and conservatives would be against. And out of Vietnam did come liberal antagonism in some quarters to foreign involvement of almost any kind, including development assistance. For example, you had Fulbright, who had been a person inclined to support foreign aid, who turned against it, and then he became an ally of the conservatives who were willing to cut aid for traditionally conservative reasons. But I don't think the Fulbright view that aid would tend to get the U.S. involved in foreign entanglements was one that was broadly accepted. Certainly it was not by other aid supporters such as Hubert Humphrey or even people like Senators Stennis, Percy, Javits or Aiken.

Observations on Vietnam situation in the 1970s

Excerpt taken from an interview with Jack Sullivan

SULLIVAN: Maybe I ought to backtrack a little bit, I was going to Vietnam for the Committee because I had Asian experience. In 1970 I made my first trip overseas by myself as a one-person staff person looking at U.S. military training. I was all by myself and the trip was fairly successful. So in 1971 and '72 I was sent back to southeast Asia

and my big exposure, I went to Cambodia and Vietnam. In '74 I went back and spent a week in every core area. I spent a month in Vietnam and half a week in Laos and half a week in Cambodia. I looked at development, mainly looking at it in terms of process, not looking at what development was really occurring, because there wasn't any development. At the same time all of this other stuff was going on I was continually going to southeast Asia. At any rate...

Q: What led you onto that subject though, as opposed to the military ...?

SULLIVAN: Because we had a military expert. I traveled with Jack Brady, who later became chief of staff. He was the military side, I was the economic side, and we were a pair and we went in '74 and then again in '75. Just as things were collapsing we were sent back to do another study. While this was going on I was getting increasingly interested in ...

Q: What were the conclusions of that study?

SULLIVAN: The '74 study?

Q: You were visiting all of the Vietnam core areas...

SULLIVAN: That it was impossible to develop economically in a war zone, how's that? That's the conclusion, a no-brainer. But I'll tell you one other thing though. I became very impressed with the land reform efforts in the Delta which were genuine, there was some good stuff happening. It was kind of heart-breaking, they're doing land reform and you've got these bomb holes, these big pockmarks and also unexploded ordnance and things. It was hellish. But you could kind of sense, that the farmers were on the right track. I believe that I am where I am today because of opportunities offered my immigrant grandfather on my mother's side who had a third grade education and spoke with a German accent all his life. That family had two advantages: they owned their own land and had free public education. To get real development, a country's got to get its agriculture right first. My father always said that the Russians could never get their agriculture right because Marx was a city boy.

Q: Who was the prime mover behind this land reform work?

SULLIVAN: AID was, oh yeah, it was AID. The best and the brightest of AID went to Vietnam. I think it was frequently frustrating. The modalities were difficult. Ted Owens went, they actually sent Ted Owens to Vietnam at one point, who was the father, one of the fathers of New Directions, and he came back frustrated. I mean there was no way anyone could do development in that war zone, and in fact when the Administration talked about more money for development they really didn't mean it. I was just talking to Don Cohen about those days. He was in AID's East Asia Bureau in those days, the Vietnam bureau, and knowing the Mission lied to Washington about what

the money was going for. AID/Saigon wouldn't even tell Washington AID what the money was going for.

Q: Well, what were they doing with the money?

SULLIVAN: Well, in one case Don told me about (and I saw similar ones), they were funding phantom soldiers, phantom workers, the money was being siphoned off to pay who knows what and who knows whom. I've always believed that a country has the right in a sense to lie in its diplomacy, but when you start lying to yourself, as we were in Vietnam, and just building an entire policy on a foundation of lies, it's not going to stand, it can't work. Vietnam proved that. I was young, and skeptical, and antagonistic near the end. I broke on the war in 1966, I began to think it was really a mistake.

Q: But your experience out there convinced you it was a bunch of lies?

SULLIVAN: Yeah, oh yeah. It was just, in fact this really funny, Frank Snapp's book that came out after, I can't remember the name of it, but he was a CIA person there. In the first chapter he discusses how he lied to my partner Jack Brady and me in an interview he gave us near the end of the situation. The book starts out with him lying to a Congressional staff delegation. That was us.

Q: Why do you think he felt it necessary to lie?

SULLIVAN: Because the truth would have killed the U.S. effort. There was nothing positive. The truth was that the government was corrupt, it was unpopular, it wasn't going to last, and American policy-makers didn't want to tell the American people. The United States was withdrawing drastically, but ambassador Graham Martin had everybody scared, and nobody told the truth. A Congressional investigator might get a bit of the truth if you stuck a few beers in somebody in the Caravel Hotel dining room. You know, we did our best. But it was very difficult for an independent observer to get any information.

Q: That you found that out very early, representing Congress out there, that you couldn't get the facts?

SULLIVAN: Yes, everybody showed you what they wanted to show you. You had to be fairly astute. If you've been a newspaper reporter, a police reporter, you get a kind of investigative notion about things, but getting facts was very difficult. Some people on the Hill didn't want to believe us when we reported unfavorable developments. Other people thought we were too willing to go along with the official line, but basically that's almost all we had. I didn't speak Vietnamese, I couldn't really do the kind of in-depth look we needed. The period held a lot of frustration. That was one of the reasons I went on to something pretty straight-forward which was miracle grains, and the New Directions. Well, let me get to New Directions.

Brief assignment on Vietnam affairs in Washington- 1973

Excerpt taken from an interview with Miles Wedeman

WEDEMAN: I was Director of the Office of Vietnam Affairs, in the East Asia Bureau of AID. I was there from the summer of 1973 until the late spring of 1974.

Q: And did you like that interlude?

WEDEMAN: No.

Q: Who was your boss then?

WEDEMAN: Bob Nooter was my boss, whom I liked very much. But I didn't like working on Vietnam. I said at the time, "All but the superhawks have fled." Everybody, not in AID necessarily, but people who were influential in State, and particularly on the National Security Council staff, and the Ambassador in Saigon, still thought it was a war to be won. And, won in a sort of conventional sense, that somehow the North Vietnamese were going to be beaten. It was clear this was not going to happen. But here we were, still busy, planning for future fiscal years. People were still talking about the light at the end of the tunnel. But the tunnel got darker, not lighter as time went on. In the fall of 1973 we were planning for fiscal 1975. In April of 1975 the whole thing came to an end when the North Vietnamese and the Vietcong took over the entire country. So ended that an unhappy period. Certainly the people who worked at AID on Vietnam were uneasy about it, but our Ambassador in Vietnam was very, very insistent on a big AID program, that sort of thing.

Q: And who was the Ambassador at the time?

WEDEMAN: That's a good question. I'm trying to remember his name. Graham Martin... well known. He'd come up through the administrative side of State, and he'd been the Administrative Counselor at the Embassy in Paris early in the Kennedy administration. The fellow who was then Ambassador, Dillon, Douglas Dillon, thought he was very able, and brought him to Washington. Then he got into the political side of State, as against the administrative side, and he was appointed Ambassador to Vietnam, oh, I can't remember when. He was Ambassador when I came back from Cambodia in the summer, early fall of 1973. He came to Washington in the fall of 1973 to watch very carefully, among other things, the preparation of AID's FY75 budget. He would sit in on all the big budget meetings. He stayed on in Washington in order to see the President. As he said, "I'm the President's representative in Vietnam." In other words, "I don't work for the Secretary of State. I'm the President's man in Vietnam, I take orders from him, and I will see him and decide what we're going to do." By this time, Nixon had no time to think about Vietnam .

Q: He was really on the ropes.

WEDEMAN: He was really on the ropes in the fall of 1973. Finally the Ambassador left, but he must have stayed in Washington three months. He never did see Nixon. For me, I have to confess it was an unhappy time. When I came back from Cambodia I really didn't want much more to do, I really didn't want anything further to do, with Southeast Asia. I'd been given another opportunity, the Senior Seminar, but I didn't want it. In any event, I began to hear of other possibilities. Sam Adams, who was head of the Africa Bureau, asked me if I wanted to go to Abidjan, as the director of REDSO, and I said fine. So that's where I went. I really have very little to say about my function or my career as the Director of the Office of Vietnam Affairs. I think I intentionally make it a blank, I'm not sure.

Q: It was a hard time to be in that kind of role, when it seemed so clear that things were getting tougher and tougher.

WEDEMAN: And when you were unsympathetic. So it didn't last too long, and I went back to Africa in May of 1974.

Q: So a brief interlude in Washington that didn't perhaps give you any great sense of joy, but maybe just as well concluded? How would you characterize that as a general experience, in a capsule note?

WEDEMAN: The important decisions involving Vietnam, even including AID, were not made at that level. The most junior level they were made at was at Bob Nooter's. As far as I could see, the critical ones were made by the NSC staff, and in the case of AID, by what was then known as PPC, which was concerned with the question, among other things, of the financing of oil for Vietnam. But the Office of Vietnam Affairs, as far as I'm concerned, was just a paper shuffling exercise. The important decisions on assistance were being made elsewhere.

Q: So it wasn't great fun.

WEDEMAN: No.

VIETNAM: Negotiating the Peace Settlement

*Excerpt taken from an interview with Maurice Williams
(See Williams' Oral History Report for full account in the annex
of the US Foreign Assistance role in the peace negotiations)*

WILLIAMS: My next political assignment was a big one, namely principal U.S. negotiator in Paris with ministers of the North Vietnamese Government on allocation of a program of U.S. economic assistance totalling \$4.75 billion over five years for the reconstruction of the economy of North Vietnam. This commitment had been made by President Nixon in a secret letter to the Prime Minister of North Vietnam as part of the

understandings accompanying the January 1973 "Peace Agreement on Ending the War and Restoring Peace in Vietnam." The economic assistance was conditioned on political performance by the Government of North Vietnam in releasing American prisoners-of-war and keeping the peace following the cease fire in Vietnam and withdrawal of its forces from Laos and Cambodia.

American economic assistance for reconstruction of North Vietnam, and its integration into the world economy, was a bold concept of President Nixon. He considered it as "potentially the most significant part of the peace accords," providing leverage for the U.S. in maintenance of peace. Such had been the case after our wars with Germany and Japan. However, it was only briefly a possibility with North Vietnam - given the dynamics of domestic politics in both countries. For a detailed account of these negotiations and their results see the enclosed annex, "Healing the Wound of War with North Vietnam."

Following President Nixon's re-election for a second term, an election in which the promise of "peace" in Vietnam played a prominent part, John Hannah was summarily dismissed as Administrator of AID. I say summarily because his dismissal was without prior warning; he was told of his dismissal by telephone while on holiday in Michigan. Dan Parker was appointed administrator.

Q: Why was he relieved?

WILLIAMS: He was treated very shabbily, but it was never entirely clear why. Apparently in his second term President Nixon decided to clear house of presidential appointees who were considered either too liberal or too independent, and John Hannah was both.

Q: He was fairly liberal?

WILLIAMS: John Hannah was a liberal Republican who had played a strongly independent role in encouraging the Democratically controlled Congress to reshape the American aid program in favor of basic human needs and earmarking increasingly large sums for that purpose. That was not entirely appreciated by the Nixon Administration. Other political appointees were dismissed at the same time. Some characterized the period as the "night of the long knives."

It was suggested that I leave the position of deputy administrator of AID in favor of an ambassadorial assignment. Because of my service in the Vietnam negotiations I was offered my choice of several vacant posts, including ambassador to Indonesia, to the new country of Bangladesh as well as ambassador to the OECD in Paris and several others. Given my career interest in international development, I chose chairman of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) with the OECD in Paris - a position which up to that time had been held by a succession of U.S. career ambassadors, including

Ambassador Riddleburger and, immediately preceding me, Ambassador Ed Martin.

SOUTH ASIA**AFGHANISTAN, PAKISTAN****Emergencies in Afghanistan—1973**

Excerpt from an interview with Vince Brown

BROWN: Our emergency food program played a vital role in 1973. In the late 1960s and early 1970s Afghanistan experienced a number of unusually dry years, and by 1973 the US, UN, Soviet Union and other governments at the request of the Afghan government, were all beginning to contribute important amounts of food to help meet the urgent needs. The crisis had reached famine proportion, and it was estimated that some 80,000 had died of hunger the preceding year before the government formally asked for help from foreign donors. Generally speaking, US assistance went to help the population south of the Hindu Kush mountain range, and the Soviet and UN supplies were distributed north of this mountain range (many peaks over 14,000 feet) which divides the country in half. Given the limited road network, much of our PL480 food supplies were distributed by a combination of rented trucks and camel caravans (some of the caravans were as long as 100 to 200 camels). Our Assistant Director for Administration, Abe Aschanese, was a tremendous force in helping the Afghan government get organized to deliver the food quickly over almost overwhelming odds. During the “famine” years, the only area which continued to produce food was the Helmand Valley which depended on irrigation, and was instrumental in limiting the loss of life during those years.

Health services for those living in rural areas of Afghanistan were virtually non-existent. A basic health services project was established to help the Ministry of Public Health (MOPH) extend health services to rural areas where 85% of the people lived. Four professional consultants were provided from the US non profit firm Management Sciences for Health, MSH (under USAID contract). The MSH team did an incredible job assisting the Ministry in planning, training, carrying out basic health field demonstrations and analyses, personnel, commodities, administration and general management. The advisors had the full confidence of the Minister and his senior staff. While small relative to the need, the million to two million dollar a year grant budget provided substantial leverage in helping get the primary health care program off the ground. One of the constant battles was to design the program so that it included women and children. Prior to this project, what little public health effort that existed, was limited to the urban area and focused on providing help to the male elements of the population.

Grant money was also available to help finance simple primary health care centers around the country. A pilot effort of 50 centers were built and staffed during my stay and plans were under way to expand the effort.

Q: Given what's gone on over the last 17 or 18 years and the political chaos which continues to reign, are there any signs remaining of this highly successful Primary Health Care program carried out by MSH?

BROWN: I'm glad you asked that question! I was just reading a very recent "Afghanistan Trip Report" written by Elisabeth Kvitashvili of the Office of Food for Peace covering the period from April 23 to May 5, 1997. In Section XII. Implementing Partners: (UNICEF), she writes about UNICEF activities in Afghanistan, and I quote: "NB: I questioned UNICEF if they saw any evidence of the cold chain system put in place by Management Sciences for Health (MSH) during the 1980s as part of the AID Cross Border program. UNICEF said that in many places, Jalalabad, Ghazni for example, the MSH cold chain remained intact and functional."

Actually the first steps of introducing "cold chain" systems (necessary for preserving vaccines and other medical supplies) in the major primary health care offices was initiated by MSH when they were working with the Ministry of Health in the mid '70s. This is good example of the lasting impact of work well done, even under chaotic conditions.

One of the critical needs was to train women to serve as health care workers. The training of Auxiliary Nurse Mid-wives (ANMs) was done at a ANM school partially financed by the USAID with two nurse advisors furnished under contract from the University of California (Santa Cruz) campus. Women mid-wives were essential since cultural taboos inhibited women from seeking medical help unless female personnel were present to serve them. It was extremely difficult to get any of the educated Afghan women to live in the rural areas, so the recruits were carefully recruited from the rural areas so that they could live with their families in the rural areas near the primary health care facilities. By April 1976 100 ANMs had been graduated and were working in the field. While this project was very tiny compared to the nationwide needs, it was revolutionary and ground breaking in the male dominated culture.

In 1976 the USAID made a grant to the Afghan Family Guidance Association (AFGA) to help expand the delivery of family planning and maternal /child health services to provincial areas. This was a small private organization with links to the International Planned Parenthood Federation in London. This was a small beginning, but was indicative of opening of government thinking we were experiencing under President Dad's leadership, with Minister Khorram in charge of the Ministry of Plan.

PAKISTAN

Mission in Pakistan/India Crisis—1964

WILLIAMS: In the ensuing period, there were increasing tensions between Pakistan and India, tensions which greatly complicated U.S. policy in the region. Pakistan as a member

of CENTO had received substantial military assistance from the United States. India as a non-aligned country had received arms from the Soviet Union. President Kennedy's Administration had shifted aid policy from military security to large-scale economic development assistance for both India and Pakistan. Now, however, the Soviet Union was stepping-up the level of its aid to India in both armaments and industrial plants, and the U.S. was increasingly sympathetic to shaping the aid program to India as a counter to Soviet influence, both in terms of industrial plants and even selective military assistance.

In the view of the Pakistan Government these developments threatened to upset the military balance in the sub-continent. Pakistan sought U.S. aid for advanced armaments and a steel plant to match what the Soviet were providing India; however the Kennedy Administration was not prepared to meet these requests. Underlying the increasing tensions in the sub-continent was the unresolved Kashmir dispute between Pakistan and India.

After my first year with the Mission in Pakistan, I took "rest and recuperation leave" (R&R) in Kashmir, rather than in Hong Kong or Beirut which was normal Mission practice. However, I insisted on combining a splendid family holiday with familiarization of Kashmir and Nepal. We traveled in Kashmir, rented a house boat in Srinigar, did some pony trekking, and gained some impressions of the country.

Q: What was your impression of the issues at that time? What was your sense of the difficulty?

WILLIAMS: Kashmir is a beautiful area with rich potential, in terms of tourism and the craft skills of its people. It has the reputation of the fairest women of the subcontinent. One farmer said to me, "Our land is fertile, we have water, and our women are fair; yet we are poor." Their potential in land and water was underdeveloped. My political assessment of the Kashmiris was that while Moslem, they were not as militant about being part of Pakistan as were Pakistan's ruling groups - for whom the issue was emotionally non-negotiable.

During 1964 tensions increased in West Pakistan over the perceived shifting military balance in favor of India, with spill-over effects on U.S.-Pakistan relations. Under the lead of the new Foreign Minister, Zaffar Bhutto, the Pakistan Government pursued close relations with Communist China in a non-aggression pact which, in the view of President Lyndon Johnson, undermined Pakistan's obligations to the U.S. under CENTO and SEATO.

In this period Minister Bhutto gained influence over President Ayub Khan, and Bhutto promoted a pro-China policy. Bhutto was like a son to Ayub Khan, the son Ayub Khan wished he had fathered, it was said.

While the U.S. Government accepted India's non-alignment in the Cold War, it found the new posture of non-alignment by Pakistan totally unacceptable. President Johnson found particularly irritating Pakistan's criticism of U.S. military engagement in Vietnam.

In early 1965 U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan, Walter McConnaughy, was instructed to convey this message to President Ayub Khan. In order to underline the seriousness with which the U.S. viewed the matter, our Ambassador was further instructed to inform President Ayub that pending satisfactory assurances, the U.S. was suspending its economic assistance to Pakistan and postponing that year's scheduled meeting of the World Bank led-donor consortium for Pakistan.

Ambassador McConnaughy conveyed the content of this instruction from Washington at a hastily called meeting of his country team. As director of the USAID Mission, at that time, it was a shocking proposal and I argued strongly against delivery of the message without first appealing to Washington for reconsideration. Far from achieving the objective of influencing the Government of Pakistan to our way of thinking about China, I argued that such an ultimatum risked having the opposite effect. The successful American aid program constituted important leverage in support of our foreign policy objectives but the best way to use it, I maintained, was by nuanced conditionality and further joint discussion with President Ayub to reach a mutual understanding. I proposed that the Ambassador request reconsideration of the instruction and offer to go to Washington to review how best to proceed.

Deliberation by the Ambassador with his country team advisors was lengthy. In the end he decided to deliver the message as instructed forthwith.

I was deeply disappointed not to make the case for reconsideration; in my view it was politically the wrong thing to do. We were dealing with people of great national pride, and I was sure that applying a blunt instrument which said: "Either you do it our way or we'll suspend aid" was going to adversely affect our ability to influence them. In my view, we in the field had a responsibility to at least point that out.

Walter McConnaughy was an experienced diplomat. As a young foreign service officer, he had served in China with distinction. He had escaped the earlier McCarthy "witch hunt", and there weren't many old "China hands" in the State Department that had done so. Also, the ambassador may have known things that I didn't know. So my advice was overridden.

Q: *This was essentially because of Pakistan's alignment with China.*

WILLIAMS: Yes, Pakistan's military leaders believed that their security was gravely imperiled by the military build-up in India and viewed closer relation with China as an imperative. American policy at that time was to isolate China. Later, we would

find it useful that Pakistan had normalized relations with China. The opening to China by the Nixon administration was with Pakistan's good offices. This was not that time and the China lobby in Washington was deeply offended by Pakistan's closer alignment with China. From the Pakistan perspective it was an attempt to maintain a regional balance with India.

After the Ambassador delivered the message, U.S. relations with the Pakistanis deteriorated sharply, to say the least. And our program of aid cooperation was at a standstill, although we sought to maintain our Pakistani contacts.

Q: *You were not able to continue anything. Everything came to a halt?*

WILLIAMS: Technically, it was only new U.S. aid commitments that were suspended. We did postpone the donor consortium meeting so most other new aid sources were held in abeyance. But, we didn't pull out and we didn't stop assistance activities already underway. However, the USAID Mission found it difficult to continue implementing the aid program in an atmosphere that was increasingly adverse, even hostile.

The Pakistan Government mounted a political campaign against the United States for using economic assistance as a political weapon, and Pakistan increasingly took the posture of a non-aligned country internationally. The press played on sensitive national feelings of offense that we would suspend economic assistance when Pakistan met all of the development criteria in terms of effective use of aid.

There was a real deterioration in the environment in which we were trying to work. Minister Bhutto's influence in the government was increasingly strong; he was a talented politician and apparent leader of an anti-American faction. Our friends in the government were progressively isolated and all their meetings with Americans, on AID business or otherwise, were monitored by specially designated note takers who reported to a security service.

Finance Minister Shoaib was trying to keep things on a moderate keel, but he also lost influence. When I called on Shoaib, which I did regularly, we would have to walk in the garden away from his office to have a private conversation free from wire taps and note takers. His reports to me on the high anti-American orientation of government policy were progressively disturbing.

Illustrative of the surveillance, I recall a phone conversation from my residence in Karachi which was badly interrupted by static. While on the line I said, "I wish you people would be more efficient in tapping this phone. You're doing a bad job and messing up the line." A week later, there was a Pakistani at my gate outside the house who wished to speak to me. He said, "Please, Mr. Williams, don't complain about the way we wiretap your phones. I have a wife and children, and I don't want to lose my

job."

Trying to discuss questions of development policy and aid performance under these circumstances was impossible and effectively the mission program came to a halt. Even keeping contact with our opposite numbers in the government was difficult, anti-American feeling was running high. Finally, I concluded that I needed a break to get away from the continuous frustration in official relations. I decided to take my family for another holiday in Kashmir.

Tensions were high between Pakistan and India, and we had to walk carrying our luggage across a closed border between Lahore and Amritsar. There I found that Air India had canceled flights to Kashmir so we proceeded to Kashmir in a hired taxi. En route northward we moved through convoys of a motorized Indian army division. The Indian troops were helpful, waving us through and even bodily carrying the small Indian taxi over an near impassable rock slide. Later in mountainous Gulmarg, a former British resort, I saw Indian troops take up defensive positions. Srinigar was strangely devoid of tourists and alive with rumors of impending hostilities, and while we were there, Pakistan troops disguised as Kashmiri guerrillas infiltrated to foment an uprising. But the Kashmiris did not respond, there was no uprising.

Q: *But the Pakistani Government assumed that they would?*

WILLIAMS: They assumed they would, but as I had observed in an earlier trip to Kashmir, the Kashmiris were not a militant or warrior people. After my return to Pakistan, the 1965 Indo-Pak war broke out and it was clear that Pakistan had miscalculated. Not only had the infiltration of Kashmir failed, but Indian armed forces were in a full-scale attack on Lahore. The Pakistan miscalculation was due to an earlier border clash in the south when an Indian army division broke in disorderly retreat, leading the Pakistan military to assume a seven to one dominance in fighting valor over Indian troops which was wrong.

Meanwhile, Ambassador McConnoughy asked me to join him in Rawalpindi for calls on senior government officials. President Ayub Kahn and much of his government were in Rawalpindi, although the new capital of Islamabad had not yet been built. The U.S. Embassy, AID Mission and our families were still in Karachi.

During the night the Indian air force attacked Rawalpindi and I woke up thinking "The Germans are at it again." In my subconscious I was back in one of the bombing raids on London during the Second World War. But I soon realized that this was an Indian attack on the near-by radio station in Rawalpindi. Outside my window was a 500 lb. bomb dropped by the Indian air force which had not exploded. With the air war activity, the Ambassador and I were isolated from our respective staffs 700 miles to the south in Karachi. All non-military flights were suspended.

But there was a U.S. communication unit in Rawalpindi and I became the ambassador's chief assistant in efforts to gain a negotiated cease fire. For several days we worked around the clock with "flash" communications to Washington, London, New York, New Delhi. Flash designations meant of high national security concern. Accompanying the Ambassador in the several calls on President Ayub Khan, I observed that the black circles around Ayub's eyes were larger and larger. He wasn't getting much sleep in that tense situation.

Q: *He was in Rawalpindi at the time?*

WILLIAMS: Yes, Rawalpindi was Pakistan's military headquarters.

A cease fire was in Pakistan's interest for although General Yahya Khan had won a major tank battle on the road to Kashmir, Pakistan's defense of Lahore was failing. The difficulty that Ayub Khan perceived in accepting a cease fire was that it would appear traitorous since the Pakistan people had been assured they were winning Kashmir. He expressed fear of a civil uprising.

The military situation forced Ayub Khan finally to accept a cease fire brokered at the U.N. Security Council in New York. An insight into the degree of isolation of President Ayub Khan was the incident of the barber shop. Not having slept for two nights I went to a barber shop for a shave, and there heard President Ayub Khan's radio announcement of the cease fire. There was a group of almost 50 Pakistan civilians gathered around that radio; they heard the announcement quietly and without comment. Fear of an internal uprising didn't seem realistic from the way this group took the news.

Ambassador McConnaughy found my report interesting enough to suggest, "I want you to tell the President what you heard in the barber shop." Getting the Ayub Khan on the phone, Walter McConnaughy said "Mr. President, I want you to speak to Maury Williams. He heard your announcement in the barbershop with an assembled group of Pakistani people. You will find his report quite interesting." I related my report to Ayub Khan who seemed pleased. While we were talking, an operator broke in to say that President Johnson wished to speak to President Ayub Khan. President Johnson's call was to commend Ayub on the cease fire and to assure him of American friendship and support.

I don't think the AID Mission ever fully gained the momentum that it had before the suspension of aid and the 1965 war. We gradually began to piece the program back together, but it wasn't the same.

Q: *Was the program restarted at some point? Was it while you were there?*

WILLIAMS: For both Pakistan and India a year of new development assistance commitments were lost after the war. Support for high levels of aid for Pakistan and

India were considerably more difficult to sustain with the U.S. Congress. Also dedication to development had eroded with the top political leadership in Pakistan. President Ayub was retired in favor of General Yahya Khan, and no longer were we assured that the military budget would be restrained in favor of development. It was tougher going all around.

Q: *So both the move towards China and the infiltration of Kashmir sort of overrode the development priority, upset it, and the support for it.*

WILLIAMS: That is true. I wish Ambassador McConnaughy had appealed the aid suspension and encouraged a reassessment in Washington. Because the suspension played into the hands of the national extremists in Pakistan who convinced themselves and the leadership that they had nothing to lose from the U.S. in a military gamble with India over Kashmir. And Pakistan's opening of relations with China was mostly symbolic in power terms. It was a time for restraint in U.S. relations with Pakistan, as the U.S. found itself competing with Soviet influence in India. Balancing our relations with these two countries was always sensitive.

And crisis in East Pakistan—1970s

Excerpt from an interview with Maurice Williams

WILLIAMS: Another Presidential assignment was to manage relief operations for a disaster in East Pakistan, which evolved in stages, beginning with typhoon destruction in the delta and progressively leading to political insurrection against the central government and military action by the West Pakistan army.

Periodically East Pakistan, now Bangladesh, is afflicted by a great storm with high winds out of the Bay of Bengal which may combine with tidal action to generate a high wave -- sometimes up to 20 feet or more -- that sweeps across the low lying delta. Dense concentrations of very poor people live there on land barely above sea level, and the destruction of these storms is tremendous. Again as the President's representative I toured the area by helicopter to inspect relief operations. Joe Wheeler was the AID Mission Director in Pakistan and we had an experienced field staff in East Pakistan. The emergency relief went well, and the AID Mission began to assist with rehabilitation measures which included measures of future security for people against recurring storms.

The extensive destruction and hardship from the storm, and East Pakistani sense of neglect by the government in the West, aggravated already deeply seated grievances against the central Pakistan government. In response to the charge that no central government leader had visited the province at the time of the great storm, President Yahya Khan claimed that he had viewed the disaster area in an overflight while on the way to visit China - a claim which was treated with derision in East Pakistan.

Later in 1971 an East Pakistan political party, the Awami League, won a national election on a platform of provincial autonomy. Fearing an independent breakaway of East Pakistan, President Yahya dispatched a West Pakistan army of 70,000 troops under General Tikka Khan who waged a brutal war of "collective punishment" against the Awami and its followers, targeting the intellectuals of East Pakistan. A guerrilla insurgency, the Mukti Bahini, fought back in a widening civil conflict.

The reign of terror only served to fuel resistance of a growing force of Mukti Bahini insurgents who, with the support of India, were engaged in cross border raids and occupying parts of East Pakistan. The result was a massive human tragedy with tremendous political reverberations. Tens of thousands of civilians were killed, nine million East Pakistan refugees fled to camps in India and millions more were displaced from their homes within East Pakistan. Physical destruction of facilities, including transport, and economic dislocation was extensive. East Pakistan with 75 million people existing on an average annual income of \$55, most living on the edge of survival, was in imminent danger of mass famine.

A wide donor effect was mounted to assist India in supplying emergency assistance for the millions of refugees in camps set up on the border with East Pakistan, but it was impossible to gain safe passage for food and relief supplies to East Pakistan without a cessation of hostilities. Meanwhile political repercussions were becoming increasingly serious, as China favored Pakistan and Soviet Union supported India. The Nixon administration was encountering increased Congressional and domestic hostility for its apparent "tilt toward Pakistan." President Nixon grand strategy of detente involved reconciliation with China, and Pakistan's friendship with China was an essential bridge.

At several national security staff meetings chaired by Henry Kissinger, I urged U.S. intervention with the Pakistan Government to seek a cease fire. Perhaps for that reason Kissinger asked me to deliver an oral message from President Nixon to President Yahya Khan asking him to declare a cease fire in East Pakistan, to relieve General Tikka Khan from command of the army on the east, to appoint a civilian governor, and to accept a UN mission in Dacca to administer emergency relief.

Secretary of State William Rogers and I called on U.N. Secretary-General U Thant to gain his support for a U.N. humanitarian mission in East Pakistan. U Thant paused, observing that there was no precedent for such a U.N. mission, but there was nothing in the U.N. Charter against it. "Yes, I'll do it", he said. That decision indeed did set a precedent as the first U.N. emergency relief mission.

The message I was to deliver to President Yahya Khan was considered so sensitive that it was not put in writing. I was to deliver it orally. I carried a letter bearing President Nixon's signature which read, "Maury Williams is a friend of Pakistan. He speaks for me."

Arriving in Islamabad, I noted that the local newspaper, Dawn, had an editorial about my arrival, cautioning against foreign interference. I called my good friend, the chief economic minister, M.M. Ahmad, and at tea that afternoon I briefed him on the nature of my message. I asked Minister Ahmad to convey the contents of my message to the President in advance of my meeting with him at 10:00 a.m. the next morning.

The next morning and I met with President Yahya Khan who was in full military uniform, with all decorations, and delivered the letter which said I spoke for the President of the United States. He took the unfolded letter and sailed it across the room, saying "So, you have a letter from your President." And he began to swear a steady blue streak for about twelve minutes. He had been a sergeant-major in the British colonial army and no junior officer could have been more verbally abused. With head bowed, I thought this mission is really blown.

Suddenly there was a pause as Yahya cleared his throat and said gruffly, "We welcome you. We know you are a friend of Pakistan." He had given vent to the frustration of his situation with the Pakistan army totally out of control and running amok in the east, killing thousands of civilians, driving millions of refugees into India, and risking the loss of East Pakistan.

President Yahya Khan then accepted the U.S. proposal to recall General Tikka Khan. He also agreed to appoint a civilian governor and to work for a cease fire. While Yahya Khan didn't think there would be famine in East Pakistan, he accepted that we might be right in our assessment and he agreed to accept the U.N. humanitarian mission. We wanted a laissez passez for food and relief supplies to meet humanitarian needs in East Pakistan, a laissez passez for ships under U.N. flag that both sides could respect as not carrying military equipment. That was part of the rationale for the UN mission.

I then flew on to Dacca in East Pakistan. The destruction was extensive with 90 per cent of all transport - rail, road and water - largely disrupted. There were about 40,000 guerrillas in the field at that point, operating out of sanctuaries on the Indian side. Food supplies were low and badly distributed. I was briefed by the intelligence staff of the Pakistan army and had dinner with General Tikka Khan. He was a pretty cold fish. Collective punishment was his policy, a term he spoke of as you and I might say "good morning." On my departure from Dacca, at the airport I met the special emissary of President Yahya Khan carrying the message to relieve Tikka Khan. We acknowledged each other with a nod in passing.

I returned to Washington and, subsequently, the division of Pakistan with the independence of the new state of Bangladesh became history. The policies we proposed for Pakistan were right, but they were late, too late. The attack of the Indian army posed a critical situation for our foreign policy. Pakistan lost an army and its eastern wing.

Disasters in East Pakistan—1970

Excerpts from an interview with Vince Brown

BROWN: In November 1970 there had been a tremendous flood wiping out much of East Pakistan's rice crop. General Ayub Khan had resigned and turned over leadership to another military leader, General Yahya. Although AID and other donors made significant food donations under their disaster, the situation remained desperate in the East. The USAID through its PL480 food program was the largest single donor.

In 1971, East Pakistan was in ferment. The local political party led by a Bengali leader named Mujib Rahman, began calling for independence. His call had a tremendous response from the impoverished population. Over one million people showed up in downtown Dacca to hear Mujib advocate independence. The West Pakistan government responded by severe military interventions, which further inflamed the population. By September, not only was tension at boiling point between East and West Pakistan, but India leaning heavily in favor of the Bengali's drive for independence.

By the Fall of 1970, we had upped the amounts of PL480 food going into East Pakistan and were going all over the country setting up supply depots to facilitate distribution. All economic assistance to Pakistan had been cut off except for humanitarian aid, as the repressive measures from the Central government (i.e. the West) escalated.

I still remember one of my East Pakistan field trips near Chittagong. I had spent a sleepless night on the floor of a guest house in a small town in the interior as the Pakistan army lobbed grenades over the roof into a local market. As we left the next morning for Chittagong, there were rumors of the Bengali rebels placing mines in the road. Our carryall came rapidly around a turn in the road only to see that there were a number round spots in the road about a foot or two in diameter where the asphalt had been dug up. All conversation stopped as we roared over these spots, expecting to hear an explosion as we ran over a mine at any second. Everyone breathed a sigh of relief at the next corner when we spotted the provincial road repair crew. In Dacca, there was a curfew, but we could hear shooting in the streets every night.

I was fortunate to catch one of the last commercial PIA flights out of Dacca for Islamabad before the military closed the airport. I slept on the airport floor the night before departure to be sure I would be there on time for the early morning flight.

In December 1971, East Pakistan succeeded and called itself Bangladesh. As the violence grew, 10 million East Pakistani's fled to India. India intervened in early December with its army. There were major battles in the Punjab near Lahore. While West Pakistan's airforce held its own against the Indian airforce, the Pak army was no match for the superior Indian forces. In 13 days the West Pakistan army was defeated. While most of the USAID and Embassy staff had been evacuated to Afghanistan, our family remained in Islamabad. We watched the bombing of Islamabad's airport by two

jets fighters from India from the terrace of our home.

After the surrender, on December 20, 1971, General Yahya turned the government over to Zulfikar Bhutto, who had been the leader of the opposition party. Since Bhutto was a leader elected by the people, the government was under civilian leadership, and the obvious domination by the military had receded, our development program for Pakistan was soon reinstated and back on track.