

**United States Foreign Assistance
Oral History Program**

Foreign Affairs Oral History Collection

An Interview with

Walter J. Sherwin

1999

**Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Arlington, Virginia**

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ASSOCIATION FOR DIPLOMATIC STUDIES AND TRAINING ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training, a non-profit, tax-exempt organization, was established in 1986 to enhance the training of foreign affairs personnel and to instill in the public a greater appreciation for our diplomatic history.

The Association's Foreign Affairs Oral History Program was established in 1988 and is housed in the Lauinger Library of Georgetown University and at the Foreign Service Institute in Arlington, VA. The collection is comprised of oral histories taken from a number of projects, with the unifying factor that all concern the conduct of American foreign affairs and experiences of those employed in the field of diplomacy and consular affairs and their families.

The oral history collection includes interviews done under the auspices of the Foreign Service History Center of George Washington University, which was amalgamated into the Foreign Affairs Oral History Program, the Foreign Service Family Project, the Women Ambassadors' Project, the United States Information Agency Alumni Association Project, the Foreign Assistance (AID) Oral History Project, the Senior Officers' Project, the Labor Diplomacy Oral History Project and others.

The aim of the US Foreign Assistance Oral History Program, in particular, is to develop a collection of oral histories of those who have served USAID and predecessor agencies and those who have served in foreign assistance programs of associated organizations such as private firms, private voluntary organizations, and other US government agencies. The Center for Development Information and Evaluation (CDIE) of the USAID has made a grant to help finance the preparation of 120 oral histories.

For the most part these interviews are carried out by retired USAID personnel on a volunteer basis, directed by the Oral History Program. The interviews are unclassified, and unless so marked are available for use by researchers. Most of these interviews have been transcribed and then returned to the person interviewed for editing. The transcript is an edited version, and is not a word for word rendition of the cassette tape. The editing usually consists of correcting of names and dates that have been missed during an interview. The individual interviewed may also choose to expand upon topics that may not have been developed in the time allotted for the interview.

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KEY WORDS
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African Manpower Development Program
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Burkina Faso (Upper Volta)
Congressional presentations
Development Studies Program
Education programs
English language training
Environment programs
Food for Peace - Public Law 480
Gambia
Guinea
Health programs
Korry Report
Liberia
Livestock programs
Logical framework analysis
Madagascar
Mali
Niger
Office of Regional Affairs/Africa Bureau
Philippines
Population/family planning programs
Project design and evaluation
Regional USAID for Africa/Washington
Regional projects
Rural development programs
Sahel Development Program
Senegal
Sierra Leone
Supporting Assistance
Togo

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An interview with
Walter J. Sherwin

Interviewed by W. Haven North
Initial interview date: February 8, 1999

Q: Today is February 8, 1999, and our interview is with Walter J. Sherwin. Walter, why don't you start off by giving us a thumbnail sketch of your career with AID. What was your involvement?

Overview of USAID career

SHERWIN: I began my career in September, 1959. I had taken the Junior Management Intern Examination in New York and passed it. I selected ICA, the International Cooperation Administration, the predecessor of AID, to work in. I was initially assigned to the Office of Personnel. I worked there first as an intern rotating to different offices to get the feel of the place. Then after several months, I was assigned as a placement officer. That was in 1960. In 1961, about the same time as ICA was transformed into the Agency for International Development with the incoming Kennedy administration, I had an opportunity to get into programming in the Africa Bureau. As I had a political science background and was really interested in international affairs, I grabbed at that opportunity and went into the Office of West African Affairs. For the next four years I served on several desks as an assistant desk officer. Initially, I worked on Liberia and Sierra Leone, and then I was switched to francophone countries including Upper Volta and Dahomey, as the countries were then called; today they're called Burkina Faso and Benin. Until 1965 I was in the civil service, but that year I joined the Foreign Service, and I was transferred to Upper Volta as the AID operations officer. This was in the context of the Regional USAID for Africa, which had been established to carry on programs in some of the smaller African countries, including Madagascar. As AID operations officer, I reported to the regional development officer in Washington. I had operational authority locally but was not a full-fledged head of a mission, and I was attached to the embassy. I spent two years in Upper Volta, then was transferred to Madagascar for the same kind of assignment. I was there from September '67 to February '69. By then we were closing down bilateral programs in many of these countries as a result of the Korry report, and we can get into that later. I was transferred to Dakar where Al Hurt was running the Central and West Africa Office for Regional Activities. I served there from February 1969 until July 1970. My responsibilities there were largely related to phasing out bilateral programs in five countries and converting to regional and multi-donor projects. Other members of the staff were entirely focused on the development of regional and multi-donor projects, but I had some connection with that.

I left Dakar in mid-1970, and after home leave I went into the economic and commercial course for six months at the Foreign Service Institute. This is the State Department course that people from AID

and other agencies were also able to attend. Following that, I was supposed to go to Vietnam. I developed back trouble that required an operation, and there was a very slow recovery, so I ended up being transferred to a stateside assignment in the Supporting Assistance Bureau which had been created out of parts of the Asia and Near East Bureaus. The SA Bureau was concerned with assistance to Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, The Philippines, Thailand, countries in the Near East, all politically very important at that time. From 1971 to 1974, I was a regional economist and worked on statistical tables, program assessments, and congressional presentations from an economic standpoint, a different kind of work from what I had been doing, but very interesting. Then a reorganization took place in 1974. This coincided with the retirement of the director, Charles Breecher, and the arrival of Larry Marinelli as office head. The economic sub-office disappeared, and I was converted to a program analyst. That too led to some very interesting work -- on congressional presentations, project reviews, evaluations and so forth. This is where I was first exposed to the logical framework which proved to be very helpful in my subsequent career. In 1976, I left that office for six months training in the Development Studies Program.

After that I went back to Africa as program officer in Niger. I was happy to get back to a position where I had some management responsibility in programming work in a part of the world that I was very familiar with. I was in Niger for two years or so, and then was transferred to Guinea as AID affairs officer. Before leaving Niger, I had the job to prepare a program strategy statement for Guinea. I think you remember those strategy statements, you were the deputy assistant administrator at that time. The strategy was approved and that is what I was asked to implement during my assignment to Guinea from September 1979 to June 1982. At the end of that time, I came back to Washington and was assigned as deputy director of the Office of Regional Affairs. I served there for four-and-a-half years until the end of 1986 when I retired.

Early years and education

Q: Okay. That covers it very nicely. Let's go back again and tell us about where you are from, where you grew up, about your early education, things of that sort.

SHERWIN: Well, I was born in 1931 in Germany. We left Germany in October 1939. We were fortunate to get American visas. We had to leave the country because of Nazi persecution, and moved to Sheboygan, Wisconsin. I lived there from the age of eight until I graduated from college. I went to grade school and high school in Sheboygan, and my first year of college at the University of Wisconsin extension in Sheboygan. Then I went to the Madison campus from 1950-1953. I received my BA in international relations.

Q: Why international relations?

SHERWIN: Well, because of my background, I was extremely interested in international affairs and the struggles with the Nazis and the Communists. I was a news junkie, an international affairs junkie. That is why I gravitated toward that field. Then I had an opportunity in 1953 to get a Fulbright grant to Germany, so I went back to the country of my birth for close to a year.

Q: What were you doing there?

SHERWIN: I studied political science, first at the University of Bonn, then the Free University of Berlin. In those days, Berlin was not a divided city. The Berlin Wall only came up in 1961. One could go back and forth between East and West Berlin. I remember going to East Berlin to see an opera and paid a ridiculously small price to see a fantastic operatic performance. That was a very interesting year and I improved my German which I hadn't learned to an adult level before I came to this country. I met my wife while I was traveling in France between semesters; she was American, living in France at the time. We got married in 1957. I came back to the States in 1954, went back to the University of Wisconsin and worked for several years on a masters degree in political science, though still with a focus on international affairs. I did my thesis on a topic about Germany.

Q: Still nothing about the developing world?

SHERWIN: No. Africa was simply another continent for me in those days. Among the courses I took was one on Southeast Asia, but none on Africa. I received my masters degree in 1958, and during my years in Madison from 1951 until 1958 I also worked at the public radio station as announcer and did some news programs. I told you I was a news junkie. I wrote and voiced a children's news program that was broadcast around the state, called Exploring the News. It was aimed at elementary school listeners and was broadcast weekly.

Q: You were pretty well-known in the area?

SHERWIN: I suppose. Then I went to the army. I had been in ROTC, and I went on active duty for six months. Following that, I found work at Scholastic Magazines in New York and wrote foreign affairs articles for about a year and a half, 1958-59. However, I decided I wasn't really cut out for that kind of career. I was interested in getting into government, and took first the federal service entrance examination and then the junior management intern exam, and that led me into AID.

Q: That road is one that many people seem to have taken to get into government and into AID. What was the exam like?

SHERWIN: As I recall, it was a general knowledge exam with an emphasis on history and government. I believe there were also questions on problems that might face a government official, and you had to choose the best solution. I think all the questions were multiple choice.

Q: Was there both a written and an oral part?

SHERWIN: No, the management intern exam was strictly written.

Q: I see. You didn't have an oral interview or questions.

SHERWIN: Not that I recall, no. I think that occurred after one had selected an agency.

Q: How did you happen to get into AID in that process?

SHERWIN: It was ICA then. Well, I made several choices, but that was my first choice because I was interested in international affairs. ICA was the closest thing.

Q: How did you hear about it? How did you know that ICA existed?

SHERWIN: I knew there was a foreign assistance program. I think I knew about that as much as did about any other government agency at the time.

Joined ICA as a management intern in the Personnel Office - 1959

Q: So you joined ICA in '59. What was your first assignment?

SHERWIN: My first assignment was in personnel. I was an intern for four or five months, and rotated among several different offices within the Office of Personnel.

Q: Did they think you were going to become a personnel officer, is that it?

SHERWIN: Yes, I think they did, and that was certainly my intention then. I even took a course at George Washington University on personnel administration.

Q: How did you find the agency at that time? What was your impression of the organization and what it was about?

SHERWIN: Well, it was my first exposure to government work and the bureaucratic process, so it was all very new to me and quite fascinating. After my rotations I became a placement officer.

Q: What was a placement officer?

SHERWIN: I was responsible for placing certain categories of technicians, agricultural technicians, taking care of their transfers between posts.

Q: There were a fairly large number of agricultural technicians at the time right?

SHERWIN: Right. I had to deal with a good number of technicians. What was so striking at that time, as compared to today, was that AID actually had its own technicians in the field. Whereas now, I think that began in the '70s, technical work overseas is done by AID contractors.

Q: Any particular issues you had to deal with when you were assigning people? It's a tricky business, isn't it?

SHERWIN: I think the main issue was matching the needs of a particular post with the abilities, needs and interests of individual technicians. Our job was to make sure that the right person was sent to the

right place at the right time. That could be tricky, especially if the match was less than perfect, as it often was. In that case, you had to try to persuade either the post, the technician, or maybe both, to accept second-best. And then you might also have to mediate between posts, where, say, one post wanted to extend a technician's tour while the other one couldn't wait for his transfer. Now, the key player in all this was the personnel assignment board — that's where assignments were ultimately decided. The placement officer's job was to facilitate the process.

Q: You weren't there very long were you?

SHERWIN: No, I did that work for approximately a year.

Q: Then what happened?

Transferred to the Africa Bureau and West Africa programs - 1961

SHERWIN: Then I was informed about an opening by Richard Thornell. Do you remember Richard? He is now a professor at Howard. He was with AID at that time. Later, he went to the Peace Corps. He informed me of an opportunity in the Office of West African Affairs as assistant to the desk officer on the Liberia-Sierra Leone desk.

Q: Did you give up on personnel?

SHERWIN: Yes. I guess I was not really excited about personnel work given my background, so it turned out to be an entry into the agency. I didn't know that I would end up in program work, but when the opportunity presented itself, I took it.

Q: What period was this?

SHERWIN: 1961 to 1965.

Q: Just when AID was formed.

SHERWIN: That's right. AID had just been formed.

Q: What was your impression of the new agency that had just been created, your understanding of what was happening and why it was happening?

SHERWIN: Generally, that was an exciting time with the new Kennedy administration. Although I wasn't involved in it, the Alliance for Progress was devised for Latin America, and there was a big push to become involved in Africa. Now, I don't know if that push was as intensive under the late Eisenhower administration or not. The Cold War was of course in full swing. We needed every vote at the UN that we could get. All the small countries in Africa were important from that standpoint. Sierra Leone had just become independent. Liberia had been independent since its founding in 1847; it was sort of America's special charge.

Q: You were responsible as the desk officer for those two countries?

SHERWIN: Well, I had assistant desk officer responsibilities, so I would work on congressional presentations, on providing logistical support, following up on commodity orders, documents, transfer of personnel, anything that the desk could do to facilitate the work of the mission. We were an intermediary between the post and the various offices in AID, so we were basically a liaison office and also had responsibility for congressional presentations.

Q: Was there much of a program in Sierra Leone at that time?

SHERWIN: We had a small program. I don't have a detailed recollection of that program, but we did support Fourah Bay College, which was an institution dating back to the 19th century.

Q: What were we doing with the program?

SHERWIN: To the best of my recollection, we provided training and material support such as books to the college. There may also have been a small agricultural project.

Q: What about Liberia? What was your understanding of what we were doing in Liberia?

SHERWIN: Well, Liberia was created in 1847 by ex-slaves from the United States, and we felt a special responsibility for its welfare. Also it was important to us as a base in World War II and for Voice of America relay during the Cold War. So we had close ties to the government and carried out a variety of projects in education, agriculture and other fields. One project that was politically very important was the construction of a hospital.

Q: JFK Hospital.

SHERWIN: Yes. The project was complicated and took a long time to get off the ground. I don't recall anymore what the specific problems were. In any case, it was a lot of money invested in bricks and mortar, equipment, etc. Other health projects I became involved in later in my career were much better focused on training and basic health services like vaccination for the benefit of the broader population.

Q: How long were you in that position?

SHERWIN: I was on that desk for a year-and-a-half.

Q: So it was very much a learning situation.

SHERWIN: Yes. It was my first exposure to programming. Then I was transferred to one of the francophone desks concerned with Upper Volta, Niger, and Dahomey.

Q: Did you have bilateral programs then?

SHERWIN: There were bilateral programs. One of the first things done under the programs was to make major commodity drops, as we called them. This occurred before I came on the desk. As you recall, heavy equipment was furnished, literally dumped on the countries as a means of quick entry for the US.

Q: They had just become independent, I guess.

SHERWIN: Yes. We were in a tug-of-war with the Soviets for influence, so we were trying to do something in a hurry. I had to deal with the consequences later when I was transferred to Upper Volta and Madagascar, and we'll talk about that. I think commodity drops were carried out in Senegal, Mali, Upper Volta, Niger, Dahomey, Togo, Madagascar, nearly all the francophone countries, I think.

Q: They were just beginning to be independent countries.

SHERWIN: Right. My work on the desk involved mainly backstopping programs in agriculture, water resources, training, and development of cooperatives. We worked closely with technical backstop offices in Washington.

Q: Did we have missions there at that time?

SHERWIN: Yes, we had directors there. Bill Gelabert was stationed in Upper Volta, John Craig in Dahomey, and Al Baron in Niger. The work I did was basically the same kind I had done on Liberia and Sierra Leone. There was an immense amount of work and too few hours in a week to accomplish it.

Q: This now related to what? Starting up new programs?

SHERWIN: Well, everything that related to my particular responsibilities; we were shorthanded and had to follow up on a great many individual actions in support of the missions, congressional presentations, briefings, etc. Lots of work for what had become fairly low-priority programs.

Q: The amounts of money were not large.

SHERWIN: Right, the amounts of money were relatively small, and they got smaller. By 1964 it was decided to eliminate full mission status for the posts.

Q: Why would we eliminate them? Was that the Congress?

SHERWIN: Yes, and in their place the Regional USAID for Africa office was created, and lower-level officials were placed in the field.

Q: Why was that?

SHERWIN: I think there was simply a shortage of resources and perhaps some reassessment of what

could be accomplished in those countries. Other countries were considered higher priority.

Q: You were there when the so-called RUA...

SHERWIN: Yes, RUA, the Regional USAID for Africa was formed.

Q: That was done in what year?

SHERWIN: It was formed in 1964.

Q: And its function was...

SHERWIN: To consolidate the programming and management of the programs in most of the francophone countries.

Q: There was a USAID mission in Washington?

SHERWIN: Yes, RUA headquarters was in Washington. The missions in Africa were converted to attaché offices within the embassies, and each of them was now staffed with an AID operations officer. The AOO reported to two bosses: the ambassador and an area operations officer working out of Washington. Each area operations officer covered several countries and made frequent visits to the field. Most of them had been mission directors in the same countries, so they knew the programs very well.

Q: That was an unusual arrangement, I would think.

**Joined USAID Foreign Service and assigned to
Upper Volta (Burkina Faso) - 1965**

SHERWIN: It was a very unusual arrangement. As I said, I went into the Foreign Service in July of 1965 and was transferred to Upper Volta as AID operations officer. My boss was Bill Gelabert, the former mission director in Upper Volta who had become the area operations officer, based in Washington. He was responsible for several countries. Later he transferred to some other post, and Harry Petrequin took over. Harry had been director in Madagascar.

Q: So in this year you left Washington, you joined the Foreign Service, you made a transfer. That was possible at that time?

SHERWIN: Yes. In the late '50s and early '60s, things were a lot more open for movement and advancement than was the case later.

Q: Why did you go to Upper Volta?

SHERWIN: I had visited Upper Volta, Niger and Dahomey while serving on the desk in Washington.

I made several field trips to those countries. The first opening occurred in Upper Volta, so that is why I was transferred there.

Q: What did you find in Upper Volta? What kind of development situation were you faced with?

SHERWIN: It was a desperately poor country struggling to consolidate its independence and make its way in the world. As in the other francophone countries, we had a rather small program. One project involved a ranch we were trying to carve out in the near-desert area in northeastern Upper Volta at Markoy to raise cattle and restore some of the ground cover in a fenced-in area.

Q: Was that working?

SHERWIN: I don't think that project worked out. I was transferred after two years and I really don't know what transpired with that project. We did have a livestock specialist and an agronomist up there and built some facilities. We collected some cattle and raised them on the ranch.

Q: What kind of project was it? Was it a demonstration project?

SHERWIN: It was a demonstration project.

Q: So artificial. It was not a commercial investment kind of thing.

SHERWIN: No. It was an attempt to demonstrate how to make cattle-raising more feasible and sustainable in a very dry and fragile area where the savanna meets the desert. Other donors, the French, the European Economic Community, were groping for solutions too, to protect the grasses, find water, vaccinate the cattle, improve breeds, provide training to nomadic herdsman. I don't think that any of those efforts had much success in the long run. Too many cattle, repeated droughts, conflict with farmers pushing northward — it was very difficult to strike the right balance.

Q: What other projects were you working on?

SHERWIN: There was a health education project, a well-drilling project, and a telecommunications project where we put up telephone poles and laid wire over long stretches, all the way to Niger, as I recall. I devoted a good deal of time to negotiating and overseeing the logistics of a food relief program that was mounted in the wake of a severe drought in 1966 — the first of ever lengthier droughts that would hit West Africa in the late '60s and '70s. We provided 15,000 tons of grain at a cost of \$2.5 million — a tidy sum in those days that far exceeded our budget for regular development activities.

Another project that took a lot of my time was the Heavy Equipment and Vehicle Maintenance project. Similar projects were mounted in the other countries where we had dropped heavy equipment in '61 or '62, because we discovered that the capacity was not there to keep the equipment running. Repair crews were not well trained, stocks of spare parts ran out, and equipment was deadlined. So, it was decided to send maintenance specialists to train the crews, provide spare parts for repair of deadlined

equipment, and improve management and budget systems. But before we would sign on to the agreement to carry out the project in Upper Volta, I insisted that the various ministries consolidate their motor pools into one. It would have been impossible to work with five or six separate shops. The consolidation was resisted, but was finally accepted, and we did create a unified, government-wide motor pool. We then brought in a team of specialists and got the project underway.

Q: This was heavy equipment.

SHERWIN: Well, it was basically heavy equipment, but I think smaller vehicles were involved as well. Some of the equipment was so far gone that it was “cannibalized” for good parts that could be used to make other less damaged or less inoperable vehicles usable. Of course, we procured a lot of new parts as well. This project, I think, got off to a reasonably good start, and it continued after I left Upper Volta, but I don't know what the final result was.

Q: Do you recall a Regional Heavy Equipment Training Center? Was that a spinoff of this?

SHERWIN: That's right, yes. It was based in Lomé, Togo and we sent people there for training. Other AID posts that had similar projects also sent trainees to the center.

Q: Other projects?

SHERWIN: Yes, the smallpox eradication and measles control program was up to full scale in 1966, I think. A pilot measles vaccination campaign had been carried out a couple of years earlier, and a full-scale program was established throughout the region, with CDC providing the technicians. I did some of the negotiating with the regional health organization that was based in Bobo Dioulasso, Upper Volta, called the OCCGE, a French acronym for a regional health organization to fight endemic diseases. The OCCGE served as a sponsor and regional coordinating mechanism. Ultimately, the project resulted in better control of measles and the elimination of smallpox. WHO did a great deal of work on smallpox on a worldwide basis that was well-publicized, but I feel that the US never got full credit for what it accomplished in a good part of Africa.

Q: It was AID people working in Upper Volta with this.

SHERWIN: Well, they were from CDC, medical people, who worked through AID under what was called a participating agency service agreement, or PASA, the equivalent of a contract.

Q: Well, are there any other projects that come to mind that you felt you had a role in?

SHERWIN: Oh yes, we had an English language training program. It brought people in for English language training from all over West Africa.

Q: It wasn't just for Upper Volta?

SHERWIN: No, it was a regional center based in Ouagadougou, and English Language Services was

the firm that ran the program. I don't know if they are still in existence. I also carried out a small program under which date palms were imported by air from Niger to Upper Volta. A technician by the name of Lewandowski shepherded that project. He oversaw the planting of the palms near Dori, a town south of Markoy in northeastern Upper Volta.

Q: Were the palms assigned to farmers or some sort of a plantation or what?

SHERWIN: As I recall, the date palms were not assigned to individual farmers or to a state farm, but the local authorities and the government ministry concerned were responsible for maintaining them.

Q: How did you find working with the French?

SHERWIN: I found working with them really very good. I guess there was resistance at the upper levels of the French Ministry of Cooperation. But working relations were fine with the people at OCCGE and with the head of the French mobile medical teams in the country. In Ouagadougou, we worked very closely with them.

Q: In the livestock area and English language training and things like this?

SHERWIN: There I think we had less contact with the French, but we worked closely with them in the health area.

Q: You say you were involved with this regional office in Washington. How did you find that worked?

SHERWIN: It really worked pretty well. Of course, we didn't have E-mail or very fast communications in those days, but by the standards of those days we maintained pretty good communications through the use of cables and airgrams, which were written papers transmitted by air pouch, and there were frequent visits from Washington by the area operations officer, first Bill Gelabert and later Harry Petrequin.

Q: Did you have authority to approve anything?

SHERWIN: I had to keep Washington informed of anything I was doing of policy significance, but they gave me quite a bit of leeway in the case of the heavy equipment maintenance project. I did the negotiating, kept Washington informed, and didn't have to wait for Washington to take the lead.

Q: You were operating a small mission although you had to go to Washington for approval for most everything?

SHERWIN: Yes.

Q: Did they allow you to get involved with the development strategy?

SHERWIN: We had to submit our annual program and budget. Whatever long-term strategizing was done took place in Washington. I believe the strategies worked out in those days were much less detailed and analytical than the programming systems installed by AID ten or 20 years later.

Q: Did you have any staff?

SHERWIN: I had a secretary and not enough assistants in the office. I had to work 60 hours a week and 6-7 days per week. There was an unbelievable amount of paperwork and numerous big and little things to keep track of. We never had enough staff, and there was too little time for field trips to see what was actually happening on projects outside of the capital. But we had a good batch of technicians on the various projects. I was very pleased with those.

Q: You were there from what years?

SHERWIN: I was there from '65 to '67.

Q: Then what happened?

Transfer to Madagascar - 1967

SHERWIN: I was transferred to Madagascar.

Q: That was quite a leap.

SHERWIN: Yes.

Q: That was still part of RUA at that time.

SHERWIN: Yes. I guess the transfer was kind of a reward for having served in Upper Volta. I enjoyed it a great deal, but it was a very difficult post. From a personal standpoint, not much was available there.

Q: How did Madagascar get to be included with all of the Sahelian countries?

SHERWIN: It was an ex-French colony, had gained its independence in 1960 at the same time as most of the other French colonies in Africa, and had a small AID program by the time I arrived there. As in the other RUA countries, the program had been reduced in size during the mid-1960s.

Q: What was the situation in Madagascar?

SHERWIN: The AID program had begun in the early 60s much as the Sahelian programs had, with a heavy equipment drop. But, as with the other RUA countries, the program had been reduced in size by the time I arrived in 1967. One of the projects that was phasing out -- and this was true in Upper Volta as well -- was public safety assistance.

Q: What was their job?

SHERWIN: Their job was to work with the local governments, the local police to try to improve their management capacity and their ability to maintain security for the state.

Q: Did you have any problem with having a project like that?

SHERWIN: I didn't have a personal problem with it. I wasn't aware of any real abuses at the time. I should mention that in Upper Volta we went through a coup d'état in early 1966. On January first, as a matter of fact, Maurice Yameogo, the first president of Upper Volta, was overthrown, and the army under General Lamizana took over. It was a bloodless coup. But it didn't change our program very much, though of course we had to deal with new people in the government.

Q: It was a peaceful coup?

SHERWIN: As coups go, it was pretty peaceful, very different from what transpired years later in Upper Volta and other countries. Anyway, back to Madagascar.

Q: What was the situation in Madagascar when you were there?

SHERWIN: It was still under the first independence government, a conservative government run by Filibert Tsiranana, who was very pro-French. The French were very much in control. They were the lead donor, first among equals as far as the international community was concerned. The same was true in every other ex-French colony except Guinea. Our program was quite small in comparison. I guess Madagascar for me and my family was the most colorful and interesting place to live that we had ever been and probably the least interesting program I ever had to deal with.

Q: Why was that?

SHERWIN: Well, the AID program was on the decline and nothing new could be launched. But Madagascar is a unique country. It considers itself part of Africa, yet is very different. The people are a mixture of Indonesian stock as well as some African and Arabic influence. They have been there for some 2000 years, and they have a very different culture from the people on the continent. We lived on a hill overlooking much of Antananarivo. We marveled at the sunsets. On any trips that we would take in the country, we found beautiful scenery, but the landscape was severely eroded because of population pressures and poor land management practices. That situation has only gotten worse over time. When we were there in '67-'69, the population was around six million. Now, 30 years later, the population is thirteen million or more, which I think is too much for the limited resource base to accommodate.

Q: But you weren't dealing with population programs then?

SHERWIN: No, we weren't, but today I believe AID has a very active family planning program in Madagascar, and it's also involved in a major way with natural resource management. In my day,

there was a well drilling project and a heavy equipment maintenance project similar to the one in Upper Volta. We also had two loan programs, one for a railroad bridge, the other for telecommunications. I had to overcome some procedural hurdles to push these loans to the construction stage. In Madagascar, my overall assignment was to begin the closeout of the bilateral program. This became a major effort for me. It was based on the Korry Report.

Q: OK, what was your understanding of that? What year was this?

SHERWIN: I believe it was in '66 or early '67. Korry was our ambassador to Ethiopia. He wrote a report the upshot of which was that AID should limit bilateral assistance to 40 countries.

Q: Worldwide.

SHERWIN: Worldwide. And stop bilateral assistance to countries that the agency decided were not among the 40. RUA countries, of course, were placed outside the 40. So, our job was to make sure that governments understood the new policy. We did this by drafting amendments to project agreements specifying that projects would be phased out. I had begun to do the same thing in Upper Volta shortly before I left. The governments were pretty unhappy about the impending liquidation of bilateral assistance.

Q: Were these projects ready to be phased out?

SHERWIN: Yes, they had been going for some time and I think were due for phase-out in any case over the next few years. The only new activities we could start were regional or multi-donor projects, and I helped develop a \$2-3 million multi-donor livestock project that gained support from the Madagascar government and the French as well as AID. I don't know if it was finally approved and implemented, though.

Q: What happened to RUA?

SHERWIN: RUA was abolished, and I guess it was in late '68 that a new organizational form was created based in Dakar, CWAORA, Central West Africa Office for Regional Activities.

Q: So we could have some projects.

SHERWIN: Yes. There was a similar organization in Central Africa, wasn't there?

Q: Cameroon.

SHERWIN: Right. CWAORA had to oversee the close-down of bilateral programs and convert to the new style of programming for the countries that were no longer eligible for bilateral assistance. The new style consisted of regional programs run through or in connection with some regional organization, and multi-donor projects. This, I don't believe, was a terribly successful form of development assistance.

Q: What kinds of projects are we talking about?

SHERWIN: I believe projects were developed in many of the fields where AID normally provided assistance. However, my recollection of this is scant, because my basic responsibility in Dakar, where I was transferred in 1969, was to work on what was left of the bilateral programs in Senegal, Mali, Guinea, Sierra Leone, and The Gambia. In fact, I didn't work on any multi-donor projects. I did help mount one regional project -- a poultry raising effort that involved Guinea, Mali, and Senegal.

Q: How do you make a project like that regional?

SHERWIN: Well, it's not easy. You use a vehicle like the Organization of Senegal River States as regional sponsor. Its French acronym was OERS. The chicks were raised in Mali and at a certain age they were to be sent to farms, poultry raising centers, in Guinea and Senegal.

Q: That made it regional?

SHERWIN: Yes, and the OERS signing on to the project made it legitimate for AID to be involved. The foundation for the project was a bilateral poultry raising project that had already begun in Mali.

Q: What was your view of this kind of a project?

SHERWIN: I didn't see the outcome of it. I was there at the early stages, but I think it was awkward because we were dealing with three different countries, each with different interests and capabilities. We had the difficulty of coordinating project activities, raising chicks in one country and sending them by air for further raising and processing in another country. It was difficult enough in those days just to run a bilateral project, never mind a complex regional one. I would be very surprised if the record shows that this was a success.

Q: But this was an attempt to maintain programs in these countries under the Korry Report policy where we didn't have bilateral programs.

SHERWIN: That's right. I might mention as an aside that one man lost his life because of this project. He was a Guinean named Oumar Balde who was an official in the OERS in Senegal. He was our contact point, and we became very friendly with him. He had escaped Guinea for political reasons some years earlier. He was on Sekou Touré's enemies list, but Guinea was an OERS member and part of this project, and Balde decided to go back to Guinea to undertake negotiations for this project under assurance that he would be well-received as an OERS representative. Well, the minute he landed in Guinea he was apprehended and promptly hanged. That was a shock.

Q: By Sekou Touré?

SHERWIN: Yes, the president, the dictator of Guinea. Not a nice man.

Q: So when did you go to Senegal?

SHERWIN: I went to Senegal in February, 1969, and stayed there until June of 1970.

Assignment in Senegal - 1969

Q: By this time RUA had disappeared.

SHERWIN: RUA had disappeared and in its place we had the new regional offices in West and Central Africa.

Q: The one that you were involved with covered what countries?

SHERWIN: I'm not sure I remember all the countries, but I think they included Mauritania, Senegal, Guinea, Sierra Leone, The Gambia, Mali, Upper Volta, Niger, Togo, and Benin. Sierra Leone and The Gambia were ex-British colonies; all the rest were part of former French West Africa. The other office in the Cameroon covered the Central African countries.

Q: What was your sense of the changing US policy toward these countries during this period? It must have been kind of a revolution in policy interest in that area in respect to what were we trying to do, what our focus was, the US interest.

SHERWIN: I guess our purpose, within the limited resources that Congress made available to us, was to hang on and maintain some influence and some developmental contact with these countries. It is really no way to run a development program, but AID had no choice but to go the regional and multi-donor route if it wanted to stay active in these countries.

Q: Why is it no way to run a development program?

SHERWIN: To constantly change the organization and mode of programming does not make for sound programs in developing countries. There are times when a regional or multi-donor approach is legitimate and feasible, but to rule out bilateral projects entirely adds greatly to the complexity of project design and implementation. Now, I was in Senegal just as the droughts were getting more serious.

Q: This would be 1969?

SHERWIN: Yes. As I mentioned, I had been involved in running a drought relief program in '66 in Upper Volta. However, the droughts were intermittent, and the term Sahel was only a geographer's term then, not in common usage at all. It was only in the early '70s that people in the US became conscious of the Sahel because of the length and severity of the drought in that region. And that's what caused the programming tide to turn once again. In the '70s we restored bilateral programs to these countries, basically because of the drought. And it's a good thing we had remained active in these countries through the regional and multi-donor years, however awkward it was, because this enabled us to move more quickly back into the bilateral mode when the drought made this necessary.

Q: What was your understanding of why the drought?

SHERWIN: I think in large part it was cyclical, but it was exacerbated by population pressures on the edge of the desert. Farmers from the more heavily vegetated southern regions of the Sahel were pressing northward into drier areas where livestock herding was predominant. This pushed herders further north, accelerating the process of desertification. The desert was creeping southward.

Q: How did it affect your career in what you were doing in Senegal? Were you part of a mission there?

SHERWIN: I was part of CWAORA and also worked closely with the embassy, but drought relief was not within my bailiwick in '69-'70. If AID was furnishing any drought relief at the time, the Food for Peace officer in CWAORA was responsible for it. But this was still before people realized that the region was in for a long-term drought.

Q: What were you working on?

SHERWIN: I worked on phasing out various bilateral projects. One was an agricultural project being carried out in the Casamance project in southern Senegal south of The Gambia.

Q: You were phasing that out?

SHERWIN: The project may still have had several years to go, and it wasn't going to be ended prematurely. But once terminated, any follow-up project would have had to be regional or multi-donor rather than bilateral.

Q: What was your understanding of that project? What was it supposed to be doing?

SHERWIN: It was a farmer training project basically. I don't recall the details of it. Then, there was a lot of cleanup work that had to be done in terms of reconciling local currency accounts from previous PL 480 Food for Peace shipments of grain, including drought relief. Both Title I loans and Title II grants were involved. The host government was responsible for depositing the proceeds from the sale of PL 480 commodities into counterpart accounts. That local currency was then to be jointly programmed for use in agreed projects. There was a lot of money that hadn't been deposited into the counterpart accounts and from there into the project accounts, and I had to dig into these matters in Senegal and Mali.

Q: Did you find it?

SHERWIN: Yes, we found it, and Al Hurt, the director, in his evaluation report of me gave me credit for renegotiating local currency loans. He said there was evidence of large ultimate savings to the United States.

Q: What did your negotiations produce?

SHERWIN: We saw to it that the proceeds from food sales were in fact deposited into the counterpart accounts and then applied as previously agreed to various projects. In a number of cases, the uses of the funds, both counterpart and AID dollars, had to be renegotiated to better reflect current project needs.

Q: What were they being used for?

SHERWIN: To help pay the local costs of the bilateral projects. AID contributed dollars to cover offshore expenses. Any money that the host government contributed to a project from a counterpart account was considered equal to any of its own budgetary funds that it put up.

Q: So you were programming in effect the government's contribution to the projects?

SHERWIN: Yes, at least partly.

Q: Did you run into any resistance to the use of these funds or this kind of arrangement?

SHERWIN: Well, once I dug into the accounts and presented the hard numbers to the governments as diplomatically as possible, they were really quite cooperative. After all, we weren't taking the money back, we were just finding it and making sure it was deposited and programmed.

Q: Well, are there some other activities that you were primarily concerned with when you were in Senegal?

SHERWIN: Yes. There was construction of secondary and vocational schools, well-drilling, road construction, rice and poultry production, housing loans, a cattle vaccine laboratory in Mali, and probably some other projects that I don't recall now 30 years later. Many of the projects involved the use of counterpart along with US dollars. Most of the activity was in Senegal, but I also made field trips to The Gambia, Guinea and Mali -- quite a few trips to Mali, in fact.

Q: Generally, you were in phase-out mode.

SHERWIN: Yes. Thinking about Mali, it is amazing, considering the largeness of the program that was reestablished there in the '70s, the degree to which we deprogrammed in the '60s. I mean, there was hardly anybody left at the mission when I was working on the phase-out in '69 and '70.

Q: This was out of the Korry Report or from something else?

SHERWIN: It was basically the Korry Report that dictated the phase-out.

Q: And you were trying to find some regional basis for carrying on.

SHERWIN: Yes. The Dakar office that Al Hurt ran had a good number of technicians whose sole job was to develop regional and multi donor projects.

Q: Is there one that stands out in your mind?

SHERWIN: Mainly the regional poultry project we talked about that I had some involvement with. I was so tied up with the nitty gritty of bilateral programs that I'm afraid I never got a good feel for the other regional and multi-donor projects that the staff was working on.

Q: How long were you in Senegal?

SHERWIN: Until July 1970. I was there about 17 months.

Q: Were you long periods in any of these posts?

SHERWIN: No, two years in Upper Volta, 17 months in Madagascar and 17 months in Senegal.

Q: You were phasing down or phasing out programs?

SHERWIN: In Upper Volta, 1965-67, we were still starting up a few projects and just beginning a phase-down of the program. By the time I got to Senegal, we were clearly phasing down and out.

Q: That is not so exciting is it?

SHERWIN: No! But each of the countries I was stationed in stands out in my mind as a unique situation and a unique place. I wouldn't trade those experiences for anything. We spent a total of ten years in Africa.

Q: What stood out as being unique in your situation?

SHERWIN: Just the people, the culture, the art. I recall a spectacular dance program and an African version of Macbeth that we saw in Dakar. Yesterday my wife and I went to a Nigerian play at the Kennedy Center, and we felt completely at home.

Q: Which place did you prefer?

SHERWIN: I think just from a country living standpoint, Madagascar was the most pleasant. Dakar was a close second. I think the city has deteriorated since then, with a great deal of crime and overcrowding, but it was a very nice city when we were there. It sits on a promontory on the west coast of Africa, and there is a wonderful wind for most of the year that makes the climate very pleasant. Upper Volta was a difficult place. But, again it was fascinating; it was our first post. We enjoyed our contacts with the people.

Q: How did you find working with local government people?

SHERWIN: Really quite pleasant. I think if you were serious about your work and knew what you were doing, they respected that, and they were good people to deal with. It was often frustrating

following up to get governments to meet their commitments. They were so short-funded and short-staffed. Travel conditions were difficult -- washboard roads in Upper Volta, deep potholes in Madagascar, but it was pleasant to deal with the people. In Madagascar, we had close relations with the people. We would go to their homes, they would come to ours. That was not the case in Upper Volta and Senegal.

Q: So you finished up in Senegal, then what happened? Where did you go?

**Attended the economic course at the Foreign Service Institute and
served as economist and program analyst in the
Supporting Assistance Bureau - 1970-1971**

SHERWIN: I went into the economic and commercial course at the Foreign Service Institute from July 1970 to January 1971.

Q: Was it a good course?

SHERWIN: It was a very good course, run by the State Department. Several other AID people were there as well. Marshall Brown sat next to me, and there were a few people from CIA and other agencies, but for the most part the students were State Department personnel.

Q: Was this just plain economics or was it something especially relevant to foreign interests?

SHERWIN: It was both straight economics and a commercial course, specially geared to the needs of an embassy economic officer.

Q: Not much on development I suppose?

SHERWIN: Less on development. I don't recall any emphasis on that.

Q: Did you find it useful?

SHERWIN: Yes, it was very useful. I didn't find it easy. Math doesn't come easily to me.

Q: There is nothing unique in that. It was econometrics then.

SHERWIN: Yes, in part, but the course gave me a good foundation for the work that I was going to get into.

Q: So after those six months you were assigned to what?

SHERWIN: Well, as I mentioned earlier, I was scheduled to go to Vietnam, but I had a slipped disc operated on, and the recovery was rather slow, so I was given an assignment in Washington. I was made regional economist, really an assistant economist in the Office of Development Planning of the Supporting Assistance Bureau. Charles Breecher was the director. My immediate boss was Harold Shafron.

Q: What does a regional economist do?

SHERWIN: I did various statistical compilations. I worked on country economic trend studies, on economic reviews of several AID programs, and on congressional presentations.

Q: Anything stand out as particularly significant that you worked on at that time, or was it pretty much straight routine work?

SHERWIN: Well, one unusual assignment was monitoring two foreign exchange support funds for Laos and Cambodia. AID provided these funds to help maintain the economies of our then allies in the Vietnam War. I had to keep track of drawdowns and help make projections for future requirements on a month-to-month basis. Overall, my assignment as a regional economist was a learning experience for me. I can't say I produced any major work that stands out. I think I did competent work and got good reviews.

Q: How long did you do that kind of work?

SHERWIN: Until November of '74, when there was a reorganization of the office. The economic section was eliminated and I was made program analyst.

Q: You were shifted to the Supporting Assistance Bureau.

SHERWIN: That was in 1971, yes.

Q: What was the Supporting Assistance Bureau at that time?

SHERWIN: It was created mainly as a response to the Vietnam War. Supporting Assistance was basically political assistance.

Q: Used for what?

SHERWIN: To strengthen countries in East Asia, Southeast Asia, and the Near East where we had programs of great political importance to the administration.

Q: Why did they create a bureau for that, do you think?

SHERWIN: Because they needed a vehicle where they could clearly bypass development criteria and provide straight-out cash assistance to prop up our allies, as, for example, with the foreign exchange import funds created for Laos and Cambodia. Nevertheless, I think the agency managed to apply development criteria to some extent. For example, in the Philippines and Thailand, even though a large amount of assistance was supplied under the Supporting Assistance rubric, development criteria were applied wherever possible. I think that was true in the case of a rural electrification project in the Philippines, for example.

Q: I see, and what was your function as a program analyst?

SHERWIN: My function was to be a coordinator in the review of project documents, project papers.

Q: You were in the program office?

SHERWIN: I was in the program office working for Bill Lefes. I worked on project documents, congressional presentations and briefing papers. I was also a bureau population program analyst and a narcotics liaison control officer, so I had a whole variety of responsibilities. My main work was in connection with congressional presentations and review of project documents.

Q: How did you find the congressional presentation process?

SHERWIN: Difficult, hectic, these were always difficult programs to defend on the Hill. One committee, chaired by Mr. Paxman, would ask a great many questions. We were responsible for getting the answers to them and making sure that our presentations covered all issues raised. My job was to work with the various country desks pulling together the CP, the congressional presentation.

Q: Were there any particular subjects or issues you had in mind while doing this or was it fairly routine while being difficult?

SHERWIN: The CP process was routine and time-consuming. I think the most interesting part of my assignment was getting immersed in the project design process. I was introduced to the logical framework.

Q: Explain what that is.

SHERWIN: OK. The logical framework is a matrix that came into use in the '70s. It's an analytical tool where you list project activities and objectives from input to output to project purpose to project goal, moving upward. This is Column 1. Moving across to Column 2, you have indicators that tell you what the evidence of achievement is for each of these levels: input, output, purpose, goal, and to the right of that is a column entitled Means of Verification. Here you cite the sources, government reports, project reports, etc., that a subsequent reviewer can refer to to determine whether you have achieved what you set forth in Column 2. In the final column, you have a set of assumptions where you state what the limitations are and the context in which you're operating. This is where you indicate the extent to which you are really dependent on other factors such as a favorable political situation or another donor doing his share of the work, or something else over which you have no control but which is important to the project.

Q: Was your job to review them or to propose them?

SHERWIN: It was to review them. We were not creating projects in this office but reviewing projects that were submitted by various missions.

Q: How did you find the logical framework works? Was it useful?

SHERWIN: I have found it very useful when taken seriously. I think the ideal way to use it is as an evolutionary tool.

Q: What do you mean by that?

SHERWIN: When you design a project, you have to start off with a preliminary logical framework, if you are going to use that tool. As you get further into your investigation and learn more about the situation, the problems you are trying to address, and the people you are going to deal with, the logical framework should be refined. It is a helpful way to keep track of the many elements you have to contend with and their interrelationships. By the time you have completed the design, you should have a full-fledged logical framework that accurately reflects the design and is truly logical. The way I think many people used logical frameworks was to create them at the last minute: we've done this design, there is a requirement here to have a logical framework, and we'd better come up with one.

Q: So it was tacked on at the end.

SHERWIN: Yes, and it is unlikely that it would be a very good one. In reviewing projects over the years, I found many logical frameworks, or logframes as they were called, that were very poorly prepared, and that were not logically consistent. Again, it is a wonderful tool if you take it seriously.

Q: Any limitations to it as a tool?

SHERWIN: Yes. It does not take full enough account of the context in which you're working. The assumptions column is where you should take account of all the external factors. Otherwise, the design risks being unrealistic. However, it is too easy to ignore assumptions that ought to be considered. I believe the logframe is out of favor now in AID, and the current system takes better account of the context of the project, the country situation, what everybody else is doing. This is done through something called the objective tree or results framework, where the pinnacle is the strategic goal. Below that you have a series of ever wider levels that should list all the items that need to be accomplished to reach your goal. Thus you may have four or five levels of related activities, and your project perhaps covers only a portion of them. Level 5 is necessary to achieve level 4, level 4 to achieve level 3, and so forth up to the strategic goal. If done right, this gives you a comprehensive picture of what AID, other donors, the host government, the private sector, etc. all need to do, and in some cases are doing, to bring about the desired results. If you can demonstrate that the non-AID activities listed are being done or are likely to be done, then your project has a good chance of being effective. I have not been involved with AID programming recently, and I don't know how rigorous the process is these days.

Q: But when you did the logframe, weren't you concerned with results also? You talk about results as though it were a newly discovered phenomenon.

SHERWIN: No, we were concerned with results, and I think if you took the logframe seriously, that is what you were aiming for. What was very important was how you framed the goal, the purpose of the project and the outputs and the inputs, so that you were really talking about one result leading to another and not just some poorly linked activities. And, of course, a full and honest listing of assumptions was important.

Q: How did you make the link between the project objective and the goal? That seems to me sometimes to be more of a leap of faith. Did you find that a particular difficulty?

SHERWIN: Yes, that can be difficult. If you have too lofty a goal, it is too distant from the project purpose, or objective. If it is necessary to state a lofty goal, then you need to insert a subgoal. You want to do these things step by step so you don't have a leap of faith between purpose and goal, or between output and purpose. If you haven't really thought it through well and taken into account all the necessary factors, then the logframe is just a piece of paper.

Q: Do you think what you have heard about the objective tree approach and the results approach and the logframe are mutually exclusive?

SHERWIN: No, not at all. I think it is a nice progression so long as they maintain the essential elements of each. I think what the logframe introduced was revolutionary.

Q: What did they do before they had the logframe?

SHERWIN: Something a lot less systematic. I think we floundered more than we did after the logframe was introduced. Not that it created the perfect programming system, but I think it improved it.

Q: Well, you had a lot of exposure to it in that position.

SHERWIN: I had my first exposure there. What I have just been talking about is not based on that job alone but on all the experience I've had since then in AID and as a consultant. The logframe, I think, was a very useful tool, and I give full credit to Bill Lefes for teaching me about it and how to use it and interpret it. There was another planning tool that came into vogue in the '70s that proved less than useful. It was planning run amok. It was called the project review paper.

Q: What was that?

SHERWIN: It was added to a project design system that had been established in the late '60s or early '70s as a two-stage affair. The first stage was called the project identification document or PID. That was followed by a full-fledged project paper. The PID was to be a short concept paper. Once that was reviewed and approved, you moved on to the project paper. In the mid-'70s, AID decided this system was inadequate. This was at a time when people thought the way to improve programming was to try to plan everything in great detail. If a mission submitted a fairly short PID, as it was supposed to do, someone on the review committee would say we need more information before we can approve this. With five or ten such comments, pretty soon you needed a much more detailed PID before you could get approval to move on to the PP. Perhaps reviewers also found that project papers were not adequately prepared, so the agency decided to establish an intermediate paper called the project review paper -- something more than a concept paper and something less than a fully detailed project paper. So now we have the PRP. Let's say one is submitted on a project and the committee reviews it. Maybe for this particular project you have already received several revisions of a PID that became, in effect, a mini-PRP. Then the PRP comes in and people have trouble with that. This point isn't covered; that point isn't covered; this doesn't make sense. We cannot allow you to move on to the PP stage; come in with a revision of the PRP. So then the PRP is revised and it becomes a mini-project

paper. Finally you get to the PP stage. I think it wasn't too long before people realized that this was nonsense, and the PRP was abandoned. The PRP had a short life and rightly so.

Q: Well then, if you took the PRP out, what did you end up with?

SHERWIN: Well, you still had the PID and the PP. I think the agency continued to try to keep PIDs as short, more general documents of no more than 15 pages or so. They weren't fully successful, but they did make the effort to try to maintain the integrity of the PID, and in order to reduce the paperwork, they reverted to the former system of going straight on to the full project paper.

Q: What do you think was driving this, the introduction of the PRP and then eventually its demise?

SHERWIN: Well, the PRP was introduced because AID was not happy with the project documents coming in. The philosophy in those days was that if projects were planned to the nth degree they would work out far better in implementation. Today AID recognizes that no plan can cover every contingency, and it's willing to take more of a trial and error approach. But in the '70s, AID didn't want to commit to a full PP until it was absolutely sure the designers were on the right track. Preparing a project paper is a costly enterprise, and the PRP seemed like a cost-effective intermediate step. Theoretically it was a sensible idea.

Q: What was missing in a PRP that had to be added to a PP? I don't want to get too involved in this, but I just want to get a sense of the thinking that was going on.

SHERWIN: I don't recall the specific differences between a PRP and PP, but a PRP was supposed to be less exhaustive. However, regardless of what stage you were at — PID, PRP, or PP — somebody in the review committee would always find something missing and demand a revision before moving on to the next stage. I remember that Ray Love was in the SA Bureau at the time and chaired a lot of these meetings. He was excellent at it, but you couldn't control everybody at such a meeting. Reviewers kept demanding more and more detailed justification. Eventually AID realized that the PRP was simply too costly in terms of paperwork and staff time.

Q: Was there any pattern in what was missing in all of this, what was needed for making better projects, or was it that each one had its own limitations?

SHERWIN: I think that each project had its own limitations. The quality of a design really depended on how much time a mission had, how good, how qualified the design team was, and how complex the situation was for which it was designing a project. Sometimes a design team would be asked to prepare a rush project for political reasons and would have a hard time producing a coherent paper to justify it. There were many reasons why project documents were either good or bad.

Q: What were these projects about? What was your sense of the subject area primarily?

SHERWIN: Oh, there were projects of all kinds. One that I happen to recall was a rural electrification project for the Philippines on which there was a lot of paperwork. It was a complicated

project that merited careful design work.

Q: The projects: were they of the infrastructure type?

SHERWIN: There were both infrastructure projects and a wide variety of technical assistance projects, as I recall.

Q: Well, how long did you do this work?

Attended the Development Studies Program - 1976

SHERWIN: I did this for about two years until mid-1976. Then I went into the Development Studies Program.

Q: What was that?

SHERWIN: That was a six-month program that was a little less exclusive than the economic and commercial course. Many AID officers, especially program people, were required to take the development studies program. I don't remember the full curriculum, but we would cover various topics for several weeks at a time relating to country studies, project preparation, including use of video which was new at the time, working with small farmers, and the like. Toward the end of the program we went on a field trip to Tuskegee, Alabama. We had to interview farmers to prepare an extension program for that area, to give us a feel for what's actually involved in designing a technical assistance project.

Q: Was there any particular development philosophy or theory or emphasis that was being taught by the course?

SHERWIN: Well, the reigning philosophy at that time was helping the poorest of the poor. It was the time of the New Directions. This was much more people-centered than previous philosophies that had guided AID programming.

Q: What was your understanding of the New Directions concept that came about around that time, I believe?

SHERWIN: The main thrust of it, as opposed to economic projects that were intended to trickle benefits down to people at the bottom of the income scale, the philosophy was to place more direct focus on the poorest of the poor. I never knew quite what the definition of the poorest of the poor was. After all, one could always find somebody who was poorer than someone else. It became a buzz word that I think people would use to justify almost anything.

Q: But your understanding was that it was supposed to invest in the poorest of the poor rather than the poor majority or something like that.

SHERWIN: That was never fully clarified. Personally, I thought sometimes a project that helped the generally poor would also give a boost to the poorest of the poor, but I believe that argument was never settled.

Q: I see. What did you do after the Development Studies course?

Assigned as Program Officer in USAID/Niger - 1977

SHERWIN: After that, I went back to West Africa and became program officer in Niger.

Q: What was happening at that time in West Africa? This was 1977?

SHERWIN: Yes, 1977. As we discussed earlier, I had been involved in the waning days of AID bilateral programming to countries like Niger in the late '60s. Between 1970 and 1976-77 there was the great drought that devastated the belt of countries south of the Sahara known as the Sahel. Initially AID mounted major relief programs. Once the extreme crisis was overcome, the agency moved to rehabilitation and finally to development programming. The Sahel Development Program was created in 1975. By the time I returned to Africa in 1977, bilateral programs had been fully reestablished in all these countries, and AID programming was flowering. You could actually start up new projects. So, it was really a very interesting period for me. As program officer, I was responsible for the congressional presentation submitted to Washington, not only for Niger, but also for smaller programs in Togo, Benin and Ivory Coast. I also coordinated the planning, design, and approval of several projects, including the Forestry and Land Use Planning project. That was in 1978.

Q: What was that?

SHERWIN: It was a project to improve forest cover in areas just below the desert, to create nurseries and train people to plant and maintain trees. That project in various forms survived for I think about ten years.

Q: How big an area was it concerned with?

SHERWIN: The project focused on several locales in the south-central part of the country near Maradi and Zinder, if I recall correctly.

Q: Was this planting by local people or government planting project?

SHERWIN: Both. It involved the ministry responsible for forestry as well as local authorities and local people, so it was very much a joint effort.

Q: What do you think contributed to its lasting and continuing so well?

SHERWIN: Well, I believe it was making progress and having real impact. I understand the project became part of a major policy reform effort supported by AID, but I don't know the details of that.

Q: Did you have a technical assistance team working there with you, or was it essentially local?

SHERWIN: There were technical advisors assigned to work with the Niger government and the local people.

Q: Any other projects that you worked on?

SHERWIN: There was a major public health project and a shelter development project.

Q: What were you doing in public health?

SHERWIN: I don't recall the specifics of the project, but the basic aim was to make the Ministry of Health more effective in providing primary health care, especially to the rural population.

Q: The shelter project was what?

SHERWIN: This project focused on modest-income housing, and there may have been a connection to AID's housing guaranty loan program, but I'm afraid the details escape me at this time. We did provide a technical advisor to the government.

Q: What about other work you were doing in Niger?

SHERWIN: I worked a good deal with evaluation teams and developed an improved management structure for the cereals project. I also had to deal with the same kind of problems I had faced in Senegal and Mali, following up on local currency accounts. There was a logjam in moving money into and out of those accounts in Niger, and I managed to break the logjam by reconciling local currency records, getting the proceeds from the local sale of US Food for Peace commodities deposited into the counterpart account. We ended up getting \$1,500,000 into the account. It was then made available for local currency contributions to projects in AID's portfolio.

Q: These were government funds that had not been properly transferred to the joint account.

SHERWIN: Yes.

Q: How did you find working with the Niger government people?

SHERWIN: They were businesslike, and I had no problems working with them. But they were very reserved, making it difficult to establish a personal relationship with them. They had a different mentality, a different approach to outsiders than people in some of the other countries in the region, but it was not unpleasant working with them. I enjoyed the responsibility I had there for programs, especially for initiating programs.

Q: At that time, did you have a full mission?

SHERWIN: We had a full mission. I made sure that all my deputies were delegated all the work they could handle and received full credit for it. I worked first under Al Baron and then Jay Johnson.

Q: This was at the beginning of the Sahel Development Program or well along into it?

SHERWIN: We had been into it since '75.

Q: That's right. What was your understanding of what the Sahel Development Program was trying to do?

SHERWIN: It was trying to work with the governments and the people to develop their agriculture, improve public health, and especially to deal with potential droughts. Everybody recognized by now that this region was drought-prone, and it was most important to get programs underway to deal with the environment. The forestry project was in that vein. A range and livestock project also was designed at that time. This was an effort to improve range management and make livestock raising possible in a very fragile part of Africa.

Q: Was that working?

SHERWIN: I don't know if that ultimately worked out. My guess is that success was limited because of continued droughts and population pressures. One other project that was attempted was called the Niamey Department Development project. This was an integrated rural development (IRD) project in the Niamey area, called a department, and like other IRD projects that the World Bank and others were attempting in those days, it attempted to coordinate a whole series of activities in order to raise income and increase development within the department. I don't think that project or any similar project had great success because of coordination problems. It is one thing if you have vertical control over activities involving a single ministry down to local officials that report to that ministry, but when you are dealing with three or four ministries or agencies that are bureaucratically independent of one another, you have major problems of coordination. I think the US government has trouble coordinating its own activities, and the problem is compounded when you try to do that in a developing country, so it is better to keep projects simple.

Q: This was very heavily top down; there wasn't much decentralization of the approach?

SHERWIN: Oh yes, there was an attempt to work with decentralized units. But they each reported to different headquarters. You know, it was almost like three-dimensional chess, very difficult to keep everything dovetailed.

Q: Well, any other experience in Niger that stands out in your mind?

SHERWIN: No, I think we've covered the main facets of the program.

Transferred to Guinea as AID Affairs Officer - 1979

Q: All right, so what happened after Niger?

SHERWIN: I left Niger in July of '79, and was transferred to Conakry two months later. In late '78, when I was being considered for the Conakry position, I was sent on TDY, temporary duty, to Conakry to become acquainted with the U.S. Embassy there and with the country, and to develop a program strategy that was to be implemented once I arrived at post. During the prior nine or ten years, there had been no full-fledged AID mission in Guinea because of difficult relations with the Sekou Touré government, which was Marxist and somewhat pro-Soviet. The only thing we kept going without interruption during these years was Food for Peace Title I loans. But in 1976 the US government perceived an opportunity to gain influence in Guinea and decided to undertake a major project called the Guinea Agricultural Research and Training project, or Guinea Ag, as we fondly came to refer to it. Between '76 and '79 there were only intermittent visits by an AID technician, so the project got off to a rather slow start; the only activities were participant training of future project technicians in the States, and preparation of plans for construction.

Q: What was the strategy, how did the strategy work?

SHERWIN: My job was to establish a new small office and to create a limited development strategy. Now, except for the Guinea Ag project, very little funding was available for bilateral programming. But there was a source of funds called the Accelerated Impact Program, AIP, that was run by the Office of Regional Affairs, so I proposed the use of AIP funds where you could get up to \$250,000 per project.

Q: What was the concept behind the AIP program?

SHERWIN: It was to start pilot projects which, if successful, could be expanded into larger ones that missions would fund out of their bilateral allotments. And of course, as the title suggests, the aim was to achieve accelerated impacts. To do something that had quick impact and would not require as detailed a programming process as regular projects would. I proposed a couple of projects, one in community forestry and another in mother-child health, based on my meetings in '78 with various ministries and discussions with the Embassy. My report with these proposals was submitted to Washington and was pretty much accepted as a valid strategy. I was transferred then to Conakry in September '79 and remained there until July 1982.

Guinea was a very difficult post. Because of the policies of the Touré government to maintain socialist control of just about every economic activity, the country became increasingly impoverished. Conakry was in terrible shape; the automobiles were decrepit, the roads were falling apart, and the economy was going downhill. It was a luxury to have electricity. It went out just about every day. But politically, there was a slight relaxation of control -- for example, people could speak to foreigners once again -- and the country was turning from a pro-Soviet stance to a more neutral stance. It certainly wasn't pro-Western. We were very interested in getting Touré into this more friendly posture, and the Guinea Ag project was a key factor in this effort. But this was an extremely troubled project.

Q: What were its components?

SHERWIN: Its components were to construct a research center and a number of training centers in three or four different locations in the interior, and to use that as a base for training farmers in improved agricultural processes. Initially, back in '76, it was thought that some renovation of existing facilities would suffice, and that we could concentrate on the technical assistance and training, but it turned out that this was not possible. The existing facilities were totally inadequate, and it was decided to move into construction. A major construction program was designed, but this put AID into a situation like a circus ring, trying to ride two tigers moving in opposite directions. It was difficult for us to stay on top of things.

Q: What were the two tigers?

SHERWIN: Well, as I think about it, there might actually have been more than two tigers. For one thing, you couldn't interest an American firm to do the job in Guinea. The conditions were too difficult, and the job wasn't large enough to interest them, so we had to depend on contractors already in the country. Most of these firms were French, there was one Italian and one Spanish firm, and a local government-sponsored firm, a para-statal. So, it was agreed to contract through one of them, on the basis of competitive bidding, of course. Now, these firms were accustomed to using construction materials that were available locally or came from the Eastern Bloc. They were not used to procuring American materials. But AID was prohibited from using Eastern Bloc materials on a project. So AID decided, in its wisdom, to take this responsibility on itself, to separate the construction contracting from the procurement of materials. This was a highly unusual arrangement; normally, a construction contractor has responsibility for procuring the materials, shipping them, clearing them through customs, and transporting them to the job site. Instead, AID hired the African-American Purchasing Center in New York to do the procurement and shipping, and it became the responsibility of the Guinea government to receive and transport the materials to the construction sites. This division of responsibility later caused serious problems. Other factors made this a troublesome project as well. AID had to work through the Small Business Administration in hiring an architectural and engineering firm, or A&E firm, to draw up the construction plans, prepare a bill of the materials to be procured, work with the host government in clearing and moving the materials once they arrived at port, and supervise the construction. Unfortunately, the SBA approved the hiring of an A&E firm which had some experience working in the States and the Caribbean but had no African experience. All of these decisions were made in the years before I came to Guinea. Hindsight, of course, is 20-20; at the time, nobody anticipated the problems this combination of decisions would ultimately cause. Well, by the time I arrived we were still in the early stages of the project. We had only gotten as far as receiving some contractor bids on the construction, and these were way beyond the budget allocated for this purpose.

Q: Contractor bids?

SHERWIN: Yes. I should note that when I arrived at post I had the help of an engineer supplied by the AID regional office in Abidjan called REDSO (Regional Economic Development Support Office). He came to Conakry about once a month. REDSO also supplied legal personnel as needed. Anyway, there had been some competition in the bidding, but at my initiative, we persuaded the Guinea government to introduce some further competition to try to reduce the cost. The Guinea government

was in charge because the work was to be under what AID called a host country contract. However, we worked very closely with them, almost as if it were a direct AID contract. We received new informal bids from the Spanish firm and the para-statal, to the annoyance of the French and Italian firms that had already bid. The new bids were lower in cost but proved unacceptable for other reasons that had to do with the firms being less than fully competent, as I recall. But the original bidders were now forced to lower their excessive bids, and we ended up with what we thought was a really fair-priced contract with a French firm.

So we solved the price problem, but then a whole series of other problems ensued. The A&E firm was extremely slow in preparing a bill of materials that the contractor required. The host government, as I said, was responsible for receiving the construction materials. There were terrible conditions at the port; some of the materials were damaged or lost, some stolen. Inventories were not well-kept. These and other factors all contributed to delays and cost overruns. Everyone, of course, was deeply concerned, and you can imagine the amount of cable traffic that flowed between Conakry, Abidjan, Washington and New York. The REDSO engineer made frequent visits to Guinea to work with me, with the A&E people and the government to try to resolve technical issues. There was also a project manager assigned to the post, but he didn't arrive until several months after me, and he was an agricultural person. Originally it was thought that we would concentrate on training and research, and that's the basis on which he was selected, but instead he had to devote most of his time to keeping tabs on the construction, something he did to the best of his ability but which he wasn't really trained for. As for me, I was completely new to construction management, certainly to anything as complex as this project was.

Well, in 1981, an assessment team was brought in to take a look at the problems. They made a number of recommendations. Corrective actions were taken, but the problems were more numerous and pervasive than we were able to cope with, and ultimately, after I departed post in July of '82, the Inspector General was asked to do an audit of the project. He was extremely critical of the way AID had organized the construction, of the management, the quality of the work, and above all the cost overruns. AID acknowledged many of the flaws and, in fact, issued a lessons-learned memo that was distributed throughout the Africa Bureau. But the bureau vigorously disputed the way the auditors had calculated the cost overruns. For example, they included as part of the US cost \$9 million in local currency contributions of the host government. That was not a dollar cost, but host-country-owned counterpart from PL 480 food shipments. The report also failed to recognize the efforts that were undertaken to improve the project and hold down costs. For example, we reduced claims for delays that the contractor had levied, delays in receiving materials. We reduced that from a million dollars to \$565,000. We worked closely with the A&E personnel and the REDSO engineer to downgrade some specifications that were unnecessary, like a swimming pool and fancy tiles. We rearranged construction schedules to avoid claims for delays in arrival of materials. And the additional competitive bidding we introduced at the outset saved us millions of dollars.

At the same time, I know that I along with other parties involved in this project made mistakes. One mistake may have been turning down a proposal for a resident engineer. At the time of the offer, I underestimated the extent of the problems we were facing and assumed that the REDSO engineer could meet our needs through his frequent visits. So did he. We also considered the fact that there

was no housing for a resident engineer up-country. If one had come, he might well have improved construction oversight to some extent, but I don't know how we would have housed him on site, so perhaps it was a moot issue.

There's no question the project was very flawed. The trouble was, we were trying to do something for political reasons that was really not possible in the Guinea environment and under AID's procurement restrictions. Everybody was determined to get the project implemented come what may.

Q: Was there any agricultural technical assistance going on?

SHERWIN: Not while I was there. Several technicians were in training in the US for eventual assignment to the project. I assume they were assigned once the construction was completed.

Q: Was there any pressure from the embassy for an American presence?

No, the embassy didn't interfere with management; they were simply interested in having the project move forward.

Q: Was anything built?

SHERWIN: Yes. I think construction was completed a year or two after I finished my tour in Guinea. A smallholder project was approved, a kind of Guinea Ag II, not as large as originally planned. While I was in Guinea, I had worked on a memorandum of understanding with the government that the follow-on project would be geared to small farmers, independent farmers, no assistance to state farms.

Q: They bought that at a time when they were heavy into state farms?

SHERWIN: They bought that, yes. The government was just beginning to see the value of private enterprise. The community forestry project that we mounted with AIP funds also was designed to work with smallholders. This was in an upland area called the Fouta Djallon. The project ended in 1985. I can quote the final paragraph from a cable that was sent from Conakry to Washington: "USAID believes this has been one of the most successful projects, in terms of implementation and village level impact, financed by USAID undertaken since renewal of US assistance to Guinea in 1976. FYI: Although a follow-on project was proposed, AID/W made a decision not to approve a new start in FY 1986. Unless this decision is reversed, this project will be terminated December 31, 1985. End FYI." Here is an example of where something good was accomplished on a pilot basis, and AID, for lack of resources or what have you, probably did not follow up at the time with a continued program. I believe, though, that in the late '80s or early '90s a major natural resources management project was started, and perhaps this is still in existence, built on the experience of our small pilot project.

The other project that stemmed from my strategy statement of late '78 was mother-child health. In the end of tour report that my successor, Edward Costello, submitted in June 1984, he wrote that "this was a very cost-effective child immunization and maternal health program in and around an upcountry

crossroads town [Mamou]. The project was completed on January 31, 1984. (By the end, virtually every community in Guinea wanted a similar project.) The project provided the experience and laid the basis for a country-wide vaccination, malaria control and oral rehydration therapy project whose planning is now well advanced. The \$2.8 million bilateral Combating Childhood Communicable Diseases (CCCD) activity, a component of a \$47 million regional CCCD project, will be signed before the end of this year." I was less than happy about the Guinea Ag experience; I was very pleased with the community forestry and mother-child health experience, so it was quite a mixed bag for me.

Q: I'm sure it was. You had an experience with doing a project in a context in which the AID regulations and requirements drove people into doing things that were inappropriate because of the procurement rule that you couldn't buy and didn't want to buy from Eastern European sources. You couldn't buy or get American contracts, so you were trying to force something, using the assumption column in the logframe , that really wouldn't work.

SHERWIN: Yes, absolutely.

Q: Why were we so political? Why were we so fascinated with this man? Did you ever meet Sekou Touré?

SHERWIN: Yes, on one occasion.

Q: What was your impression of him from your time and experience there?

SHERWIN: Well, as a person he had charisma, to use that overused word. Just looking at him and talking to him, he made a very good impression even though he was extremely ruthless and was running a highly dictatorial regime. I'll never forget the dinner that you and the AID Administrator and I had with Sekou Touré in his palace -- an attractive, colonial-style building that had served as the French governor's mansion years earlier. This was in 1980. Doug Bennet and you were on a tour of Africa and you spent less than a day in Guinea. We had a strong political interest in Guinea, but it was very difficult to do anything of a scale that would support such a strong interest. We tried it with the Guinea Ag project which I've already described.

Q: What was our strong political interest?

SHERWIN: I think our political interest was military; it was to keep Touré happy and to make sure that he never gave any bases to the Soviets. I don't know in detail what our interests were, but I think we were trying to keep him at least neutral in the Cold War.

Q: It might be that because of the location of Guinea ,the US Navy was concerned that a Soviet presence would evolve there.

SHERWIN: Right, I recall that there was a US Navy port visit while we were there. If I could describe this dinner, I recall that I served as the interpreter there. You and Doug Bennet were seated on one side of the table and Sekou Touré and I were on the other side. A television set was on at the

end of the table, I don't know if you remember. What was being featured on the TV, of course, was the party program and Touré himself. While this was playing, he was carrying on a perfectly good conversation with us. We were talking about the Senegal River Basin organization, and he was fully alert to everything being said, but never took his eye off that television set. I was wondering, was he just enamored with his own image or was he monitoring the way the party propaganda was being broadcast? I recently met a Guinean and asked him about this incident. He said, absolutely, Touré was concerned that the party line -- and his image was a major part of that -- be presented correctly on TV. He was a striking figure. He stood up to DeGaulle in 1958 and won independence for Guinea two years before any of the other colonies did. In fact, he probably hastened the decolonization of all those other countries. The French left Guinea in a huff and the country quickly went downhill under Touré's economic policies. I guess the one laudable thing he did was to reduce the amount of inter-ethnic conflict, to inculcate a sense of nationhood. Perhaps he accomplished that.

Q: Was he popular?

SHERWIN: I think by the early '80s, he no longer was. He was in control, but he was not popular. When he died in 1984 in a hospital in the States, rioters burned down his palace the very next day. Touré's ministers tried to form a government but were immediately overthrown by the military. There was no love lost for this man, but I think early in his reign, he probably was popular.

Q: That is an interesting observation because I recall, and I don't remember exactly when it was, probably in the '60s, the Assistant Secretary of State for Africa, Joe Palmer, met with Sekou Touré in Guinea and rode with him in his white convertible through the city. Palmer was very impressed with the fact that there were no security guards around. Touré rode through the streets and the people just cheered and cheered. The Assistant Secretary's message that came back to Washington was that Touré was a true African leader. I think that was the phrase that he used. Here was a true African leader, so he made a tremendous impact at that time.

SHERWIN: Come to think of it, even during my tenure there late in his regime, he was able to ride in an open car and wave his white handkerchief to the crowd. There were one or two attempts on his life, but the Touré government was able to maintain firm control.

Q: Do you recall that after that dinner we met with Touré's ministers about agriculture projects and other kinds of projects? We went into a meeting hall. I think you were there interpreting it. We were trying to get some ideas and they were coming forward with suggestions on this and that and the other thing. You might recall that one of the characterizations of Guinea was that it was the graveyard of AID projects. There were several. One was the four-town electrification. Are you familiar with that?

SHERWIN: I'm afraid not.

Q: At that time, they asked us to repair the electric plants. We did provide generators because the original ones hadn't been maintained. There were some old Dakota aircraft that had been given for the Guinea airline that were on the airport. Do you remember those?

SHERWIN: Yes, they were wrecks parked near the runway. They'd been donated in the '60s.

Q: This was in the '60s and you were there long after that, but this is relative to political efforts to respond with one failed project after another because it was such a difficult place. You were programming PL 480 local currency at that time too or not?

SHERWIN: Yes.

Q: What was that used for mostly?

SHERWIN: We used it for the Guinea Ag project. We also tried to use it for the mother-child health project which began while I was there. The community forestry project got underway later. I had difficulty getting the government to cough up the local currency for the MCH project. That was a constant struggle. They did make limited contributions from other budget funds, but not from PL 480 counterpart. We also programmed some of the local currency through European Economic Community projects.

Q: Well, anything more that you want to talk about in Guinea?

SHERWIN: The only thing useful, I think, would be to try to summarize the memo Ray Love, the deputy to the head of the Africa Bureau, sent out to mission directors, the REDSO director and Washington office directors in November of '83, lessons learned from the Guinea Ag project. I think the draft I have is close to the final version of his memo.

Q: What were his main points?

SHERWIN: His main points were that we need to face realities, that we should not be afraid to kill a project if we understand that it is not going to work. We need to be sure of contractor capability. We were at fault in this project for accepting the certification of the Small Business Administration for the competence of an American A&E firm. We didn't check out their overseas experience. Result: over-designed structures, inability to complete the work and poor supervision over the contractor. On host country contracting, Love felt that this was not a significant factor in the Guinea Ag problem. But the decision to use a host country contract must be based on the preparedness of the host country to assume the responsibility in the specific situation, not on a desire to circumvent the more rigorous procedures and language required for a US contract or to curry favor with host country officials. Dividing responsibilities along clear lines was a dramatic problem. There was slippage and confusion among the various offices that had responsibility for this project. Responsibility for procurement and construction should not be split. The prime contractor should assume both. As a concomitant responsibility, the contractor should schedule inputs as well, and that schedule should be part of the contract.

In summary, the main points were to (1) establish clear lines of authority, (2) concentrate on selection of a person or firm on whom one may rely and who can take decisive action, (3) insist that any contractor have control over all actions essential to his task, demand performance and hold him

accountable, and (4) be prepared to back up that demand when that performance is not forthcoming; take strong action when difficulties arise, including resident oversight. The cost of letting problems drift rapidly becomes excessive.

Q: Do you think that was a fair statement? How did that fit in the context of Guinea? They are all right and proper conclusions that we have with hindsight, but how about the situation now?

SHERWIN: It's fine as general guidance. But I don't know if we could even have had a construction component in the project if we had applied such rules, given the conditions in Guinea and AID's constraints on source of procurement. And, you know, that might have been a good thing. We should have concentrated more on technical assistance and training and done something smaller. It was the political imperative that got us into the mess on construction.

Q: I think that is a fair message. I personally experienced that too, because I met with Touré and the Administrator when they came to Washington, at which point the message was loud and clear: get it done. We were faced with a lot of this interaction between US political security and developmental interest.

SHERWIN: A politically motivated project is fine if it is feasible, if you can achieve something, and if there is a reasonable return, but when you try to do the impossible, then you really are misusing resources.

Q: Any other observations about Guinea?

SHERWIN: It was a good case study. I think we've pretty well exhausted it.

Q: After your Guinea assignment you took on a new position?

Returned to USAID/Washington Africa Bureau, Office of Regional Affairs - 1982

SHERWIN: Yes, I was transferred to Washington and was made deputy director of the Office of Regional Affairs in the Africa Bureau.

Q: What was that office?

SHERWIN: It was an office that carried out a variety of projects deemed more suitable and cost-effective under regional management than if they were carried out by field missions acting alone. One type of project would allow for uniformity of country activities. An example of that is CCCD, Combating Childhood Communicable Diseases, which we just discussed in connection with Guinea. This was a program that carried out major health activities on the same basis in quite a number of countries, and it also worked in coordination with the World Health Organization office in Brazzaville.

Q: It was an immunization program?

SHERWIN: It was a broad-based program covering child immunization, malaria control, oral rehydration therapy, training, and other interventions. It was carried out for a number of years in the '80s. Another example of a project that worked in collaboration with a regional center, this time in East Africa, was a remote sensing project. A second type of program that was suitable to the Regional Affairs Office was one that allowed for centralized management of generalized training that was used by almost all of the missions. It was called AMDP, African Manpower Development Program. I believe that such a program is still carried out but in a different manner.

Q: This is for participant training?

SHERWIN: This is for participant training, technical training, yes, and also for graduate studies. A third type of program that Regional Affairs managed was assistance to organizations such as the AFL-CIO and the National Council of Negro Women. These organizations carried out projects in a number of countries in Africa, and we were the vehicle through which they were funded.

Q: They were all similar projects with implementation in various countries?

SHERWIN: They were different projects in each country, but there was a common theme and a common approach that they used. A fourth type of program was managing the US contribution to multi-donor efforts such as the river blindness control project in West Africa. That was known as the onchocerciasis project. This program reached a level of some 40-50 million dollars a year.

Q: All of these projects?

SHERWIN: All of the regional projects together. I should mention there were also some agricultural research projects that worked in collaboration with regional organizations.

Q: What was your view on this approach to providing assistance where you had, in lieu of separate mission projects or activities, a consolidated funding approach?

SHERWIN: Well, I think it was reasonably successful in that it did provide for some commonality of approach and management, especially in projects that dealt with regional organizations or where you had a similar type of project carried out in a number of countries. But there was always tension. The bilateral missions felt that these were resources that they would rather have control over. Why give them to a regional office when we are short of funds for a bilateral program? Finally in 1985, the assistant administrator, the head of the bureau, despite our best efforts to maintain the program, decided that it must be downgraded. The office was abolished as a separate entity and became part of the Office of Technical Resources.

Q: Do you know why that came about?

SHERWIN: Well, I think the aim was to save money on personnel, and to eliminate what some missions considered a complication, having to deal with a regional bureaucracy.

Q: How big a staff did it have?

SHERWIN: Oh, there must have been about 20 people in there at one point.

Q: It was a pretty big operation.

SHERWIN: Yes, including secretarial staff. They did manage to reduce the staff when it was transferred to the Office of Technical Resources. I was credited with maintaining morale during this process.

Q: That must have been a challenge.

SHERWIN: Yes, it was. We fought hard to maintain RA but when the decision was made to abolish it, we tried to make the best of the new office and got good support from the staff.

Q: Did you go to the Technical Resources Office?

SHERWIN: I went to the Technical Resources Office and was placed in charge of the regional sub-office. At that time there was also a shift to buy-ins, giving resources to the missions so they could in effect buy the services that they wanted from the regional program.

Q: Do you understand how that worked?

SHERWIN: I retired before this process got too far along, but it probably worked reasonably well. It put the missions in the driver's seat in tapping many of the regional projects. I don't know what happened to all the regional activities after I left the agency, but I imagine some way was found to continue the essential ones.

Q: Did any of those projects stand out in your mind as ones you found particularly unique or effective?

SHERWIN: I believe that the training program was very effective. I personally think that training is one of the most effective things that AID has done, and AMDP allowed for training in all kinds of fields, not just those directly related to bilateral projects. Increased technical training certainly met one of the most serious needs of the African countries. I think that the Combating Childhood Communicable Diseases project was also a very worthwhile effort. It contributed a great deal to improving the health of mothers and children.

Q: Well, you retired at this point. In what year was that?

Assignments since retiring in 1987

SHERWIN: I worked until the last day of 1986. My retirement began in 1987.

Q: Have you undertaken some interesting assignments since then? You might want to touch on those.

SHERWIN: Sure. I've undertaken a whole series of consulting assignments, basically in project design and evaluation. My first assignment was in 1987. I was team leader for the design of a natural resources management support project. This was for the Africa Bureau.

Q: Was it a regional project again?

SHERWIN: Yes, that was a regional project to provide consulting, training, information and research support on resources management to USAID field missions and private voluntary organizations.

Q: What natural resources are you referring to?

SHERWIN: I think principally in the area of forestry and soils, environmental management.

Q: That project got underway?

SHERWIN: Yes, that project was underway for a number of years, but the way these things work, you know, a consultant goes from project to project. One loses track unless one makes a determined effort to see what happens to projects one has worked on, and there is not a great deal of incentive to do that. The same thing happens to officers working for USAID because they get transferred from post to post. They are at a post for a couple of years; then they go off to another mission, perhaps even another continent, and they lose track of what they were so deeply involved with in the previous post.

Q: What do you think about that kind of a situation?

SHERWIN: I don't know if there is a good solution to that, because if you were to retain a program officer or a technician at the same post for, say, 10 years to follow through to the end of a particular program that he started, that might be good for the program. However, sometimes fresh blood is needed, fresh thinking. Probably it would also not be good for the individual's career to remain at the same post for many years. There aren't too many opportunities for advancement within a mission. On the other hand, within the whole agency, opportunities do open up for advancement.

Q: What do you think is the optimum period of time to have somebody working on a program, starting it and so on?

SHERWIN: I think three to four years is about right as a general rule for somebody to stay at a post and with a program. It depends entirely on the situation.

Q: Are there any other assignments?

SHERWIN: Yes. My next job was in 1988, the preparation of USAID/Mali's country strategy statement. This was a collaborative effort with mission staff.

Q: Do you remember any of the specifics about that strategy that you were trying to emphasize?

SHERWIN: Yes. There were three main elements to the mission's strategy: (1) restructuring and liberalizing the economy in favor of private enterprise, (2) promoting agricultural growth and research, and (3) strengthening health, family planning and nutrition services. The paper was well-received in Washington. After that assignment, I did a series of contracts with REDSO, the regional office in Abidjan, first, in August to October of 1988, a year later for a few months again, and finally again in January of 1990. Under these contracts, I led a mid-term evaluation of a health planning project in Togo, did an evaluation of an agricultural training project in Sao Tome and Principe, did a short management review of an agricultural research project in Mauritania, and helped clarify design ambiguities for an NGO support project in Burkina Faso. In 1990, I worked for six months for the Africa Bureau in the Office of Project Development as a reemployed annuitant. There I coordinated review of project and non-project designs.

Q: What is a reemployed annuitant?

SHERWIN: A reemployed annuitant is a retiree who is reemployed for a brief period of time to work exactly as a regular employee, to fill a gap in an office.

Q: What were you working on specifically?

SHERWIN: I worked on a whole variety of projects. I analyzed project papers from Mali, Cape Verde, and other countries that the Office of Project Development had review responsibility for. Next I was a planning consultant for Management Systems International in 1990. I served on a team that helped USAID Togo define its strategic program objectives and formulate its performance measurement plan.

Q: What is a performance measurement plan? That is fairly recent.

SHERWIN: Yes, this was 1990. It was more or less the beginning of the agency's effort to develop specific sets of indicators to track progress on projects, setting benchmarks of achievement, so that a mission wouldn't go blindly forward and hope that at the end of the project term of, say, five years, the objectives would have been achieved. This was a way of measuring performance as you went along, year by year.

Q: Do you find it is hard to define these indicators?

SHERWIN: Yes. It is a difficult process.

Q: What particular area were you trying to improve that you were working on?

SHERWIN: In Togo it was for the program as a whole, not for a specific project. We were working with the mission to set strategic program objectives and devise a performance measurement plan. In such a process, one has a great many choices of indicators, and one of the major difficulties is identifying what a mission can assume responsibility for, what it would have enough control over. The agency term for this is "manageable interest" of the mission. Identifying that is difficult if you

don't have all the facts on hand as to what the country is doing on its own and what other donors are doing in a certain area so that you can isolate exactly what the gap is and what you could do to fill that gap. It is a challenge to isolate realistic indicators and performance measurement indices.

Q: You said you did some evaluations.

SHERWIN: Yes, an evaluation I mentioned that I did in '89 and '90 of a health planning project in Togo. There were serious problems of coordination between the AID-funded advisor and the Togolese government, and between different agencies within the government that had responsibility for different aspects of the project.

Q: This was not with other countries.

SHERWIN: No, the issue was getting the project to organize itself to achieve what it set out to do. The evaluation analyzed the problems and made suggestions for corrective action, mainly spelling out more clearly who should do what so as to resolve conflicts.

Q: How did you find the evaluation experience?

SHERWIN: It is always a challenge, but I found it extremely interesting. The challenge in designing a project is giving form to a concept. In the case of an evaluation, the form already exists, but then it is a question of trying to understand what is really going on, and if things are not happening the way they are supposed to, trying to figure out why. What are the obstacles? Why did things go wrong or why did things go right? No matter what kind of design or evaluation activity you are engaged in, it is always a challenge.

Q: Was it well-received?

SHERWIN: I think it was well-received.

Q: Any chance it had an impact on the shaping of this project?

SHERWIN: Yes, I believe it did. I didn't hear any negative reports about the follow-up, but I don't have specific information on how or to what extent the recommendations were implemented. As I said, once a consultancy is over, you tend to lose track. Next in 1991, I did some work for the Bureau of Science and Technology. I wrote a project paper amendment to expand the scope of the Development Strategies for Fragile Lands project. Also that year I went to Guinea to work on the design of a rural roads project. I worked for both USAID/Guinea and REDSO on that assignment. This was a paper that detailed USAID's role in a large multi-donor project involving also the World Bank, the Germans and the French. As of four years later, more than a thousand kilometers of road had been rehabilitated, including 486 km. through direct USAID assistance, which allowed isolated communities to achieve dramatic increases in commercial and passenger traffic. I would be interested to know if the government has been able to maintain the roads that were improved. The issue here, as with most projects, is sustainability -- does the host government have the capability and the

resources to maintain and build on what the project produced?

Next I prepared a project identification document on a regional project for the Sahel office, called Programs for Applied Development Research in the Sahel (PADRES). After that, I worked on a Food Security PID and PP for the Bureau of Research and Development. In 1992, I traveled to Botswana to prepare a PID and a project paper for redesign of a population sector assistance project, in conjunction of course with health technicians. In 1992-93 I worked with a team organized by the Chemonics firm that identified opportunities for global climate change projects in Africa. Also in 1993 I went to Cape Verde and revised the project paper for the Watershed and Applied Research Development project. Since then, the mission there has been closed out and the project of course has been terminated as well. This was one of the very small posts that could not survive the cuts that have occurred in the last few years.

Q: Did it make much difference?

SHERWIN: I'm sure it made some difference to the Cape Verdeans, but I believe they are still receiving PL 480 food shipments. There is a lot of political support for food shipments to Cape Verde from the descendants of Cape Verdeans, the Portuguese that live in Rhode Island and Massachusetts. They put a lot of pressure on their congressmen and senators to ensure that kind of support for Cape Verde.

I did a couple of projects in Madagascar in '93 and '94. I was design specialist and deputy team leader for a Chemonics team that designed the Commercial Agricultural Promotion project, CAP. That was an effort to increase commercial agricultural production and income with emphasis on a couple of high-potential zones in Madagascar. My friends at Chemonics tell me this project has gone very well. Then, working with a firm called the Services Group, I led a team that designed the Opportunities for Entrepreneurs, or OPEN project. This too was in Madagascar, from April to June 1994. In '95 I was design specialist on two health projects, one in Zambia and another one in Guinea. I had a one-week job in 1996 and a major assignment in 1997 as team leader on an evaluation of the Environmental Health Project that is being implemented by USAID Global Bureau contractors. This evaluation was run through a USAID contractor known as the Health Technical Services project, HTS. The evaluation consisted of a technical and management review of EHP worldwide, and made recommendations on the future directions of the project.

Q: How does someone master all those subjects and design projects in all those fields?

SHERWIN: You don't master them, and I don't pretend to be a master in any of these areas. What I think I contributed was knowledge of how to put together a project, how to design it, how to make sure that the requirements for a project paper were covered. The technical input was provided by specialists on the design teams.

Q: Given that you have done so many of these, what are the steps that you go through as you approach the task of designing projects in many of these areas? What is it that you do? How do you bring about a project? I think it might be very instructive to other people given all your experience.

SHERWIN: Well, you begin by reading everything you can about the proposed activity, about the country that is in any way relevant. You work closely with the technical people to ensure that all the elements of a project that are required are going to be covered. You try to make clear-cut assignments for the various parts of the project paper. I myself usually take on researching and writing the project background and context, the logical framework, the management section, some of the less technical parts of the paper. I also work on the budget, but always in close coordination with the technicians. Then, of course, there is the team management aspect, making sure that the people on the design team keep on track, provide their inputs more or less on time, that the effort remains coordinated, because there are always centrifugal forces at work. If you are not careful, the effort can fall apart.

Q: What are these centrifugal forces you are referring to?

SHERWIN: There are times when a particular technician will go off on his own, a little bit oblivious to what the team is trying to do. That's one force that one has to deal with. Then one may run into difficulties obtaining information. That can throw you off stride. The mission may make unusual demands that the team finds hard to comply with. One is always dealing with human beings, with people that have different agendas, so it is a constant effort at management and diplomacy and research to keep a design on track.

Q: How did host country people come into the picture? They are not on the team, are they?

SHERWIN: Very often host country people are on the team because they have the best knowledge in certain areas. I think that is even more true today than it used to be. In addition, you are always interviewing host country people in the government, the private sector, farmers, health workers or whatever type of people the project is addressing. Host country people are a crucial element in any project design. If you ignore them, you end up with something that might as well have been written in Washington, and worth about that much.

Q: Are there any particular techniques you used in getting host country people involved? You just suggested interview techniques, are there any others that you have used?

SHERWIN: I think it is a matter of dealing honestly and forthrightly with everybody you come in contact with. That seems to work universally. I don't think there is any one technique, but what is important is to let everybody know exactly what one is attempting to do and what one's responsibilities are, and to care about what you are asking them to do or to provide in the way of information.

Q: Well, if you are going out to lead a project design and don't have much experience in this, what would you advise? What are three or four or five pitfalls to avoid making big mistakes, what would you suggest?

SHERWIN: You want first of all to make sure the team members are fully qualified for what they are expected to do, and try to select people who are going to work well together. A team member may be proposed who is brilliant but can't work well with people, and you might want to choose someone else if you have the opportunity. Of course, as team leader you may not be given the final say-so. The

choice of the team may be dictated by the firm or by AID, but to the extent that one can one should have input into the selection of people. It is important to have detailed planning sessions, to try to set out as clearly as possible what the schedule is going to be, but be flexible because inevitably you will have to make adjustments once you hit the ground and see what is really going on. It is impossible to plan everything perfectly in advance. It is important to keep in close touch with all the team members, following up on what they are doing so you are sure they are coordinated and remain on track. Keep the USAID mission regularly informed of what you are doing. I got into a bit of trouble on one or two occasions when I didn't keep the mission director fully informed of what we were doing, and he became upset. I learned a lesson or two along the way. Of course, keep the host country people that you are dealing with informed of progress; they also have to approve the project in the end. It is really a matter of good management. The team leader should also take on direct writing and research that he has time for and is qualified to do, so that he is not just a supervisor who doesn't get his hands dirty, so to speak. One has to keep in close touch with the firm or the office back home that one is working for, make sure the funds are available to carry out the design, and make sure the logistics for the team are in hand, locally as well as internationally. It is a very hands-on type of activity.

Q: It was true in previous years and it is still true that AID does a lot of studies. It takes too long. What is your impression -- as a program designer, how do you deal with that kind of question, taking on one study after another?

SHERWIN: Well actually, in my own experience I haven't been involved in theoretical studies; my work has been on actual projects.

Q: I'm thinking of studies that are preparatory to doing a project, like a social analysis or an economic analysis or other kinds of studies that AID says it needs before it can do a project.

SHERWIN: Oh, I see. Yes, all the projects that I dealt with required a number of annexes, social soundness, economic, financial, environmental, etc. Those studies can be useful but they can also be required to an excessive degree. I believe that the agency over the last few years has made most of these studies optional. One has to use a rule of reason, common sense as to what kinds of studies are useful and what kinds are not. You shouldn't avoid them simply because they are burdensome. They can provide essential information toward making the project work, but there is no point in doing Ph.D.-type analyses that tell you everything about an aspect of the society that may or may not have applicability to the project. I don't have direct information on how the current optional system is working out, whether missions nowadays are applying common sense criteria in doing studies where they are necessary, or avoiding them because they are not required. That would be something interesting to look into.

Q: Of course, one of the questions is not permitting the design people to implement the project. Do you think that's an issue or a problem? I know from a legal sense you have to separate the two for contractual reasons, but has that been a major failing of the process?

SHERWIN: I think that has been a problem. Many projects were not adequately designed and ran

into unforeseen problems in implementation.

Q: This is despite the fact that the people designing a project were not the ones that implemented it?

SHERWIN: I think it is precisely when designers do not have responsibility for implementation that problems are more likely to arise. Designers in those cases may have less incentive to make their designs realistic, and missions have to review their work carefully with that in mind. In one of the projects I worked on, the Commercial Agricultural Promotion project in Madagascar, we had a design and perform arrangement. The same firm that designed the project ended up carrying it out. I'm sure it enhanced the quality of the design.

Q: Another issue that people talk about is how to achieve ownership; where does the ownership lie and how does that come about? How do you approach that kind of question?

SHERWIN: That's where involvement of all the partners, all the beneficiaries, or the customers, as they are now called, is crucial. Customers, by the way, is a term I don't care for because I think of customers as people who buy something. Anyway, it is important that all the people, particularly those who are supposed to benefit from the project, be involved in a project design from the outset. If they are involved in every stage of its development, they are likely to feel a sense of ownership for it.

Q: Did you find you were able to make that happen in the projects you worked on?

SHERWIN: I believe I did achieve a sense of ownership among the participants.

Q: Any particular techniques you used? The beneficiaries may not be needed in the design process.

SHERWIN: Well, I think we went as far as we could in the design process to interview people who would be beneficiaries, and to work with the local levels of a ministry, such as a health post, that would be involved in implementation so that the design would reflect their input. I think that the agency has progressed even farther since I have done any design work in establishing formal committees and groups to participate in the development of projects. I think those techniques have been refined.

Q: Any particular issues you faced in working with the host country counterparts in this process? Was there anything that stood out?

SHERWIN: In any design or evaluation effort one has to have a wide range of contacts with the host country counterparts so that one does not run into surprises. If you depend too heavily on one particular group or one individual who seems to be cooperative, if you ignore other elements in the host country that are going to have an important role in the project, you run a serious risk of ending up with a distorted picture, so one needs to be sure to cover all the bases.

Q: Well, anything else in that experience? You have had extensive experience in project design and

evaluation work. Anything that stands out in your mind?

SHERWIN: Only that working on designs or evaluations is always a very intensive activity. It usually requires a six- or seven-day workweek. There has been a great variety in my consulting assignments, and I have enjoyed them as much as I enjoyed my career with AID, which also had a good deal of variety.

Concluding observations

Q: Well let's shift and end up with some concluding observations, your views about your experience. Looking back on the foreign assistance program as you saw it and experienced it, has it made any difference in world development or did it just sort of evaporate over time? Was there some impact that had some lasting effect?

SHERWIN: Considering what has been happening in Africa, one has to question how much lasting impact all these projects have had. I certainly don't think we have achieved everything we set out to do, but I think there have been some lasting impacts. Once you train somebody, no matter what happens, if that person stays active anywhere near the field they have received training for, that is a plus.

Q: I was going to ask you where the impact was significant in training.

SHERWIN: I would say across the board — I'm not sure I would be able to specify a particular area where training has been most effective. But I think AID overall has had the greatest impact in the health area because we helped eliminate smallpox. We helped control measles, improved health services in many of the countries, introduced family planning. I believe that has made a difference. We haven't made as much progress in family planning as we could because we haven't put nearly the level of resources into it as needed. That is because of the know-nothings who control AID's purse strings in Congress who think that family planning is the work of the devil. I happen to think it is the work of the angels, because the one way to reduce the number of abortions is to have healthy citizens, helping them raise healthy families where the children are properly spaced, and this can only be done through programs of health services and family planning, distribution of contraceptives. I simply cannot understand the opposition to this.

I think there has been some progress in the area of environmental management, forestry, but I'm not sure the progress has been enough to stop the environmental degradation of, for example, the Sahel, the region bordering the desert. Because the population pressure is so great, and people have to eat, they are going to raise crops in fragile areas that are not suitable for crop raising. Perhaps in an area like environmental management we are putting our finger in the dike and hoping that not too much of the flood gets through. I don't know how successful we will be in the long run. I think the two areas requiring foreign assistance that are most essential to sustained development, especially in Africa, are environment and population.

Q: Are there other areas where you think AID has had an unusual impact? You mentioned health

and population and environment.

SHERWIN: Helping with the development of the private sector has had an impact, although this only began late in my career with AID. There is hardly a country in the world that still believes socialism is the way to develop a country. I think AID has played some role in bringing about this change.

Q: How would you characterize AID's role in that respect?

SHERWIN: Help in improving government policies that would be favorable to the growth of private enterprise as well as direct technical assistance to private entrepreneurs. Another area where AID in recent years has become active, particularly since the fall of communism in Europe, is democracy and governance. This was practically unknown during my time with AID, becoming involved in the political realm. We focused entirely on economic and social activities. We have begun to realize that you cannot have economic development, equitable development, if you don't have solid, well-working institutions in the political sphere. Democracy and governance projects address that need. I don't know how successful the agency has been in this area, but it probably has had as many successes and as many failures as it has had in any of the other areas it's been involved in. It is perfectly legitimate that AID has become involved in democracy and governance. State and USIA may consider this an invasion of their turf, but AID has expertise in dealing with the nitty-gritty institutional and technical aspects of making governments work effectively, and I think they can make a major contribution here.

Q: Well, that leads us into what are some universal lessons that have come out of your experience that you recognize and fall back on. Whenever you tackle a new assignment, these lessons are always in the back of your mind. Are there two or three of those that stand out? You have already implied that the governance issue has been critical and you have given a lot of attention to it in the earlier period. Are there other lessons learned in carrying out AID programs that you think stand out?

SHERWIN: I have some idea of criteria that should be applied in preparing a development program or supervising a project. I believe these criteria will stand the test of time. When a development specialist, say, a representative of a donor agency or an NGO, is considering a problem that he or she thinks can be usefully addressed by an aid intervention, then that specialist should approach the problem in a straightforward and realistic way. If the latest fad in development theories offers a good insight into the problem, fine, take advantage of it. But don't try to force your approach awkwardly into the theory if it doesn't fit. There is a tendency I found throughout my career of people using the latest buzz word in everything they wrote in hopes that this would cover up the flaws in their thinking. They thought their papers would pass muster so long as they said the project addressed the poorest of the poor. That was a favorite buzz word. I say, always be realistic and don't take the latest theory any more seriously than it deserves. There is a need to do realistic planning that provides adequate data on the conditions addressed, on the status and role of beneficiaries and partners, and on how the project you are working on fits in with what others are doing. I think some designers and managers who are in a hurry for whatever reason to take planning shortcuts.

There used to be a tendency in the agency to overplan, and I believe that tendency has been overcome. Possibly the current danger lies on the other side, with people taking too many shortcuts. There is a

need to design projects for long-term effect. You don't want to start a development activity if you have to compress it into an arbitrarily short time frame. Congress has always wanted AID to achieve something in two years or five years, and it is risky to promise that you are going to achieve your final objective in an arbitrary period like that. If you are compelled to work within such a period, if you have to finish the project in five years, OK, but then aim for a realistic goal. Perhaps it won't be your final goal and you will have to have a follow-on project. If you are reasonably sure that you can carry on a long-term activity but you have to do it in phases, that's fine, have the three-year project followed by another three- or four-year project and work toward achieving your goal in that way, but don't overpromise. I think it is important to keep projects fairly simple. Don't involve too many independent beneficiary agencies or groups in a project where you require close coordination. I think that's why Integrated Rural Development, IRD, failed in the '70s, because it involved too many independent agencies that were not about to be closely coordinated.

Q: How does one approach rural development then?

SHERWIN: I think one has to take on the smaller universe at a time, perhaps have parallel projects that cover the larger universe. It may not be a perfect solution, but it stands a better chance of success than if you try to create a Swiss watch in one project. This would apply not just to rural development but urban or other development as well. Another important thing is to treat host agencies and beneficiaries as equals who are capable of entering into and honoring an agreement. Make it clear that you intend to have both sides honor the terms fully, barring unforeseen circumstances that both sides would agree require alteration of the terms.

Q: We don't do that?

SHERWIN: I don't believe that has always been done. Too often we've assumed that a host country would be prepared to make a contribution that in fact it was not able or ready to make. Of course, it is in the host country's interest to get the assistance, so it might be willing to promise anything. That's another caution for the project designer, that what is promised be within the capability of the promiser to keep. If you have that kind of agreement, try your very best to stick to it, because otherwise people lose respect for you.

It is important for aid agencies to work their way out of a job. I don't think this is too much of a problem for USAID managers, since they aren't usually at a post long enough to become over-identified with a project. They are going to be assigned somewhere else in a few years, but more important is the fact that they are constantly under pressure to disengage from programs and even from countries. However, over-identification can be a problem with NGOs and other groups that seek AID funds, so one has to make certain that they have the same mentality that you do with respect to a project, and that they are not trying to get an endless flow of resources to carry out an unending agenda.

And, as I said earlier, if AID has to carry out a politically motivated project, make sure that it is feasible and provides a decent return. Don't try the impossible.

Finally, and I think this has been emphasized by the agency and other donors for the last 15-20 years, make sure that the necessary policies and institutional capacity are in place to carry out what you want to achieve in a project. If the policies and institutional factors are not favorable, either don't do the project or deal with those gaps as part of the overall effort.

Q: You talked about politically motivated projects. In general, has your experience been that US political interests, security interests have been supportive of development programs, or undermined or corrupted them?

SHERWIN: I really think we do better when we don't have an immediate political interest.

Q: You are speaking about immediate.

SHERWIN: Yes. Obviously, there is a political element to everything we do. The AID program in general supports our foreign policy by helping to bring stability to the developing world. We are better off where we can focus on development in a systematic and sensible way than where we have to jump in and do something in a hurry because it is important for short-term political reasons. I think our food programs in particular have been misused sometimes to the detriment of local agricultural production, because for political interests we felt that we had to provide the food. I believe that was the case in Guinea. Of course, the agricultural research and training project in Guinea went awry because of mishandled construction, and that project was entirely politically motivated.

Q: Well, let's turn to your experience. How would you characterize your experience in AID, working in foreign assistance? Compared to where you started out and what your expectations were, looking back on it.

SHERWIN: That is not an easy question to answer because the experience was so varied. There were so many different places, so many different kinds of activities I was engaged in.

Q: Did you find it a satisfying experience or frustrating or what?

SHERWIN: It was both. Frustrating when there was too much paperwork and too little time to take field trips to see what was actually happening at project site. Also frustrating when expectations exceeded what could be accomplished. But it was also very satisfying because I feel that I steadily progressed professionally, and the agency did too, for that matter. It was also a very enriching experience personally because it broadened me and my family culturally. I will never regret the experience of working on certain programs, of working with people in another language and another culture to try to achieve something cooperatively. The long-term impact of what I did, it depends on the particular activity, was probably modest, but I think something was accomplished, especially in the way of training and health and improved institutions. Overall, I feel good about it.

Q: How do you find AID as an agency to work for?

SHERWIN: It is a hectic experience working for AID. It is constantly undergoing revolution

whereas an evolutionary approach would be a lot better. The revolutionary aspect is perhaps dictated by the difficulties of the whole development process, and by the disappointment of the Congress which wants results yesterday. There is not much of a constituency in the country for foreign assistance so that AID is always under pressure to accomplish what apparently it has not accomplished, and if another revolution in the programmatic approach or the organization is the way to satisfy the critics, then that's the way the agency goes. That is demoralizing for the employees and I think in the long run it is not terribly productive.

Q: Is the agency in its fundamentals very different, as you see it now or as you saw it when you retired, from when you started?

SHERWIN: Oh, yes. I think the various revolutions have resulted in a more professional agency. It's just that the process has been extremely difficult for the people involved. If the agency could continue on a more evolutionary path, it would get to where it wants to go with much less disruption. AID is probably the most professional donor agency in the world in terms of the way it approaches problems. It is less concerned than it used to be about processing paperwork, more interested in results and more flexible in changing the approach to a problem if results aren't being achieved. But the agency doesn't have enough financial resources. It also doesn't have enough people to carry through what it wants to do. AID officers for the most part are overworked managers who oversee the people on the front lines, the contractors, universities and NGOs that carry out the projects. When I entered the agency, there were actually technicians on AID's payroll who implemented projects. That is unheard of today, and that's unfortunate, because it keeps AID personnel at a certain distance from actual development. At the same time, AID is a better agency than when I started because it is more systematic and has a better sense of what can and cannot be done.

Q: That is a good point on which to end the interview. Thank you very much.