Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
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Information Series

ROBERT B. PETERSEN

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
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INTERVIEW

[Note: This interview was not edited by Mr. Petersen]

Q: Today is February 16, 2001. This is an interview with Robert B. Petersen. This is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy. The name Petersen, is that Scandinavian?

PETERSEN: It's Danish. My father came from a large family. I think he had nine siblings. By the time he died in 1984, he was probably the only one spelling it with an "sen" and the others after the post office, Social Security, whatever, made it "son," they said, "Why bother?" My cousins and uncles and so forth ended up spelling it differently. But that's what was on my birth certificate.

Q: Could you tell me when and where you were born and something about your family?

PETERSEN: Sure. I was born in Cleveland, Ohio, at St. John Hospital on the west side in Lakewood just west of the Cleveland boundary, on July 22, 1942. The war was underway. I was conceived just a few weeks before Pearl Harbor. I grew up in Cleveland for the first six years. Both my parents were born in the United States. All four of my grandparents were born in different locations in Europe.

Q: Let's go back to the origins. Where were your grandparents born?

PETERSEN: On my father's side, both grandparents were born in Denmark. Their older children were born in Denmark, their eldest son and eldest daughter. I believe the other eight children were born in the U.S. On my mother's side, I'm not really sure. The naturalization certificate for my grandfather says he was a subject of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, which could mean anything. My mother tells me that one time she asked him what they were and he said, "Oh, don't bother trying to explain it to people. Americans would never understand." She understood some Serbo-Croatian, not well enough to really respond with more than a few words, but she said she certainly understood it when it was spoken around her house. So that's a hint. I do know that she had a half-brother who was living in what then became Yugoslavia. But there was no particular effort ever to maintain ties or dig into that family history.

Q: On your mother's side, was she from the same area?

PETERSEN: I'm not sure, and my grandmother on my mother's side died in the flu epidemic in 1918, as did some of my mother's siblings. My grandfather on my mother's side died six years before I was born, so I had no contact with the family. My mother's family was broken up, put into foster care and so forth. It really was rather difficult to maintain connections there.

Q: What type of work was your father doing?

PETERSEN: He was a farmer. That was what he loved. He grew up on a farm. His grandfather was a mason, a builder. But he was also a farmer. I have the feeling that he was a farmer full-time and supplemented the farm income with work as a mason.

Q: So often that was the case, particularly during the winter.

PETERSEN: Yes. But my father grew up on a farm. He had an older brother who became

a farmer. All of his other brothers went into other occupations. But he really had his heart set on farming. After he got out of the service in '45, he went to work with his older brother. In 1948, after we had lived in Cleveland for six years, we finally moved to a small village west of Cleveland in northeastern Ohio. He began farming on his own. So, I also grew up on a farm.

Q: How about your mother? Was she from farming stock, too?

PETERSEN: No. Her father was a carpenter, but I don't believe he ever was employed by others as a carpenter. He built some houses, sold them and rented them. But he was a coal miner in southeastern Ohio.

Q: Many people from Yugoslavia went into the mines in those days.

PETERSEN: He was a coal miner. It was a very hard, very difficult life from what my mother has described to me. But one of the things that my mother remembers that would probably describe my grandfather's outlook and efforts is John L. Lewis sitting at their kitchen table. Her father was part of the effort to organize miners in southeastern Ohio.

Q: John L. Lewis was the head of the United Mine Workers, a major figure in the '20s, '30s and '40s.

Did either your mother or father have any higher education?

PETERSEN: No.

Q: What about your father and the military? What did he do?

PETERSEN: While he was living in Cleveland in the early '40s, he was a licensed engineer of stationary power plants. I think he was working for the McGee Chemical Company at the time. He told me the story of having gotten his induction notice. He reported and he said as the men passed through the line, every other inductee was told to go to the right and he was going into the Army and every other one was told to go to the left and being told he was going in the Navy. When he stepped forward, they told him, "Over there. You're going to the Army." He said, "No, that doesn't make sense. I know how to operate stationary power plants. I'm a licensed engineer. I could at least do something useful in the Navy." They said, "All right, you're in the Navy." That's how he got into the Navy. I don't think he actually ever put any of that civilian skill to work in the Navy. He ended up working in Navy salvage in different locations in the Pacific, at Pearl Harbor and several of the islands in the Pacific, salvaging vessels. He was enlisted, of course. He never talked much about his naval service, very little. He told me a few times about riding a seagoing tugboat that had to go from the Hawaiian Islands back through Panama for some reason. He told me it was a very unpleasant trip, bounced around a bit. Not that he ever refused to talk about his naval service, but it never seemed to be anything of great interest to him.

Q: By the time you were six, you moved to a small farming community. What was the name of the place?

PETERSEN: Avon. It was in Lorain County, which abutted Cuyahoga County. L-O-R-A-I-N was French. The village in which I grew up was sometimes referred to as "French Creek," but it was actually the town or the village of Avon. There was a creek running through the center of Avon that was called French Creek. It was an area that was part of the French area of exploration, not settlement so much, but just trapping and exploring. But none of the settlers who settled in Lorain County that I'm aware of traced their origins back to France.

Q: Did you have brothers and sisters?

PETERSEN: I have one sister. She was born in Cleveland just before we moved to Avon, the summer of '48. She is six years younger than I. That's probably something I shouldn't talk about [laughter]. She probably would prefer I never reveal her age. But I have a younger sister and she was born in Cleveland before I moved to Avon. So the two of us grew up on the farm. My father was a full-time farmer, but like most farmers, certainly in that area, he supplemented his income with different occupations during the winter season. My mother, as a farm wife, did a lot of work at his side on the land.

Q: Did you all, particularly you, the young man and older than your sister, get involved in a lot of farm work?

PETERSEN: Yes. I had household chores, everything from carrying in the coal and so forth, from probably about age seven or so onward. Regular weekly or daily chores that I would carry out. I never really worked on the farm full-time until I was probably 11. Then my summers were full-time work. I never really spent a lot of time during the school year working on the farm. Sometimes I would help out in the evenings and weekends, but never to the extent that it interfered with schoolwork. I actually can only recall probably one time when I was in high school where my dad asked me to stay home and work on a school day because he needed some help for a day or so. But other than that, I was allowed to play sports after school, things like that.

Q: What about at home? I realize that being a farm family, particularly your parents were very busy. Was there much reading or discussion about events and things like that?

PETERSEN: Certainly nothing international and really not national. I need to be very careful and not overly dramatic in describing growing up on a farm because I never thought of it as a hardship in any sense. I remember that we had a daily newspaper, always. But I don't recall dinner table discussions about the events of the day or anything of that sort. It was discussions about what was going on in the community and what was going on on the farm to the extent that we talked at dinner, but never – or not that I can ever recall – discussions about what was going on with the federal or the state

government or what was going on internationally. I can recall a few things as a youngster. Shortly after we got a television, General MacArthur was recalled. I remember my mother either getting me out of bed to watch it or interrupting whatever it was I was doing to sit down and watch with her General MacArthur's arrival - it might have been a film clip or a news clip – in San Francisco. To some extent, there was an awareness of significant momentous issues.

Q: What sort of farm did your parents have?

PETERSEN: It was a truck farm – no livestock, no grains. It was all fruits and vegetables, grown for the Cleveland market and sold through commission houses. We would take the produce to the commission house in Cleveland, an area set aside on the east side of Cleveland where farmers from around Ohio would deliver their produce and then it would be sold the following day and the commission house would take a percentage of the sale price and return the rest to the farmer. Sometimes we sold directly. For a few years, my father would rent space and we would go three mornings a week. I think we would leave the farm about 12:30 or 1:00 AM, drive into the market in Cleveland, back our truck alongside all the other farmers who were renting space that season, and sell to grocers and others who would come by to purchase directly from the farmers. We did that for a few years while we also sold through commission houses. By the time I was probably 10, 11, or 12 years old, I don't think we would ever sell directly. We would sell everything through commission houses.

Q: Who did the picking?

PETERSEN: We did quite a bit ourselves. We raised corn, beans, tomatoes, cabbage, lettuce, cucumbers, squash, a lot of greens. We did a lot of it ourselves, but when it came time to harvest a field, we would bring in day laborers. Either the county or the state had a hiring office in the nearby city of Lorain. We could go there in the morning and hire as many people as we would need – three, four, or 12 day laborers, who would be paid not an hourly wage but by produce. That was just when we had some fields to harvest. Beyond that, it varied from season to season. Sometimes we would have only one regular hired man who worked for hourly wages and sometimes we would have two or three steady people working throughout the season from spring to fall.

Q: Schooling. By the time you moved to Avon, you were getting ready to go to school.

PETERSEN: Yes. I had already begun first grade when we left Cleveland. I attended a school in Cleveland long enough to receive my first report card as a first grader. I think we moved probably either at the end of October or very early in November of 1948. The reason I remember is because before leaving Cleveland, I must have gotten a Halloween mask and probably went out trick or treating at the age of six. I remember that in the move the one thing I had with me was a Halloween mask. I remember for some reason it was important to me. I remember at our new location at this farm in Avon having that Halloween mask and looking at it as I was about to set out to my new school in the

village.

Q: What was the school like?

PETERSEN: It was a parochial school.

Q: Were you of a particular religion?

PETERSEN: It was a Roman Catholic parochial school. I had been baptized a Roman Catholic.

Q: Sort of almost contrary to what I would think of somebody coming out of the Danish community.

PETERSEN: My father probably had been baptized or when he was baptized it probably was as a Lutheran. He never had much interest in organized religion. My mother as an adult had been baptized into the Roman Catholic Church. Normally no one ever remembers his or her own baptism, but I remember my sister's baptism at a Roman Catholic church. In 1948, when I started the school, it was at a neighborhood Roman Catholic school in Cleveland and then when we moved to Avon, I was enrolled in a Roman Catholic parochial school. It was rather interesting. It was a four-room schoolhouse, eight grades, two grades per room. So, when I was in the first grade, the first and second graders shared the room. There were four teaching nuns and a fifth nun there who was probably the cook and housekeeper, all employed by the parish. The schoolhouse consisted of the four rooms. It didn't have indoor plumbing. There was a pump in the schoolyard. One of the rotating duties for boys in the class was to be responsible for going out either once a day or whatever number of times per day out to the pump, priming it, pumping a bucket full of water, bringing it in, and when it was time to get a drink, we would all line up and bring our cups to the bucket and get a dipper full of water.

Q: Were the boys and girls in class together?

PETERSEN: Yes.

Q: How long were you in this school?

PETERSEN: Until I graduated from the eighth grade. I actually did have a graduation ceremony, including a diploma from the eighth grade, from the school. One of the interesting things about the school was that when I started there some of the sisters – maybe it was the principal – were still German speaking. Obviously, they could speak English, probably quite well, but I remember some of the students making comments about the German nuns. When I graduated, not everybody in my class went on to high school. This was 1956. Today, that would be pretty bizarre. Some of the students still ended their schooling at the eighth grade. It was a farming community. These would be

fellows who probably had failed a few grades along the way and were 16 years of age or something. There was nothing illegal about them not going on to high school.

Q: Did any subjects or nuns particularly impress you? Did you find yourself being directed in any way?

PETERSEN: Some of them made a great impression on me. I can remember, I was in the fourth grade, and the reason I can remember it is that I can visualize the room I was in and which side of the room I was sitting on, so I know I was in the fourth grade. I sat along a wall on which we had either a world map or a map of Europe. I remember the pink color of "USSR." I remember sitting there and puzzling over that, what did those words "Soviet Socialist" mean? I remember having discussions with the nun and asking her. At the time, I didn't realize it, but an effort was made to open one's eyes to the fact that there was a larger world than the little village in which I was growing up. In particular, there was a sister who was serving by the time I left the school as the principal, but also as one of the classroom teachers. I remember in particular geography lessons and certainly religion lessons, but the effort she made to make certain parts of the world – India, for example – come alive. For whatever reasons, I can remember looking at geography books in the sixth grade and there was a photograph of a paddy field in Japan. Why that stuck in my mind I can't exactly remember but I do know that the sister teaching the class had talked at some length about the importance of rice. I had never seen a paddy field. I remember her trying to explain how people had to work hard in some areas of the world because they didn't have a lot of land that they could till. Some of those teachers made a great impression on us. I learned a lot more than I realized. Some years later, either in the late '70s or the mid-'80s when I was in Washington, my wife and I spent an evening hosting the sister who was the principal of that parochial school. She was in Washington and we visited with her. At one point in the evening, I complained to her about how little I had been taught or the gaps in my education in grade school. She reminded me of specific texts and lessons that I had forgotten completely about, but indeed there had been a great effort made to provide us information about areas of the world and historical developments. I simply either hadn't been paying attention or had forgotten all about it.

Q: You think of a small order of nuns working with farm kids to bring them into the world. The devotion of these ladies is really remarkable.

PETERSEN: Yes. They were a remarkable group, quite good.

Q: You went to high school where?

PETERSEN: In the same community. The changes that were underway in that community were exemplified by my going to the high school there. The year that I graduated from the eighth grade, 1956, was the same year that a new public school building was being built as a high school for grades nine through 12. Up until then, the only public school building in the community was a building that covered kindergarten and grades one through 12 all

in one building. It had served the community quite well and adequately, but prior to when I started high school, there had been a levy passed and a new building was being constructed. But it wasn't ready by the time the school year began in 1956. But there was no longer room in that original school building for all 12 grades. So, the solution in the community was that during the day, grades one through eight went to school. Then late in the afternoon, grades nine through 12 would report to school. We didn't have a lunch break. We had a dinner break. I don't know how late we stayed there. It seemed late at the time. Probably it was 7:30-8:00 in the evening. We had a compressed school day that started late in the afternoon and let out at night. That went on until the new high school building was well enough completed that the high school students could move over there.

Q: In high school, what were your teachers like?

PETERSEN: A mixed lot. I say that with respect. As I would say about my colleagues in the Foreign Service, there was a mixed lot there. Some of them were very impressive and dedicated. Others, I don't know if they spent their lives in education, but some of them probably did not and went on to other occupations. We had only one faculty member with an advanced degree, a Latin teacher who had a master's degree. I don't believe that any of the other teachers had advanced degrees. That's not to suggest that they weren't very talented and very good teachers. When I think back on it, I had the opportunity to learn a great deal. Like most students, I didn't make the most of my opportunities, but when I would open myself to listen and pay attention, I had some very good teachers. I remember some in particular. Our football coach taught biology and general sciences. My Latin teacher was a real inspiration. And there were others. I had an English literature teacher when I was a senior. I would be astounded to think that there could have been a better English literature teacher in any system in the state. She was phenomenal.

Q: How big were your classes?

PETERSEN: My graduating class had 55 or 56 students in it.

Q: Were there any subjects that particularly interested you?

PETERSEN: Literature certainly did. I guess it interested me more than other subjects when I had the opportunity to sit in a literature class, I could imagine more. My imagination was freer. I remember in particular some of the things that we read: Silas Marner, Shakespeare plays. I just enjoyed myself trying to imagine what people's faces would look like, what they were wearing. In Silas Marner, trying to imagine what the weather felt like when certain scenes transpired. Whereas with biology or math, where precision was more important, there was less opportunity to imagine the colors and the smells and the appearance of things. But I also found mathematics interesting because I enjoyed visualizing how things fit together and transpired through equations and so forth.

Q: In Avon, was there a good library?

PETERSEN: There was a library in the town hall that served as the meeting place and the place where the village's fire truck was stored. It was converted into a library, a single room. A sparse collection. I remember using it. But I also remember going to a neighboring community, a somewhat large town, Elyria, which was the county seat, and using the public library there at least when I was a senior. I couldn't find what I was looking for in our town library or in the school library. I don't want to do a disservice to the memory of people who were responsible for libraries or the school, but I seem to recall as a senior in high school being told by one of the teachers that our school wasn't accredited. There was some debate about whether the school should be accredited. One of the things to become accredited was to have a certain amount of resources in the school library. When I think back on it, it probably didn't make any difference. Those who wanted to learn had great opportunities in that school and those who weren't so interested probably didn't.

Q: While you were in high school, did the outside world intrude at all?

PETERSEN: Yes, it certainly did. The intrusion began before I got to high school. "Intrusion" is a good term. This was after World War II and Korea as well. There was a significant transformation underway in the United States, economic and social, that affected farmers a great deal, farmers like us. I remember my father commenting several times about the poor quality of imported produce that was showing up in the Cleveland market but that how some of our customers were turning away from us and turning to foreign produce because it was more available and sometimes it would arrive out of season, things like tomatoes that would come from Florida or Arizona. What we were seeing was, of course, what we now take for granted: the fact that things are available year-round in our supermarkets. When I was growing up, undoubtedly some supermarket chains in the Cleveland area did indeed have certain things available year-round, but a lot of the grocers to whom we sold, sometimes grocers would own only one or two stores. We did sell directly to some of the larger chain stores as well. But I remember that shoppers would look forward to the first corn or the first tomatoes of the season and so forth. Now, of course, my wife and I expect to buy corn or tomatoes year-round. We were caught up in that. What we were saying when we referred to "foreign produce" was not produce coming from other parts of the U.S. but the first glimmers of things coming in from perhaps Mexico and other locations outside the U.S. It was interesting because we were in the midst of it. It's very hard to see something like that clearly and what it really means. It's very difficult to see the big picture when you're looking at a small environment. So, we focused on things like the quality of imported produce and perhaps missed the importance of availability, as did a lot of other farmers. Maybe there is still a farmer left in Avon today, but I wouldn't know. I doubt that there are very many, if any, people still farming in that community.

Q: How about extracurricular activities?

PETERSEN: The most important one was working on the farm. I say that half seriously, half jokingly. Even before I got to high school, during the late spring and early to late

autumn, five nights a week I would frequently, if not every school night, ride with my father to the commission houses in Cleveland to deliver our produce. That would be done after supper. That was one activity. But in high school, beginning my sophomore year, I played football. In the autumn my last three years in high school, after school, I was practicing or playing football.

The summer between sophomore and junior years of high school was full-time work on the farm. The summer between my junior and senior year in high school, I had my first opportunity to have a full-time paying job off the farm. I worked that summer and into the fall even during football season at a shopping center in Lorain County. It was the first shopping center in the county. I worked for the maintenance supervisor moving grass, repairing asphalt parking lots, doing other work. During the summer, five days a week, I worked from 6:00 AM until 2:30 PM with a half hour off for lunch. Then I would get home and work on the farm the balance of the day. Then weekends I worked on the farm. That was my first opportunity to have a full-time job where I got a paycheck for a 40 hour week. That was when I was 16. My 17th birthday came that summer of 1959. I had worked off the farm prior to that, but that would be working for other farmers occasionally, sometimes just a day or a week at a time. I would get paid for that, but it was incidental. I remember starting out at age eight or nine picking strawberries for someone during strawberry season and getting a nickel a quart for picking strawberries. That was very minor. Anyway, that summer between junior and senior years of high school was a full-time job. In addition to the grass moving and the repairing of the asphalt, there was a much older person, someone in his 30s or 40s, who drove the big sweeping machine around the parking lot every day to clean it up. Occasionally, I had a turn at doing that as well and enjoyed that immensely, driving the big monster of a machine.

Q: Did you have any time for taking ladies to the movies and all that?

PETERSEN: I would have had the time had I wanted to make the time for that. But that wasn't an important part of my growing up, not at all.

Q: By then you were getting ready to graduate from high school in '60?

PETERSEN: Yes. I graduated in the spring of '60.

Q: Whither?

PETERSEN: What was I looking toward? Well, it was a mixture of some dreaming about the future, some of it realistic and most of it not. I was very, very fortunate. I think you asked me earlier about some of the teachers. Looking back on it, I was blessed with some wonderful people who took an interest in me from my high school football coach to my high school Latin teacher and several others as well. I felt that I was going to go on to college but it was no sure thing. I should say, it was probably a sure thing that I was going to go to college, but the path to getting a college education was far from clear. In the

autumn of my senior year in high school, at the end-of-season football dinner, our guest speaker was a coach from a nearby college, Bill Greis. He was the coach at Oberlin College. Coach Greis was a very entertaining after-dinner speaker. I can't remember a thing that he said, but I do remember being impressed by his skill as a raconteur. After the dinner, my high school coach made a point of introducing another player and me to Coach Greis. Coach Greis gave us a short description of Oberlin College and what playing football there could be like for someone who wanted a good education and a lot of the pleasures of playing college football. He invited this other player and me to visit the campus and meet him there. I was impressed that evening when he said to me, "I won't speak to you again unless I receive a signed document from you saying you're interested in visiting Oberlin College. It doesn't have to be any more than a postcard, but I've got to have something because I won't follow up and contact you again. Those are the rules." I didn't know whose rules he meant. Probably they were NCAA rules. I was very impressed by that. The other player was the far more talented football player between the two of us. I didn't have any intention of following up on that invitation. But the other player did. He said he was going to send Coach Greis a message saying he'd like to visit the school. He coaxed me into sending a similar message.

Then sometime that winter, the two of us went out. It was a short drive from our high school, in the county. We visited the campus. The football coach took us around, showed us the practice field, took us to the field house and showed us the locker rooms. We were walking through the student union, a snack bar, the only one on the campus, and there were a few pool tables and billiard tables and a room that had table tennis and pool. I remember turning to my high school companion and saying something to him about, "Well, Joe, if we ever went to school here, here's where we'd spend our time. We could make some dough playing pool here." The coach said to me, "Robert, if you come to school here, I'll show you where you're going to spend all your time and if you don't, you'd better not come here" and he marched us across the street to the library. From there, we went to see the people responsible for admissions. That is a rather long-winded response to your question. I started out by saying I somehow knew I was going to go to college, but the path wasn't clear.

Q: You went to Oberlin?

PETERSEN: Yes.

Q: From '60-'64?

PETERSEN: Yes.

Q: Did anybody tell you that this was one of the preeminent private colleges in the United States? It's not just a nice farm type college. My son-in-law went there. It's top rate.

PETERSEN: I was well aware of that. During the winter of my senior year in high school, there was a football coach from Ohio Wesleyan who came and spoke to me and that same

high school companion, the other tackle. We both went to Western Reserve University and the football coach there took us around as Bill Greis had done. I never applied to Wesleyan, but I did fill out an application while I was sitting in the admissions office at Western Reserve. They asked me to fill out an application and I did, I applied right there, with the football coach waiting while I filled out the application. I probably applied to maybe another school as well. But by then I had also applied to Oberlin and I knew darn well about Oberlin. I knew that a higher proportion of graduates at that time from Oberlin College than from any other college in the U.S. went on to graduate school. I talked to one of the high school faculty members, a couple of them, about that, and he told me, "Wow. Great school. If you can somehow go there, it would be a great place." A few people joked with me, some of them not so humorously, about what a terrible place Oberlin was because it was such a leftist, "pinko" campus. In a way, that appealed to me, too. I was well aware of what an opportunity it would be if I could attend Oberlin.

Q: I realize you were out in the middle of a farming community in Ohio. But as you mention Oberlin, one of the spark plugs in the civil rights movement, was this affecting you at all in high school? Was this of any interest?

PETERSEN: Yes, it was. I have to be very careful. I grew up in a small town. It was a very conservative farming community. But to go back to one of your earlier questions about some of the teachers, yes, I certainly was aware of issues. I mentioned to you earlier that my English literature teacher when I was a senior, I can't imagine anybody in the state who could have been a better teacher than she. I wrote an essay for her for literature class. I chose as my subject the execution of Caryl Chessman. I remember writing, deciding to take almost as if I were debating, arguing that it would be morally wrong not to execute this criminal. I remember her reading it and saying, "All right, maybe you've written a logical paper, but let's talk about the moral dimension of this and what it really means." I remember her engaging me in that. I remember an issue in our community where there was someone from outside the community who was shot by a police officer, a minority, and the discussions that we had about that, everything from, "Why would a member of a minority be distrustful of police? What is the image that people have of an all-white community?" I remember discussions about everything from school integration and other things that were underway. Yes, there were certainly discussions and. I remember some vigorous informal debates about those issues. I remember a formal debate in high school in my speech class as a senior where I argued on behalf of the death penalty in the U.S. and one of my classmates drew the lot to defend it. I remember the fun I had because I felt that I had the easier argument. But it also made me think in our discussions before and after the debate. As I was learning more and more about Oberlin, the opportunity to be in a college community of that type where those issues were the daily fare really was something I realized I wanted very much.

Q: How did you finance this? It's a small private college.

PETERSEN: I was very fortunate. Oberlin offered a package of scholarship and work. I was awarded the Glenn Grey Scholarship, a scholarship given in memory of a graduate of

the class of 1914 who died in World War I. Glenn Grey's time on campus was well regarded. He was apparently quite a leader in school. It was a scholarship given for someone with leadership qualities. I think it was, if not always, certainly frequently, given to an athlete. But there were no athletic scholarships. I was very fortunate to get that particular scholarship. What it didn't cover of my costs, the job that I was assigned in the school work program – my freshman year, I was a dishwasher; in my other years, I was a waiter in the dining hall – made up nearly the rest.

Q: Let's talk a bit about the atmosphere when you got there. 1960. This was big time stuff. The Kennedy election. Things were really stirring. And particularly a campus such as Oberlin, which still maintains a well-deserved very liberal reputation. Forces were moving. How did you feel? What were your impressions?

PETERSEN: In a way, I was like a kid in a candy store. Coach Greis was right about spending time in that library. I just felt so comfortable there. And what a resource. I don't recall now, but I think the holdings in the library were over a million books. That was a huge library. It was an open stack library. I didn't appreciate fully the significance of that until I saw some other university libraries. But the opportunity to wander through the stacks and find such an immense amount of material that I could read when I was researching my papers or preparing for classes was wonderful. In a way, I really enjoyed immensely the opportunity that I had there and appreciated it very much. On the other hand, I also recognized that a lot of my classmates at the school were far, far better informed than I. I won't say it made me humble, but it made me aware of how much I needed to learn and how much I wanted to learn about what was going on in the world. I knew when I still hadn't graduated from high school what an opportunity it would be if I could attend Oberlin. When I got there, I realized that what I had been looking for was there. That wasn't to say that I didn't have my frustrations at the school. There were some parts of it that I found maybe not to my liking. I remember probably my freshman year, certainly early when I was at Oberlin, the discussions about Cuba and our policy there and about the significance of the revolution, the debates about communism and socialism in the world, about civil rights in the U.S… In terms of an opportunity to be plugged into what was going on in the U.S., in the world, the opportunity to listen and share ideas with intelligent, relatively well-informed students, was something that I enjoyed immensely. Then obviously that school has an incredibly good faculty. What really is distinctive about Oberlin is, even to this day, is that the faculty there really was encouraged to be good teachers first and foremost. Publishing had some importance, but the effort made to teach well at Oberlin was quite visible.

Q: Where did you end up majoring?

PETERSEN: I went to Oberlin thinking, after reading the catalogue, that I was going to be an economics major. In my naive way, I thought that was something that one would do to go into business somehow. It would be a good path away from farming.

Q: I take it farming never grabbed you.

PETERSEN: Let's say that if you wanted to do real psychoanalysis here you could say that for years I used to stand in the fields and watch cars go by on the road and think to myself, "Gee, I'd sure like to be in a car going anywhere and not working on this farm. I'd like to see the rest of the world." I started out my freshman year in an introductory economics course. Robert Tufts was my teacher. Bob Tufts, Professor Tufts, was a fantastic teacher. I wasn't aware of it at the time, and not until a few years ago, I was reading Paul Nitze's autobiography and there was a photograph of a committee at the State Department, during World War II, and my former Oberlin professor-to-be, Bob Tufts, was on that committee. Professor Tufts was a very sophisticated economic thinker. He spent some time from time to time in Washington as a consultant. He didn't really talk a lot about that in the classroom, certainly not in Economics 101, where he was really teaching about guns and butter and supply and demand. He was an example of the stellar faculty that we had.

I went there thinking I was going to major in economics, had that course with Professor Tufts, and I had several other economics courses. But I hadn't gotten very far into the first semester when I realized I certainly didn't want to be an economics major. I didn't find it exciting. I didn't find it inspiring. I found much of it disagreeable. I remember having a discussion with Professor Tufts at the end of the semester when he was giving an oral exam that supplemented our written exam and telling him that I certainly understood the points he was making in our course about shifts in the economy and the sociology of the United States as people were moving from one type of occupation to another. But then I had the audacity to tell him that I thought it was a lot of bunk and that I disagreed absolutely with him on the social costs. I remember saying, "You've pointed out that ultimately this leads to a certain economic efficiency in the nation as it reorganizes around new industries as people become retrained. But you don't begin to appreciate the pain of that retraining. The best thing that I hope to do with my life is to support unions and to fight against these types of shifts." He must have looked at me and thought, "What a silly, arrogant little freshman." I do remember him looking at me and saying, "Are you sure you really understood what I was teaching you?" I said, "Yes, I can tell you what you said, but I don't believe you and I don't agree with you. I think you're wrong." He said, "Well, you're going to learn."

Before that first semester was over, I had decided I was going to major in speech. That's because one of my courses that first year was a speech course. I enjoyed it, trying to lead people in a certain direction by talking to them.

Q: What does "speech" mean in those days?

PETERSEN: It was called "speech." It was not the dramatic arts, but it was about the theory or the elements of putting together a public address and what the psychological elements are to be convincing. It was probably called "speech one." It wasn't to make you a debater, although debate was an element of the course. It wasn't to make you a performer, although I remember some discussion about stagecraft and so forth. But it

really was to enable one to put thoughts together in a convincing way and then to speak to a group and to either explain or lead a group through public speaking.

Q: You maybe saw an element of logic there, too.

PETERSEN: That was a part of it, but it wasn't in the philosophy department. By the end of my first semester, I had decided I would be a speech major. By the end of my second semester, I decided I would major in government.

Q: There is a logical progression there.

Incidentally, how did the football work out?

PETERSEN: Not well. I was not a starter as a freshman. As the year went on, I actually had less and less playing time. Our first game of the season, I was on the field more than in any other game. By the end of the season, I don't know if I even got into the final game of the season. It didn't work out well for me that first season. To leap ahead, my second season, I was injured and that was the end of my football before the first game of the season.

How did I become a government major? I had a course my second semester with Professor Aaron Wildavsky. For Oberlin, it was a relatively large class. It must have been Government 101. There were more than a couple of dozen students in the class. I just was fascinated by Professor Wildavsky and fascinated by what he described as government. It was us, it was getting things done, it was doing things well or poorly. As I thought about it, I decided, "If you're interested in social change, somehow being knowledgeable about government would help." Oberlin didn't have a political science department. It had a government department. I decided that that's what I'd better major in and study.

Q: Did Oberlin for the most part support Kennedy? This was one of those crucial elections emotionally more than in real terms with the Nixon-Kennedy election. It energized an awful lot of students. I would think that Oberlin would fall into the Kennedy camp.

PETERSEN: I don't have data on how the campus would have fallen out between the Republicans and Democrats, but, yes, Oberlin certainly would have been overwhelmingly in favor of Kennedy, although a fair number of students would probably have preferred someone a little bit more to the left than a mere Democrat. That first semester, I remember discussions about debates. I don't remember how I watched the debates. I can't remember where I was or whom I was with, but I must have watched them because I have the images. In later years, I've seen short film clips of some of the debates and I know that I watched them when they were originally telecast. But I can't recall a particular or a single conversation I had that first semester with anybody about the campaign or really about the issues. Certainly we were aware of them. I was aware of them. I was casually discussing them with fellow students and others. But I can't remember a particular

conversation.

Q: The issues weren't that great. It was more about personality.

PETERSEN: Yes, but one of the issues was religion. Another one was defense. Another one was the economy. In the late '50s, we had gone through some economic doldrums. In the campaign, Kennedy talked about getting the country moving again. He talked about gaps in our defense. I'm of the generation that grew up wondering why all those Russians wanted to kill me with their nuclear bombs. Defense was something we thought about. Then the issue of whether the country would accept a Roman Catholic president was another issue.

Q: Moving on to Oberlin, foreign affairs has not played any particular role before. How about when you were at Oberlin? Was this beginning to attract you?

PETERSEN: Yes, it was beginning to attract me. I remember at different points in my life making several comments about foreign affairs in relation to Oberlin. One was saying that I thought I wanted to go into law and be a lawyer working for labor unions. At some point at Oberlin, I started noticing that a lot of issues in the U.S. – legal, economic, social, etc. – in which labor unions played a part seemed to be guided by events outside the U.S. I remember joking a few times about this and saying, "Well, that was my first awakening that there was anything outside the U.S." That's not really true, but intellectually I was starting to see the need for really learning systematically about trade relations, treaties, and so forth. Also, I made an effort intellectually to tie in my own personal experience, limited as it was at that stage, with the greater world. I remember thinking about how I was seeing the demise of small-scale farming in northeastern Ohio and realizing that the international trade in food was having some effect on that and that beyond that bald statement, I couldn't really describe it any more accurately than that but thinking, "There is a lot going on there that I just don't begin to have the first understanding about and I'd sure like to learn about it."

Q: Were you able to plug into courses?

PETERSEN: Oberlin has a Shansi program where the student body supports students from every senior class to go to teach English in China, or in East Asia when the students weren't permitted into Communist China. It goes back generations, because of Oberlin's origins as a school that was founded by some of the early evangelicals and the fact that many of the early generations of students at Oberlin turned to missionary work.

Q: John Stuart Service. A lot of the China hands.

PETERSEN: Professor Reischauer was an Oberlin student. I didn't know it at the time, of course, but an internationalist flavor just permeated - and hopefully today still permeates – Oberlin. That's one of the things I was aware of before I matriculated when I was still waiting to see if I was going to be accepted at Oberlin. The thought that this was a

campus with so many not just students who were from outside Ohio but students from around the world was something that excited me. There were all sorts of programs and interest groups, debates about Cuba policy, debates about our policies in different places in the world, concerns about famine and developments. There was so much going on. In those early semesters, maybe more than just the early semesters, I had so much basic learning I still had to do before I could participate more fully in any of that.

Q: Had you ever been outside of Ohio?

PETERSEN: Hardly. When I went to Oberlin, I had been on a brief visit – maybe overnight, possibly two nights – to visit a relative in Chicago when I was still in grade school. I had driven my sister to a summer camp in the nearby state of Indiana. I drove over and picked her up at the end of the camp. That took a few hours. That was the extent of my travel. I hadn't had the opportunity. I simply hadn't traveled much.

Q: By the time you graduated from Oberlin, you had a pretty solid background in international affairs, government, history?

PETERSEN: Yes and no. Certainly as a government major, I had a number of courses in government, but what really fascinated me was the issue of parties and politics. I think I had a course by that title and there was a text by that title. One of the courses I took as a sophomore or junior again with professor Wildavsky was about how decisions are made. We all had to do some research and write a paper on how a particular group that we researched contributed to the making of a decision. I remember going around and interviewing members of the school board and PTA and other organizations in Oberlin to see how the people I was looking at contributed to the making of a decision, whereas others went around and talked to other actors in the community. I was fascinated by that. I had a course in comparative government taught by J.D. Lewis. I thought it was somewhat Eurocentric. We looked at parliaments in Britain, France, Germany, and Italy and compared them to what we had in the U.S., but nothing that I recall about any South or East Asian countries.

Q: At that time, there was not a lot to compare as opposed to one party-one man rule in a way.

PETERSEN: The world history course I had again was certainly Eurocentric. It was taught by Professor Robert Neil, a tremendous historian. Was I well prepared in terms of international affairs? I had certainly been exposed to some European history and theory and current events. I remember as a senior writing a paper for a joint government/economics seminar on Swedish neutrality and writing another paper on the potential for German reunification. I'd be embarrassed to recount the conclusions I reached in that.

Q: I talked to somebody, an expert on Germany, who was brought in to discuss the same thing. He spoke on that same subject in September 1989. He basically came down and

said, "There will not be German unification in my lifetime." Of course, three months later, there was.

As you were approaching the end of your time at Oberlin, what were you thinking about doing?

PETERSEN: The summer between my junior and senior year, I took the law boards. I got a good enough score that I could certainly apply to a variety of law schools. But I didn't have the resources to go on and I didn't have the type of scores or academic record that would get me a full scholarship at a law school. That was one thing that was on my mind. But along the way, I don't want to say there was "luck" because that implies it was pure chance and it wasn't. But in the course of my education, through my classmates with whom I spent time with talking about world affairs and how one could most enjoyably spend one's life, I remember having a conversation with someone who had gone to school in India, the son of missionary parents. I remember him telling me about the United States Information Service (USIS). I was fascinated by that and thought, "Gosh, now that would really be interesting to do something like that." My senior year at Oberlin, I signed up for the Foreign Service exam. When I took the exam, we had a choice of two blocks: State Department or United States Information Agency (USIA). I decided to check "USIA." So, I was thinking systematically at that point about what I wanted to do after Oberlin. I didn't take the exam on a whim or just because I wanted to see how well I would do, but because I really wanted to see if I could pass that in order to really do that. Obviously, I understood the odds. Even then, the odds were long to pass the Foreign Service exam. I put some thought into it and didn't apply to take the exam until I decided I was really going to try for this very seriously. I really wanted to pursue that particular course of action.

Q: You took it in '63?

PETERSEN: It must have been in the spring of '64.

Q: How did it go?

PETERSEN: I passed. That spring, I had the oral interview.

Q: Do you recall any of the questions?

PETERSEN: Yes, a couple of them. I don't recall the exact questions, but I recall talking at great length about the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), so one of the questions had to have been about Asia. I remember describing to the panel the members, what the issues were, what the challenges were, and so forth. I remember a question having to do with American literature. This was on the oral exam. It probably was couched as if I were telling someone abroad what to read, what single book would I recommend? I remember trying to think on my feet, starting to talk immediately, not sitting there quietly working through a list. I remember mentioning one or two authors

and describing what insights those authors offered about the U.S., but then thinking to myself as I was speaking, "Well, that's not the best choice," and then explaining to the panel why, although that particular author might indeed offer interesting insights, that really wasn't the best choice, as if I were logically working up to the very best choice. I think the author I settled on was Mark Twain having to do with race relations and so forth. I also remember mentioning John Dos Pasos because of what he would say about the union movement.

Q: Maybe this is a good place to stop. We'll pick this up in 1964. You've taken the oral exam and passed. Did you go into USIA right away?

PETERSEN: A year later. It took a full year of getting the background check, the medical exam, the security exam, and then waiting for an opportunity. I think the oral panel was in late spring/early summer of '64. I joined USIA in June of '65.

Q: How did you keep yourself afloat between '64 and '65?

PETERSEN: Well, in addition to taking the Foreign Service exam, I knew I wasn't going on to law school immediately. I just simply didn't have the wherewithal. At one point, I was accepted at a couple of law schools and was told there was no chance of any scholarship support, period. Without that, I couldn't have possibly done it. I remember sitting, pleading, with the dean at Ohio State, one of the schools, and he said, "We'd be pleased to have you at the school," but there was no way that a state school was going to offer any money to me to go to law school. So, I knew I wasn't going on to graduate school. I was looking for work. I applied to several different companies. There were several insurance companies where I submitted applications. I spent a day at an insurance company in Cleveland and then interviewed at another insurance company. I was called up later and told that the person who interviewed me didn't really think I would be working in Cleveland but at the home office in Hartford, Connecticut, and thought maybe I could go there. So, he arranged for me to fly to Hartford and be interviewed at the home office. I accepted a job with Connecticut General there. I had other jobs all through school in summers. I worked as a structural ironworker and a member of the Hodcarriers and Common Laborers out of Cleveland Locals, and was an apprentice structural ironworker out of Cleveland Local. I had gotten my chauffeur's license so I could drive concrete mixers and done a variety of things, but none of which had enabled me to have enough money in the bank to go on to graduate school.

Q: We'll pick this up the next time.

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Today is May 9, 2001. Bob, we're in 1965 when you entered USIA.

PETERSEN: That's right. I started June 23.

Q: How did they train you? Did you have the equivalent to an A-100? Talk a little about the class and what you did. Can you characterize some of the people in it?

PETERSEN: The training was quite formal and began immediately. I have the sense that I walked in the USIA headquarters on the first day and that within minutes of being introduced to the other nine Junior Officer Trainees (JOTs) who were part of USIA, we were receiving substantive orientation lectures. It couldn't really have been that way. I don't really remember how long we were sequestered as a USIA group before we joined our State colleagues in the A-100 course. Much was made of the fact that the 10 of us were the first USIA people joining as Foreign Service officers. It didn't mean much to me at all. It was only much, much later that it had any significance whatsoever. But others, the people who greeted us and spoke to us over the first days in the Agency, talked about how they were in the Foreign Service Career Reserve. We were constantly being congratulated. I had no idea what they were talking about.

Q: These things are an indication of where you fit in the scheme of things. It's ridiculous to call people "reserve" when they come in the same way and all that. It was just sort of the old boys, I guess, or trying to keep people in their place.

PETERSEN: Perhaps later we'll go into this, the tension of the different outlook between those involved in public outreach, and cultural information programs as a career versus others who had a different orientation in the Foreign Service. But as far as I knew, the nine others and I were joining the Foreign Service. I remember having picked the block for "USIA" when I took the Foreign Service exam the previous year based in large part on a serious conversation I had with my college roommate. I was a senior in college when I took the exam. He had spent part of his life prior to going to school in the U.S. living abroad as the son of missionary parents in India. We talked about what Foreign Service life and work was. He described to me what he knew about USIS in India. I said, "That really sounds like what I would really like to do." With not much more preparation or research than that, I had that career choice. The exam was a single exam, but that set me on a path from that time forward. So, I ended up in June '65 at 1776 Pennsylvania Avenue in USIA.

Q: You say there were nine others in your class. What were they like?

PETERSEN: I'll tell you something that I think is very significant. Five of the 10 of us were female. I think perhaps we were on the cusp of a major change. Looking ahead to the A-100 course, I remember one of the A-100 course members who was a Yale graduate. At one point, half in jest but half not in jest, he said, "What was so wrong with the great tradition of picking people from the Northeast and from the elite schools and having a male-dominated Foreign Service?" This was mid-'60s and the whole country was in a post-World War II awakening to political correctness, gender issues and race issues. I shouldn't say "awakening." It's always been part of our country. But a resurgence or a heightened activism on some of those issues. So, there we were: five women, five men. I was by a couple of days not the youngest of the 10. One of the ladies

was a few days younger than I. She and I and one other stood out as rather young and in terms of work experience less experienced than the other members of our small group. There were people who had worked in journalism. One person had been teaching on the west coast at Berkeley. There was someone who was still in graduate school. In fact, even before she had her first Foreign Service assignment, she took time off to complete her doctorate at Johns Hopkins. But she was nevertheless inducted in the summer of '65. I don't recall anybody from the west coast. The fellow who had been teaching at Berkeley was from the New York area. I have the impression that all 10 of us were from east of the Mississippi River. I don't recall any Southerners from the group. We were from Midwest, Northeast, Atlantic central states.

Q: Did you keep an eye on them? How did they move in the Foreign Service?

PETERSEN: I really didn't. In those first few months and for the first assignment or two, you kind of pay attention to who's being transferred where. I think there might have been some form letters that went out from some of us, sent to all the members of the group, of what we were doing in the midst of the first assignment or the end of the first assignment. Some of them may indeed have remained close and fairly well bonded and maintained close ties. Of the four other men, two of them had full careers to retirement. One of them specialized in Turkish affairs. I think he had several assignments in Turkey. I know he served in Israel after I had served in Israel. I didn't see him there. I gather he retired after a normal career. The other fellow spent a lot of time in Africa. Two of the men left the Foreign Service after their first assignment. One went to Germany and the other went to Brazil and they resigned. I think the fellow who went to Germany just said it wasn't what he had in mind. The fellow who went to Brazil resigned to take over a family business in New Jersey. So, there were three of us of the men left.

Of the five women, one resigned after her first or second assignment and went to work at the Smithsonian. Another went to Ecuador and Pakistan. She resigned and returned to upstate New York and to some sort of social work, public service but in social affairs. That leaves three. A third woman ran into that problem that existed then and that no longer exists: she married. She married a Foreign Service officer. She had to resign. It was required. It was the regulation at the time. Later, she rejoined the Foreign Service. I know she served in India at one time. She had some European assignment. But I've lost track of her. She perhaps went on to a full career. So, the fourth lady I'm thinking of, her first assignment was in Sub-Saharan Africa. I don't know where else she served. But I later ran into her in the mid to late '70s when she was a desk officer in the Africa Bureau. I sought her out to get her advice on a post I was considering bidding on. Later, when she was serving in India, she died in an automobile accident in service. The last woman had a very good career. I say that because she ended up as an ambassador in Nepal. At some point in her career, she did switch formally from USIA to State. I don't know at what point.

On a couple of occasions, there have been reunions, not of the USIA group, but of the A-100 people, a mixture. I've never attended one of those. I've never been in Washington

when one of them was held. I would hear about them later. In one or two instances, I even got the group photo that was taken or a brief summary of where people were or what they had done. So, I haven't had the opportunity through reunions to stay in touch with the group.

Q: How did you find the USIA contingent were received with the State Department contingent?

PETERSEN: Perhaps I was naive, but frankly, it was seamless joining into the A-100 course. Obviously, we had to have had a different orientation, oriented more to public affairs. But I don't recall anything either as part of the formal A-100 training or the information get-togethers, conversations, exchanges and whatever that were part of that course that drew a distinction at any point. That isn't to say that they weren't there and that they weren't significant. I simply can't recall any. But I was at the time busy charging ahead.

Q: Also, you all came in basically through the same system. It was just which box you ticked and you hadn't picked up what might be the virus of discrimination between one branch or another. How did you see yourself going?

PETERSEN: There was some USIA training that was relatively brief compared to the A-100 course. Then we went into the A-100 course in the summer. At some point in the A-100 course, it came time to bid on our first foreign assignments. One thing that was different then from today is that everybody was so enthusiastic about going abroad, getting out of Washington. There were some people who did have spouses who had separate careers, but it wasn't a significant thing yet in terms of the entire group. I'm drawing a distinction between today, when there is such tension and challenge in getting people to go abroad and take their assignments because of commitments and family members' need to remain in the U.S. I don't recall much of that kind of conversation. But I was a bachelor, so maybe the married members of the group talked among themselves about some of the issues that I wouldn't have been facing.

In any event, it became time for us to bid on our first assignments. As I recall, I wrote an essay explaining how I wanted to spend my career and where I wanted to go on that first assignment. I mentioned the Middle East and Turkey as particular interests of mine for a career. But I said, "Regardless of what my career aspirations might be, I want only one first assignment: Vietnam." I believe I put in that essay an explanation that prior to joining USIA, I had been doing some voter registration work in the civil rights movement and that if I were not in the Foreign Service, I felt that's where I would want to be: in the civil rights movement. But as a member of the Foreign Service, I felt there was only one place that I should be and that should be where my country was engaged in war. I felt I should be in Vietnam. I went on a trip with my good friend from college, the fellow who had been my roommate for four years and the fellow who was the son of a missionary. He was a graduate student at Columbia who was working in Washington that summer. He and I went camping on Assateague Island for the weekend in order for me to talk with

him about my Foreign Service plans. We sat in the sand and talked seriously. He was much more experienced in terms of foreign affairs than I was. I remember following that conversation, I went back the following week and wrote my essay explaining what I wanted to do. Well, I submitted the essay and was told, "This is ridiculous. We don't permit any first-tour officers to go to Vietnam. We don't want them underfoot. We don't want them in the way. This is not a training program like that." I knew that before writing the essay. In the first day or two of joining USIA, several people had said to our group, "Some of you are probably nervous about the possibility of being sent to Vietnam. Let me assure you that is not going to happen in your first assignment. We don't permit people to go to Vietnam for a training assignment. But after your first assignment, yes, there is a real likelihood that you will go there as we forecast the need for lots of Foreign Service Officers (FSOs) there." I submitted that essay. I was told, "That's not going to be in the cards." I was young, I was naive and didn't know any different. I found a fellow who had worked in Vietnam and was back working in USIA and I explained my situation to him. He took a liking to me. He said, "By golly, you really want to fight for it? I'll give you some advice." To make a long story somewhat shorter, it came down to this: after I got several people in Personnel on my side, they said, "All right, kid, you want to make an exception. Here's what you're going to have to do. You're going to have to convince the head of JUSPAO (Joint United States Public Affairs Office) in Saigon, Barry Zorthian, who is due back in Washington. We'll set up a meeting with Zorthian for you and you get him to approve it and we'll permit you to go." I think they all figured Zorthian wasn't going to make an exception. Well, the day came in summer '65. Barry Zorthian, director of JUSPAO, was back in Washington. I got excused from whatever duties I had at the A-100 course to go over to USIA headquarters. I remember joining a sizable group of people in an auditorium and sitting there with many others listening to Barry Zorthian describe what was going on in JUSPAO. Then he was rushing from place to place. The meeting that had been arranged for me with him was to be a "pull-aside" in a hallway. I was stationed there with this fellow who had first taken a shine to me and had told me he'd give me some pointers and help me out. He stood there in the hallway with me. He said, "When Zorthian comes out of that room, you're going to have a minute or less to make your case. You make it to him." Zorthian came out. I was introduced to him. I explained why I ought to go to Vietnam and why he should approve it and make an exception. I'll never forget, he looked at me and said (I'll leave the expletive out), "Well, all right." Then he strode off down the hall and went to his next meeting. The fellow standing there with me, the witness from the Personnel office, suddenly broke out into a smile and said, "By golly, it's going to happen. You can go. You can be a JOT at JUSPAO." Then I went into Vietnamese language training and took the Southeast Asia area studies course. Early in '66, I was on my way to Saigon.

Q: What were you hearing from your colleagues? I was in Personnel and got myself assigned to Vietnam in '69 because I wanted to see the elephant, more or less. What was the attitude? At that time, was it still an adventure or was this just stupid? What were you getting from people?

PETERSEN: Frankly, among more than a few of the members of the A-100 course, there

was opposition to our being in Vietnam in the way we were there with the military force and a commitment to defend South Vietnam against northern incursion. That was an intellectual, patriotic, professional opinion. There were others who said, “Geez, I don’t want to be anywhere near that place for personal reasons.” There was one person in the A-100 course who had worked in Vietnam just prior to joining the Foreign Service and was looking forward to returning and taking up his duties again out there. But I don’t recall anyone evincing any particular support, enthusiasm, or admiration for my determination to go to Vietnam. Perhaps this fellow did, but he was a little bit older than I, quite a bit more experienced, and focused on his own career development. I don’t recall spending a lot of time talking with him. He already spoke Vietnamese, too. I think he was operating at a slightly different level than I.

Q: How much Vietnamese did you get and how did you find it?

PETERSEN: I got six months. That was a struggle. I knew from studying German in college, in the artificial classroom situation, that I don’t respond well to learning a language. As soon as my feet hit the ground in Vietnam though, it was as if I was absorbing the language, the sights, the sounds, the smells, and the feelings of the country through my skin. I became a very fluent illiterate. I didn’t overly care about the grammar, but it was just the speed of communicating widely and quickly. It was like night and day. The moment I was in Vietnam, the change came about. But for that first six months, I was probably still at 0+. It was awful, especially the first few months when I didn’t hear any tones at all.

Q: It’s a five-tone language. I took two weeks, enough to let me know that.

You arrived there when?

PETERSEN: In early ’66. Probably the beginning of March.

Q: How did it work out? What did they have you doing?

PETERSEN: I was just describing Barry Zorthian to you. I think there were some interesting things about my arrival there, but let me move ahead for a couple days. At some point early in my first week there, like all new arrivals at JUSPAO, I was scheduled to have lunch with Barry Zorthian at his residence. I gather it was a routine, maybe a daily thing. I was notified that I would have lunch at Barry’s residence. I showed up and there was an Army colonel there. He was the other new arrival that day having lunch with Barry. Just the three of us at the table, sitting outside, Barry sitting at the head of the table. I can’t recall much about the lunch, but it struck me as elegant and very attractively set, very nice. Barry turned first to the colonel, “Well, tell me about yourself.” This guy went on and on. He had a lot to tell. This man had a career. I remember sitting there listening and thinking, “Gee, wow, that’s really impressive.” Then Barry turned to me and said, “Tell me about yourself.”

I'll never forget that Barry threw his fork down. It clattered on the table. A combination of driblets of food and expletives came forth from his mouth about those "idiots back in Washington. Didn't they know there was an absolute rule prohibiting first tour officers. " It seemed like an awful long time he was in a tirade about "those idiots back there." At some point, I was able to intervene and say, "Mr. Zorthian, sir, you approved it." Then that set him off again. He wanted to know when and how. I reminded him of that hallway meeting. He then said, "Well, what the hell was I thinking?"

Q: What was your impression when you hit Tan Sanh Hut Air Base?

PETERSEN: I got to Vietnam in the evening on a flight from Hong Kong. There was an incident taking place because there was a blackout. It couldn't have been that significant an incident because I was on a commercial flight and it landed. But nevertheless, it was significant enough that there was a blackout. I was hustled through whatever the formalities of arrival were and taken to downtown Saigon to the Aster Hotel. There were a number of people being housed there and I was put in a room that I shared with someone else newly arrived. I don't recall what agency he was with. But he was a civilian. It was a short walk from the hotel to JUSPAO. I don't recall how I got there the next day.

In reporting for duty, I reported to the executive officer. Unlike in the military, he wasn't the second in command. He simply was the chief administrator of JUSPAO. His name was Harold Wright, an experienced administrative person. He outlined for me what the training program would be. He was determined that I would indeed have a training program at JUSPAO and wouldn't simply be assigned or "misused" by being thrown in somewhere where a body was needed. He actually had a formal training program laid out. I took a look at it before coming here today and read the very precise "two weeks here, two weeks there, etc." It didn't turn out that way, but it was a good starting point, a good negotiating point for what I needed to cover and where I should go. I had a real positive impression of those people I met. I remember Betty Paidian was the personnel officer at JUSPAO. Wilmer Wilkie was one of the assistant administrators there; he handled finance. I met that group the first morning and was excited and pleased.

Q: What was the situation in '66 on the ground in Vietnam?

PETERSEN: Anything I say I'm reporting through the somewhat dim recollections of a newly arrived JOT. A lot of confusion about who was who, what was what, what was going on, what was underway in the countryside, outside the city. But in saying that, I realize that almost all of that confusion must have been my own. Everything I saw and heard, every acronym, organization, person I met, job title was all so fresh and new and trying to sort that out rapidly was probably what gives me the idea that there was confusion. I remember some early conversations with people about terrorism, bombings in the city. There had been an event at the chancery. In our neighborhood where JUSPAO was located and where I lived just a block or two further down the street on the river where there were floating restaurants, there was an anti-personnel mine, a bomb, that

went off at one of the restaurants. All of this was happening and it just made me think, “Geez, where is the center of gravity of all this? How do you define our goals and our opponents here? Just how are we going to get out and win this thing?” not quite knowing what “win” meant or what the “thing” was. All through the time I was there, I was meeting people who had served in a number of countries in Southeast Asia and was just absorbing their experiences, their outlooks, their attitudes. I remember a lot of discussion about the Chu Hoi program, whether it was effective, and how to make it work.

Q: Chu Hoi were the Viet Cong who were welcomed back into South Vietnamese society.

PETERSEN: They gave up their allegiance to the communist goals of taking over in South Vietnam and were rehabilitated. Later in ’66 for a brief period in the field, I was at Chu Hoi Center and even interviewed a few people there. Being in JUSPAO, I either showed a movie or set up an exhibit or did something there. I had some contact with the Chu Hoi effort that way and by designing leaflets and posters in connection with that. One time in ’66, I was in the television studio where we were filming an interview with a returnee for broadcast. There was a lot of effort and commitment by JUSPAO to the Chu Hoi program.

But your question was, what was the outlook? What I recall is a sense of confusion but a sense of excitement, not discouragement. To a large extent, that reflects my own personality. I found a lot of job satisfaction in being there, a lot of professional satisfaction. I was excited about what I was doing, what I saw, where I went.

Q: What were you doing?

PETERSEN: My first few weeks were, frankly, quite mundane. I had some tasks in that executive office working under Harold Wright’s tutelage, or under the tutelage of those he assigned me to work with. I had tasks such as, I remember being pleased that I had worked out a system to increase the speed of APO mail delivery by a full day by looking at some logjams were and where bags were picked up and delivered and making some recommendations. We got our mail a day earlier. I studied distribution systems within JUSPAO and in all the grandeur of a brand new JOT wrote my first official memo: do this, do that, I recommend this and that. Looking back on it, I enjoyed that. It’s sort of like the traditional story of the guy who rises up through the ranks of some great corporation but he started in the mailroom. Maybe that was me. But the time I was spending outside of JUSPAO, my breakfasts, lunches, dinners, any free time, everything from visiting the zoo to going to performances, just talking and listening to people, sampling food on the street, looking at the architecture, I was just drinking everything in and enjoying it immensely. I found Vietnamese society fascinating. I had a rather mundane initiation in terms of the work but felt that there was great excitement outside the walls of JUSPAO. I took immediately to the tastes of Vietnam, loved Vietnamese food, enjoyed the sounds. For some reason, I saw some traditional Vietnamese operas, which I think are basically similar to Cantonese operas, and enjoyed the colors, the costumes, and the pageants.

But after the executive office, I went into the exchanges office of JUSPAO. The young Vietnamese high school students meant to go to the U.S. were interviewed in the JUSPAO exchanges office. In the time I was there, I remember interviewing about 30 of the 60 and enjoying that and making the first real use on the job of the very limited Vietnamese that I had at that stage. I worked on some Fulbright programs. I remember in the exchanges office dealing with some Vietnamese who were looking for opportunities for graduate studies in the U.S. It was a chance for me to visit some campuses and start to learn about the educational system.

One of the things that struck me was an anomaly. In a great Confucian sense, a scholar would be highly revered and held in rather high esteem and rewarded. That wasn't the case in Vietnam in 1966, where the monetary rewards were going to Vietnamese who were doing other things than being scholars and thinkers and teachers in the society. I started to see the impact that war and a massive U.S. presence had, the disjointedness that was occurring in society. It was one of the things I took note of.

In the exchanges office, the experienced officer I was working for, Bill Sayler, and his boss, Art Bardos, were facilitating appearances outside of Vietnam by some Vietnamese performing and visual artists. This was part of our effort to help portray Vietnam as a full and complete and interesting society, not simply an armed society engaged in constant warfare, but to humanize for the world the Vietnamese nation, our ally. I found that interesting. This was just a small little part of that effort, but I remember giving some thought to that.

I mentioned Art Bardos, Bill Saylor's boss. One day, I had to write a cable that was to go to Washington. I typed it up on the old green form with multi-copied yellow and pink forms. Then it would go down to the code room for transmission. I took it in to Mr. Bardos for his initialing, his approval, so that it could go out. I remember him reading it over carefully and looking up at me and saying, "You can't send it in this form. You have a mistake." I said, "Oh, Mr. Bardos, sir, what's the mistake?" He said, "Here" and he pointed out that I had split an infinitive in a cable. I'll never forget blurting out to Art, "Mr. Bardos, my God, there's a war on!" He said something about, "Well, nevertheless, correct this thing before it goes." That made a real impression on me, the fact that in the midst of all this hurly burly, rush and heavy workload and all, here was a man who, by golly, gave 100 percent and insisted that you do so. If we have a chance later on, I'll tell you of another meeting with Art where many years later, I recounted this incident to him one time at the Smithsonian. That was the exchanges office. I enjoyed that.

I went from there to the Joint Economic Section to work as part of my rotational JOT series of assignments. The Joint Economic Section was a State-USAID (United States Agency for International Development) section. I was assigned to the Civilian Manpower Committee Staff. The Civilian Manpower Committee [CMC] had been created by Ambassador Lodge that January. The members of the CMC included representatives of State, JUSPAO, USAID, the Army, the Navy, the Air Force, and some of the larger construction companies working in Vietnam. The Labor attaché chaired the committee. I

was on the staff and the other members of the staff were two State Department economic officers, a Department of Labor person who was in Vietnam on an extended TDY (temporary duty) just to work on this committee, an Army major, and myself. We put together a report, a six-month forecast, on personnel needs in the Republic of Vietnam. I remember telling you a few minutes ago about taking note in the exchanges office of some of the anomalies in society that were occurring because of the high monetary rewards going to somebody who could operate heavy construction equipment, a bulldozer, whereas a professor of Vietnamese poetry, who in the past would have been at higher levels of society, was now just eking out a meager existence and there was a topsy turvy economic situation in the country where different skills, different training, were valued differently because of this massive war effort. I really got a look at how this was affecting the country while putting that report together, determining what wages would be necessary to fill vacancies in different sectors of the economy. One of the issues was, well, should more Koreans or Filipinos be brought in?

Q: These were called "third country nationals [TCNs]."

PETERSEN: Yes. Or could find the necessary personnel within South Vietnam? We had needs for labor among men of a certain age who would presumably also be needed in the military and what effect would recruiting such people to work in construction and other security projects have on military recruitment? Those were some of the things that we worked on there. I also, with the other staff members worked on developing a new way of coming up with weekly job listings, surveying all the major employers in the country and then making known, advertising, in different areas of the country and different sectors of the economy what the major job openings were week by week so that work planning could be done. As part of that, I worked with this fellow from the Department of Labor. We spent some time researching and putting together something that may sound very mundane, but it was an essential tool: A list of different jobs by job title that were internationally recognized so if recruitment were done outside of Vietnam to fill some of these vacant positions, apples would compare to apples and oranges would compare to oranges.

Then I worked on a project on the Civilian Manpower Committee alone, without the other staff, and one that I enjoyed because it allowed me to spend my time outside the office. I put together a security form so people could move from job location to job location. We were finding that when people were needed to be transferred from one location to another, they often couldn't get security clearance from the security authorities in the new location even though they had been cleared by the Vietnamese security authorities in the other jurisdiction. Working through MACV (Military Assistance Command, Vietnam), which set me up with some initial contacts, I went out and liaised with the Vietnamese military security services in the different jurisdictions. Then I designed a two-page form. I must have gotten my Vietnamese language tutor to help me with it because it was a bilingual Vietnamese-English two page form. It was a security form. Then I went back out to all these different Vietnamese military security service jurisdictions and got each one of them to approve the form so that we'd then have a single

form that could be used anywhere and people could go from one job location to another. If they had their clearance in one area, they would be recognized in another area. It facilitated movement by needed labor. I enjoyed that. I found that exhilarating. But a lot of the fun was not being tied down but being out there meeting and traveling and working with a variety of people all around the country. On that assignment is where I first heard that revered name of Brown and Root, Morrison-Knudsen and learned of the significance of it.

Q: That is a major construction firm.

PETERSEN: For somebody who had joined USIA to be a cultural and information "type," this and other similar assignments I found ideal. I enjoyed them immensely and felt I was learning a lot about how the country worked, certainly how our government, way beyond the Foreign Service, was working in this particular country and how the war effort was being waged.

Then I went from there into something very traditional. I went to the consular section. I imagine you have not interviewed a single person who has not paid his dues in the consular section. Looking back on it, I enjoyed that tremendously and probably could have seen myself spending a career very happily as a consular officer. In the first period in the consular section, while being undoubtedly kept on a short rein and watched closely by the consular officers and the experienced FSNs, I participated in immigrant and non-immigrant visa interviews, and did some processing of adoptions and marriages. But after doing that for a brief time, I really had an opportunity. One of the consuls had to leave. He was going off somewhere. Maybe it was just an extended R&R (rest & recreation). I don't remember. But I was told that I could step in and take over his area. He had seaman's affairs and deaths and estates.

Q: Was that in a separate office?

PETERSEN: Yes. I had my own office. It was his staff, but I had my own support staff while I substituted for him. In doing that, I had 15 different cases that I worked on, not from start to finish, but some of them were in the initial stages, some were near the end stages. I finished up a couple of them. But 15 separate cases of repatriating remains or taking charge of estates, evaluating estates, and contacting next of kin. I enjoyed that. That involved some rather somber and very sad duties, such as going to a mortuary. I remember being involved in an effort to try to identify some remains and determine whether these were the remains of someone, an American civilian, who had gone missing. I also went down to the prison and visited incarcerated people. I met a guy there. I was there to provide the full service and appropriate protection for American citizens, but, gosh, some of the people I met. One guy I visited was in prison on a murder charge. There was another guy in there for smuggling. If you have been to a prison, it's pretty spartan. Probably the aspect of that work that I enjoyed most, seaman's affairs and deaths and estates, was handling the seaman's affairs. Every American carrier that came in, the master would come in and present his papers. I would inspect them. I did a quick study on

what I was supposed to be looking for. I came to respect the Foreign Affairs Manual [FAM]. I would inspect the papers and if they were in order, I would attach the consular stamps and sign. But quite frequently, it seemed like every ship (but it wasn't every ship) had problems. The master either had discipline problems and he'd bring a seaman to appear. I'd listen to the presentation and make a judgement. I had seamen who had charges against other seamen. I had masters who tried to discharge people. Some of them were bad cases and you could see why they shouldn't be on the ship. In other cases, I remember one particular seaman told me his master was giving him an unfair deal. I remember finding for the seaman that he shouldn't be put off in that port. It wasn't until then I realized that on a merchant vessel you could still be put in chains. In one case, there was a seaman who had been put in irons for trying to knife a shipmate. He was brought into port that way and brought into the consulate. I found all that rather interesting.

Q: Did you have Coast Guard officers working with you on that?

PETERSEN: I don't recall any Coast Guard officers at all.

Q: Later, they assigned a Coast Guard officer and a petty officer. It made it a lot easier. Also, later, they had a member of the Masters, Mates, and Pilots Union. So, when the Coast Guard officer and a union representative would appear on a ship, there wasn't an awful lot of crap because the whole triumvirate was right there looking down their throat. Who was the chief of the consular section?

PETERSEN: I wish I could remember his name. I vaguely remember his stature as being somewhat heavyset.

Q: I was thinking of Bob Bishton.

PETERSEN: I just can't remember the name.

Q: I was consul general there for 18 months, '69-'70. I know exactly what you're talking about. The work there was fascinating because you had everything.

PETERSEN: Yes. As I say, I remember thinking at the time that this would be a very, very rewarding way to spend a Foreign Service career, perhaps not just doing immigrant and non-immigrant visa interviews for a career, but I really liked the detective work, especially the deaths and estates and being involved so deeply in people's lives in such a significant way.

Q: It's the equivalent to being a death sergeant and a social worker.

PETERSEN: And at times being a father, professor, friend, and priest. I remember some of the tales that I was told when people would come in. Sometimes they were in real destitute situations. I could regale you with several dozen stories of individual cases, but I think that gives you enough of a flavor.

Q: Were you making any contact with young Vietnamese ladies or others there?

PETERSEN: The answer is yes -- Vietnamese men and women who were not directly related to the work I was doing. Some of them were artists. I had the opportunity, having served in the exchanges section, to find out about cultural events going on through the university and whatnot. I was aware of art exhibits and music performances. I was very fortunate. After initially staying in the Aster Hotel, a fellow asked me if I wanted to share an apartment with him. He was working at JUSPAO. He had formerly been in Thailand with Air America. Then he had worked in similar assignments in the Philippines. He was middle-aged. He had spent much of his life in East Asia and he really knew his way around in terms of how the Foreign Service bureaucracy worked. He approached me and said, “AID has just completed a new apartment building. I can get us an apartment. Would you like to share an apartment?” I said, “Yeah, that would be great.” Before long, through him – and he seemed to know a lot of people working in Saigon – my circle of acquaintances expanded rapidly. I took advantage of the Vietnamese I was meeting to practice my Vietnamese as much as possible. I had left formal training at FSI (Foreign Service Institute) with an abysmal record in that artificial classroom setting, but in the real world, it was quite different. I was very motivated. I remember a technique I would use at a gathering or going from place to place in the course of a day or evening. Whatever my first conversation of the day or the event or the evening – it could have been someone telling me about his family or someone explaining that she had traveled to Paris and come back – whatever the vocabulary, the issue, the circumstances were of that first conversation, I would use that as my framework. If I had six more conversations with six different people, I would do everything I could to steer our conversation along the same pathway so that I’d hear that vocabulary over and over. I remember someone telling me about his family – his older brother, his younger brother, older sister, younger sister. Undoubtedly at FSI we had gone through the names of the different family members. An older brother or sister is not the same as a younger brother or sister. Different name. But it hadn’t stuck. But in those real-life situations, I would push hard at that. It worked. Another thing I did, I went to a bookstore and got a copy of Kim van Kieu, a great epic poem that’s a Vietnamese classic. It seemed to go on for a hundred and some pages with some illustrations. In reality, it’s a Chinese story that was adopted by the Vietnamese and made into their own classic. But in any event, I got this and studied it and studied it. I memorized passages. I would rip off these passages from Kim van Kieu in the midst of a conversation. If I hit it right, I could tell by body language that “this person really knows our country or our language.” Sometimes when I hit it wrong with not quite the right passage to quote in connection with what we were discussing, people would look at me like “Who is this fool here?” But I used that and similar techniques to really grease the wheels, to keep things moving. I probably didn’t memorize more than a few dozen lines and images and references, but by throwing out a line or a word or two from the poem that someone would recognize, you could leap forward in terms of confidence in one another. If I were in the midst of interviewing someone and in response I would throw out a line of a poem instead of struggling to come up with something myself, you could just see the barriers going down. I enjoyed that. Frankly, I look back on it now and it seems

significant, but it was only because it was the first time I was dealing with a foreign language. We all do that with every foreign language we study. We learn what we can in terms of the classics and the poetry and try to work that in and make use of it and learn from it.

Q: Did you get outside Saigon much?

PETERSEN: I did. In July of ’66 for a week, I was assigned as an embassy control officer to Congressman Prentiss Walker, a Republican from the state of Mississippi. I saw this as a great opportunity to move around the country. I had already been going out on my own finding excuses to accompany people who were traveling in the Delta or up in the Highlands and had gone out practically every weekend or during the week if I could connect it to the work I was doing. I spent a week accompanying the Congressman. That was one example of many opportunities I had. I spent quite a bit of time in Dalat over a multi-week period working with the BTAO (Bureau of Technical Assistance Operations) in Dalat. That came near the end of my being a JOT, but the very first week I was in Vietnam, on a weekend, I found out through the fellow that I later shared an apartment with, that one of the JUSPAO airplanes was flying up to Dalat that weekend to deliver some material. I arranged to hop aboard and fly up there and start looking around Dalat. I did a lot of that, participating in whatever opportunity I could find to get out and get around.

Q: Do you have any other comments on the Prentiss Walker visit? What was his experience?

PETERSEN: One, I was either asked or told that I would be the control officer. I remember thinking, “Wow, what an honor” and someone straightened me out very quickly and said, “No, it isn’t an honor. Nobody else wants to do it.” It reminded me again of my status. I was an FSO-8. I was the only FSO-8 there. There were no FSO-7s. The next rank up was FSO-6. That’s how low I was on the totem pole. But I enjoyed it immensely. I did a little field work, went out and checked areas that we thought that Walker should see. I took note of the fact, one, that he was Republican, and that was significant; and two, that he was planning to run for the Senate seat out of Mississippi that year and that he was on the Agriculture Committee. In reading about him, I learned he had been a poultry farmer while in Congress. He was an expert on that. He arrived and the embassy put him up at the Aster. I remember taking him around, getting him a cultural orientation to Saigon, and taking him to a restaurant and different places and introducing him to people that first day. The second day, I had arranged for him to go to the Highlands. We visited the First Air Cavalry and we went and visited the 101st Airborne Brigade, which was involved in Operation Hastings at the time. The commanding general there took us with him in his chopper and we flew around looking at some of the efforts underway. At one point, because we had the headsets on so we could hear the commo with the chopper pilot, and we had to swoop down low because we were coming into what would have been the path of some artillery rounds. We had to go below it. But it was interesting to see the Congressman in action posing with the troops for

photo ops. This was my early USIA training, making sure that we had at every conceivable photo op the photographers ready. Of course, we were accompanied by a photographer throughout his visit. On the third day he was with us, a Wednesday, the whole day was dedicated to AID projects, self-help projects. And I remember the Congressman, who was a poultry farmer, in one village going into a building where there were Dalat bags filled with chicken feed. I remember him sticking his hand in a very knowledgeable way into that feed and sifting it and taking it up to his nose and whatnot and looking at it and going out and looking at those chickens in the village. I made sure there was a lot about what we were doing in Vietnamese agriculture. That was part of his visit. We saw a lot of chickens out there in the field.

The next day, we had some briefings. It was the Congressman, General Westmoreland and I sitting together as the General briefed him on the situation. I remember General Westmoreland talking about how good the American boys were who were there and how important it was that we support them properly and that Congress provide the support that DOD (Department of Defense)needed and so forth. I wasn't supposed to be in that meeting. At least that was MACV's point of view. They were a little upset. I could tell by the body language and the shocked looks on their faces when I did not respond to the nudge to get out of what was to be a one on one meeting. I wasn't going to miss that opportunity though, so I sat through it. General Westmoreland's looks at me during the meeting were quizzical. I won't say they were scalding. But it was an opportunity and I wasn't going to let it pass. It was the only time I ever saw General Westmoreland the whole time I was there.

Then we went over and met with the AID director. I remember the AID director talking about dislocated populations and the agricultural support projects and self-help projects and the importance of poultry projects. I got a real insight into something there. The Congressman said, "Well, you're doing it wrong." The AID director said, "What do you mean?" He said, "You just told me that in this one village, egg production is so important. Well, I was there and you brought in broilers. You didn't bring in layers." That congressman knew his chickens and told AID they had brought in the wrong shipment of chickens to accomplish the objectives of that particular project. I got a kick out of it because he wasn't chewing me out; he was chewing out the AID director. In a way, that's an indication of success of that visit. It wasn't just all photo ops.

Later, we met with the assistant director of JUSPAO. For whatever reason, I don't know why, Barry Zorthian wasn't around to meet the Congressman, so he met the assistant director, briefed him about all the outreach efforts at JUSPAO. And then we went over to the ambassador's residence for lunch. Ambassador Lodge greeted Congressman Walker and said, "Well, if you think a Republican congressman from Mississippi meeting with a Lodge from Massachusetts is going to really help you, we'll have our lunch together, Congressman." I thought, "Oh, okay, it's going to be a political discussion." I was unceremoniously told by Lodge's assistant that I wasn't part of the luncheon, so I cooled my heels outside with a growling stomach while the Congressman had lunch with Ambassador Lodge. But unlike the meeting with General Westmoreland, where I made

sure that I was a participant – of course, I made notes that I shared later with people, but they were rather innocuous; it was an innocuous conversation – Ambassador Lodge wasn't about to have a JOT at his table for lunch.

The next day, Friday, the only significant meeting I recall, we met with Phil Habib, who was head of the political section. What stands out there was perhaps in contrast to some of the meetings and conversations the Congressman had been having all week, Phil Habib described some of the real problems along with the successes and the hopes and the goals. He described some of the threats, shortcomings. I was very impressed by seeing that head of the political section talk to the Congressman that way.

You'd asked about getting out in the field. Later on that year, I worked in the field representative's division of JUSPAO. JUSPAO had a number of divisions. To give you an idea of what was involved there, there was a JUSPAO provincial representative in every province in the country responsible for what today we call "public diplomacy," in those days "public affairs," winning the hearts and minds. That division had some real resources. I mentioned the Twin Otter (aircraft) that we had. That wasn't the only airplane. There were other aircraft that were flown. I think the Otter was flown by the Army. But Field Division had a lot of military people assigned to it. I don't know that any of the JUSPAO province representatives were military officers. Maybe some were, but I have the impression they were all Foreign Service personnel. I went to one province and spent an extended period with one province representative going around with him. It was an extra body for him. It was a great learning experience for me, traveling around. That was the only time the whole time I was in Vietnam where I ever had bullets fired in my direction. He and I were in a jeep going down a road that we thought had been cleared. We found out later that it hadn't been. We had seen a truckload of Republic of Korea [ROK] troops on that road and he was under the impression that it was all right. He knew it had been a disputed road and one that you wouldn't use except during daylight hours, but he was under the impression it had been cleared earlier. We went down the road and somebody fired. The impression I got when I heard that "pow" from the side, I didn't realize that my head and my neck could descend down below my shoulder blades. I had a sore neck for a week just from that involuntary scrunching down. We had sandbags on the floorboard to provide some protection from hostile mines. There was nothing on the sides. It was just a jeep, sort of a military vehicle.

I traveled around to a number of provinces and interviewed province representatives. I was probably as unwelcome as one could be. Here I was, coming down from Saigon and taking time out of their busy days to interview them about their work in order to put together two documents. One of them was a guide to province facilities. I took great pride in that. I was pleased as punch with my results. It ended up being a manual in JUSPAO. We had great printing facilities, so I had a fancy cover put on it, designed to fit into a regular three ring binder. I don't remember how many pages it was, maybe 100. I typed fast after every interview. I put together a description of what each of these province representatives had available to him through the Vietnamese information service, through local liaison with U.S. or Vietnamese military, what was available commercially in terms

of if you wanted to mount exhibits or get leaflets designed -- everything to do with a province representative's job. I summarized it for each of the provinces. I did not get to every province. I relied on some written questions and got written answers for those I didn't visit. But I got around to a fair number of people and saw the country. I recall thinking that I would much prefer to work up in the mountainous area, the Highlands, rather than in the Delta, which I didn't find all that attractive, a great expanse of flat land. Topographically, it wasn't as interesting as the area to the north.

Then I did another document that ended up being a nine-page document that was a guide based on interviews of what every new province rep should be aware of as they stepped off the airplane. It was set up as a guide for each new fellow, how he ought to do his job and what he ought to be aware of and what some of the pitfalls could be and how to leverage opportunities to get things done. One of the things I put in there was, "Don't go hat in hand to State or to AID or to MACV. If you can't borrow it, go out and buy it, but be careful of your stature because you are a part of the province council. Don't be the whining guy with your hand out all the time." That was in the advice column. A lot of it had to do with very practical things of how to put up a display and advice about languages and so forth. I enjoyed that. Again, the key was getting out, getting around the country.

I did have other jobs as a JOT. I was assigned to the press section. When I was in the press section, I spent almost every single day over in the political section. They had me digging through the bio files and putting together a sanitized description of either all or as many as I could do of the candidates who were candidates for the constituent assembly. On September 11, 1966, there was an election. I put together this guide to all the candidates, or as many as I could find out about. I also spent a lot of time going out and talking to some people and reading a lot of newspapers. That was my first effort to translate material from Vietnamese into English for these files. It was for use in the press section for the journalists so they would have a guide as to what was going on. That's why I say it was a sanitized version. I was allowed access to the classified bio files, but just to unclassified material for the newsmen.

Q: Did you get involved with the five o'clock follies, the daily briefing which the correspondents became very dubious about?

PETERSEN: I observed the five o'clock follies a few times. I don't recall ever having an assignment to prepare any of the material while I was in the press section that was used by the follies. I do remember one time, when I was out in the field, buttonholing a correspondent and telling him of a great project that was underway in that province and that he ought to come and look at it. It was some development project. I remember him saying, "If it doesn't have blood on it, I don't want to see it." I did not deal directly with the newsmen.

Q: You're the new boy on the block. What were you getting from the senior officers who dealt with the press? What was their feeling about the correspondents at that time?

PETERSEN: You have to remember that a lot of the people in USIA first and then in JUSPAO second and in the press section third were people who had come to their work from backgrounds in journalism. They understood it. They felt good about it. They thought it was important, significant work. But because so many of them were former journalists, they also knew what journalism was about – it was about meeting deadlines, about if you could getting the scoop. They knew how to do a favor for a journalist, give him some information that others wouldn't have. They also understood very clearly the tension between the official version and what the journalists were getting. They understood perhaps in ways that others elsewhere in our embassy didn't appreciate that the journalists weren't there to be on our team. There was a real appreciation for what the journalists were there for. JUSPAO was very aggressive in getting our side of the story out. I'm starting to talk about things I really don't have firsthand knowledge about. I don't think we ever tampered with facts as we knew them. But that didn't mean that we wouldn't be very aggressive in our interpretation of the statistics. A lot of the facts were questioned – things like body counts. I never saw disdain for the journalists or animosity. There was personal and professional respect for the journalists who were there. They clearly understood what the journalists were there for and it wasn't what we were there for.

Q: When did you leave Vietnam?

PETERSEN: At the end of '67, after JOT training, which was capped off with one stay in Dalat.

Q: What were you doing up in Dalat? This was considered the Switzerland of Vietnam.

PETERSEN: It's fantastic. I was assisting Don Serbo, the province rep, with just about everything that was on his plate. He had English-teaching classes going. He had a library. In some respects, it resembled a little traditional USIS post. I think it was a USIS branch post. He wasn't the province rep. He was the ETAO. He had many traditional USIS programs. Dalat was a gorgeous place. I just delighted in every day that I spent there. Getting there was interesting. I was told that I would have the opportunity to go up and work with Don. I had been up there my first week in Vietnam. I had flown up for the day to deliver some goods on a Twin Otter that JUSPAO had and had met Don Serbo then. But nearly a year later, I was going up there for the second time to work with him. I remember waiting around in Saigon for several days for the weather to clear. We were told we couldn't get in to the place we were supposed to land. I think there was also another reason for the delay as well. One afternoon, I was told we could get in. I went out to Tan San Nhut airport and it was a four-seat airplane, a twin-engine airplane. It seated four: the pilot and three passengers. There were three of us to be dropped off at a small airfield near Dalat. For some reason, we were not going to go to the normal airfield that was used for Dalat. That normal airfield had a very short distance in the runway and when planes would take off, they would seem to go down below the runway off the edge of the highland there and then they would rise up into the air. I had not yet become a pilot and it was very dramatic to see that. We started taxiing at Tan San Nhut airport and had a

problem with the right engine. The pilot feathered the engine, handed me a tool, I opened the tiny little door, and I crawled out a little bit under the wing above the cowling for this right engine, and I tightened something down that had come loose and was flapping there, some piece of metal. I remember thinking, "Hmm …" I crawled back in and we took off. We got up in the Highlands area and it was very cloudy. Finally, our pilot took us down under the cloud cover and I remember looking to my right and to my left and seeing the sides of hills. We were in a long valley with land to the right and the left, vertical, and then a cloud over the top. We went through this funnel. I knew so little about flying, I didn't know enough to recognize what could have been a perilous situation. The pilot said, "I see where I should put you down." He didn't shut off the engines while we three – one of the other passengers was a Vietnamese army medic who was bringing in some medicine that was needed on some urgent basis – and another American and I – hopped out of the plane and ran to the edge of a field. The pilot turned the plane around 180 degrees, gunned the engine, took off, and got out of there. As he flew away and was airborne, we three looked at each other and said, "This is some airport. Where are we?" We found out later that we had been dropped off at the wrong place. Then, I was nervous. I assume the other two were nervous. On top of that, I was cold. I was up there and was in a short sleeved shirt, didn't have a jacket or a sweater. I had not realized that Dalat is chilly. It was cold enough that I saw my breath. I started shivering I was so cold. The other American said to me, "Ah, are you nervous?" I said, "Yes, I'm nervous. And I didn't bring my weapon with me." I had been issued a Carbi and a revolver earlier for other assignments, for other travel, at JUSPAO, and had decided to leave them behind, thinking it would be completely unnecessary. He said, "Don't worry. I've got one." I said, "Good. What have you got?" He reached in his pocket and pulled out a pen knife. I started laughing. The laughter made the two of us and the Vietnamese - I don't know what his feelings were – realize how silly and ridiculous this situation was.

Eventually, we found a little tiny bus. We walked out on a road and hailed a bus that we saw going along and asked the driver to take us to Dalat. He said, no, he couldn't do it, there was no way, night was falling. In fact, it was nightfall by the time we found the bus. He refused. We insisted strongly enough that he took us. He gunned that thing. I don't know how far away we were, but it seemed like we must have traveled 20 miles. We had been dropped off at the wrong place in the wrong area. When we got there and Don Serbo and others in Dalat found out what had happened, they said, "You guys were very fortunate." It makes a great story, but nothing really happened in the end. But that was the beginning of an idyllic assignment in Dalat working with Don at the branch post. I was so excited about that and enjoyed that so much. It was so beautiful, the beautiful lake and the flowers. We celebrated Tet of 1967 in Dalat. It was fun. I enjoyed it so much I went back to Saigon and said, "What I would really like to do is now get a branch post and become a BPAO (Branch Public Affairs Officer)." Shortly thereafter, I was told, "All right, we're going to send you to Da Nang. You can be the VAA [Vietnamese-American Association] director and you can be the acting BPAO because the BPAO is leaving and there is nobody to take his place." I was crestfallen because I remember thinking, "I want to go to Dalat, not Da Nang." I remember someone saying to me words to the effect of, "How dare you act as if you are entitled to go to Dalat. You're going to Da Nang. You said you

wanted a chance to be a BPAO. We're giving you that chance. You should be thrilled. How dare you not be thrilled." So, I became thrilled and headed off to Da Nang in early '67. That's where I was until the end of '67. I was the bi-national center director and for a lengthy period of time, I was the acting BPAO because they didn't have anybody. Then before I left, they did get a fellow to go up there to be the BPAO: Clyde Hanna. The day that I left to go down to Saigon to process out and leave the country, they assigned the second person, Phalen Peters, to go up there. But I was thrilled because it was a fantastic opportunity. The branch post had been in Hue and it was moved when we were burned out some months before. They moved everything, lock, stock, and barrel, including staff, down to Da Nang and set up shop there and had a combined PAA and branch post. They had two American officers. Al Ball was the BPAO and Barry Ballow was the VAA director. They both left the same week and I had the chance to go and replace them both.

Q: What sort of work were you doing there?

PETERSEN: The centerpiece of the bi-national center, the VAA, was an English-teaching program. We had a tremendous need for English speakers. Aside from the cultural reason, we had a tremendous economic reason for people who could speak a modicum of English to work with our construction companies, the military, etc. I had a volunteer group, I guess it was a combined paid and volunteer group of teachers. There were 48-50 teachers of English. All the classes were in the evening, five nights a week. We used a local high school for that. We had way over 1,000 students we would teach. I remember how touched I was by that night after night. There is no other way to describe it but that I was really touched by the determined, desperate effort of these students, and their dedication to studying. When we would issue a workbook for every student who would purchase classes, we would also issue candles for use in the classrooms because there was no electricity. Over 1,000. I used to sometimes stand in the courtyard and look… I think it was a three-sided building, multistory. I would stand in the courtyard and look to my left, center, and right and see the glow of candlelight coming out of the doors and windows, which were all open in the evening, of these students. Every student – we had adults and youngsters, high school age, middle age – would take the melted wax on the bottom of the candle and plop it down on the bench that served as the desk and that's how they would read the text, that's how they would see the blackboard. I was just touched by that.

Q: Where did you get the teachers?

PETERSEN: We had some professional teachers. One of our teachers was from a lycée, who had taught American literature at a lycée, and volunteered. I recall that we paid the teachers a stipend. We paid enough that there was a sense of obligation. It was psychological as well. For some of the teachers, it was needed income. But it also established the fact that they had an obligation. We had several professional teachers who had been trained to teach either English or American literature or to teach the English language. We also had some American volunteers who were not trained as teachers. Among the 50, probably half, maybe more, were of these volunteers who were not trained to be teachers in a classroom or certainly not trained to be English-language teachers.

Some were American military personnel. I had a Navy captain who spent his evenings teaching English. I was no longer a JOT. I was now an FSO-7 and I was launched in my real assignment. But I remember as an FSO-7 standing a little bit in awe of a Navy captain who was one of my faculty members and some of these other really qualified people who served as the teachers. It was a mixed group, a mixed bag.

The program was not without its challenges and dangers. The person who made his high school available to us was later assassinated before I left Da Nang. It's horrible what happened to him. But you asked what we were doing. English teaching was the basis for the bi-national center. It was the milk cow. That's where our income came from. It enabled us to do other things. I got two Vietnamese artists and staged an art exhibit, which is a very traditional thing for a bi-national center to do. I did a number of other cultural events while serving as the VAA director. In the midst of the war, we even had, through USIA, visiting American cultural performers. We had the Phoenix Singers come out. In front of the USIS library, which was part of the branch post, we set up an outdoor stage for their performance. They were very nervous about performing because I had Vietnamese soldiers standing at the corners of the stage and at the outer edges of the audience and at the perimeter of the premises. That was just standard operating procedure. And the stage was interesting. Book donations were a large part of the USIS program. One time there was no way that I was going to describe the numbers of books that I donated to different Vietnamese libraries and village centers and so forth. I used to describe them by the trailer load.

I had plenty of books. We had concrete steps going up to the entrance of the library, but there wasn't room enough to serve as a stage. But I was able to get some large pieces of wood. But I needed a stage very quickly – I didn't have time to go get carpenters to build the stage – so I took some of the books that would go into the donated book program and stacked them up and those were the supports for the stage that day. I'm sure any authors and people who helped USIA gather the books for the donated book program would turn in their graves if they knew that their books were used for that purpose. But I needed supports for the stage and that's what I used, hundreds and hundreds, maybe a thousand, books to support the front of the stage that evening. That's what I did as the VAA director.

As the acting BPAO, I had a library and a couple of Vietnamese Foreign Service Nationals running the library. But I also had another very interesting part of the job. I served as BPAO to the CORDS (Civilian Operations Rural Development Support) director's staff as the liaison for the PSYOPS [psychological warfare] effort of the Vietnamese military unit responsible for defense of Da Nang. I would take off my VAA director hat, put on my acting BPAO hat, and spent a lot of time with the Vietnamese military. The issue there was keeping up morale and assessing morale in Da Nang and reporting on that through CORDS to the American military officer who was in overall charge. Ambassador Barney Corne was the CORDS director in Da Nang. His JUSPAO provincial rep, was Sherwin Helms. I had two supervisors. I reported to Sherwin Helms for my BPAO type of work as well as to Leo LeClaire in Saigon, who was the cultural

affairs officer at JUSPAO. In theory, I also reported to a bi-national board of directors for the bi-national center. There was one member who was a permanent member, a very well-to-do Vietnamese lady who had a number of enterprises. Then there were other people. I'd bring them on the board whenever we'd need to have a meeting and a decision – a doctor here, someone there – I'd get some Vietnamese and maybe an American or two together and they'd constitute the board for a brief duration. This Vietnamese lady seemed to be the one ongoing member. It was a very bizarre situation. But there was a war going on.

Q: You left there just before the big Tet offensive.

PETERSEN: At the end of '67.

Q: This is a good place to stop. We'll pick this up in 1968. Where did you go?

PETERSEN: Malaysia.

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Q: Today is July 2, 2001. Bob, how did your assignment to Malaysia come about?

PETERSEN: At some point in '67, while I was in Vietnam, I wrote an evaluation of how I had seen my first year with the Agency in Vietnam. As part of that, I said what I would like to do after Vietnam. I recall specifically saying I was interested in studying Chinese or Thai and that I'd love to serve in Taiwan or Thailand or Malaysia and that I couldn't imagine a better job than becoming a BPAO somewhere in Southeast Asia. You've got to be careful what you wish for. Late in '67, I was notified that my next assignment would be BPAO in Kuching, Malaysia. I can't remember the exact dates, but I do recall – I didn't think it was funny at the time; I just thought it was an absurd bureaucratic foul-up – learning about my next assignment in a letter that arrived in Da Nang notifying me of my new assignment and telling me that I should prepare to leave Vietnam and take home leave and report. I was supposed to report the same month that I finally received the letter, which had been written several months before. I was already late by the time I learned about it.

Q: You were in Malaysia from '68 to when?

PETERSEN: I left in early '70. I was there two years.

Q: What happened during the Tet offensive in Da Nang? Did you hear from your colleagues?

PETERSEN: Hue was what really was hit and badly damaged. Da Nang, in a relative sense compared to Hue, did not suffer nearly as much. But, no, I did not hear directly from my former colleagues, Sherwin Helms, Phalen Peters, or Clyde Hanna. Once I left, I

left. I think maybe I bumped into those people, but it was later on, seeing them in a hallway somewhere. I remember Sherwin Helms when he retired took a job down near Williamsburg, I think in Jamestown. I saw him down there once. But I didn't maintain contact with my former colleagues in Da Nang.

Q: When you got to Malaysia, what was the state of Malaysia, in '68?

PETERSEN: Malaysia was a young country at the time. It had been formed just a few years earlier. The Malay states on the peninsula together with Singapore and with two states in Borneo, Sarawak and Saba, were brought together in the Federation of Malaysia. It was an uneasy federation. Singapore left after a brief association. But what remained were the states of the peninsula and the two states in Borneo. While I was there, I thought often and compared in my mind Malaysia to the early United States. In particular, I was struck by a couple of the leaders of Malaysia. One was Tunku Abdul Rahman, the first prime minister, the father of his country. I used to compare him to George Washington and say how fortunate we were to have George Washington available when we were forming our nation. I always felt while I was there and in the years after I left that that country was fortunate to have Tunku available as a leader. His deputy, the next prime minister, the man in waiting, was Tun Abdul Razak, another very talented political leader, but it was not just talent on their part. They had a commitment to the nation. They represented a moral high ground in the way that Washington does in our folklore. That was very important for Malaysia because it was divided into communities and that was its Achilles heel, the fact that the Bumiputra, the people of the land, the Malays, represented about half of the total population. A large part of the population were Chinese. The ties between what became Malaysia and China were millennia old, but when the British had the Malay peninsula colony, Sarawak and Saba were ruled by either British companies or British raja or by the Crown itself, and they brought in Chinese. It was a policy to bring people in for economic development. As a result, there was a large Chinese population. There were also for the same reason a fair number – not nearly as many – of people of Indian descent. Then in Borneo, there were the aboriginals, the Sarawaks, the land Dayaks, the Ibans. There were five or six major Malayan groups of aborigines in Borneo. You had that mixture, an uneasy relationship among all of them. The Malays were Muslim. The Chinese to a great extent were Christian or Buddhists, and the Indians were Hindus. Although different languages were spoken, that wasn't as divisive because English was widely used as a national language by the elite, by the government. But these different communities had an uneasy alliance as they tried to form the country.

Q: When the British had it, at one point it was called the Federated Malay States. Did that mean that within the Malay peninsula, it was chopped up? Or did that have much meaning?

PETERSEN: At the time I was there, it didn't have a lot of meaning. The legacy of it was that the states in peninsular Malaysia provided from the ruling families of each state the pool from which the king was chosen. I believe it was on a revolving five-year basis. So, a sultan of one state would serve for five years as the king. Then it would go over to a

sultan from another state and so forth. It was primogenitor within the sultan's family as to who was going to be the next king. An interesting idea of sharing power that way. The king was symbolic of the nation. It meant the king was always going to be a Malay, always be a Muslim, and always be from peninsula Malaysia, never from Sarawak or Saba.

Q: When you were there in '68, was it called the "troubles" or the "confrontation?"

PETERSEN: There were troubles when I was there. In '69, there were riots. That was communal tension. But prior to that, the confrontation was between Malaysia and Indonesia. Indonesia confronted the new nation of Malaysia, challenged in not a direct military fashion, but with animosity. That was the confrontation. Then it was exacerbated along the border between peninsular Malaysia and Thailand and along the border with Indonesia in Borneo by guerrilla movements. Our U.S. concern had to do with mainland China's support for some of the guerrilla activity along the border. We depicted it as Chinese communist instigated.

Q: There was a major war that had gone on in the '50s.

PETERSEN: Yes. But that was history by '68.

Q: Who was our ambassador?

PETERSEN: James Bell was the ambassador when I got there and when I left. Robert Moore was DCM when I arrived. Another person took over the following year.

Q: Could you describe Kuching?

PETERSEN: I had a small USIS branch post. USIS in Malaysia, the main office was in the AIA (American International Assurance Company) building in Kuala Lumpur. It was a 15 story building. That was where the embassy was and USIS was located there. I'm pretty sure it was 15 stories because the week I arrived in early February of '68 was the tail end of the celebration of Chinese New Year. The first day I was there, to commemorate that, they set off a 15 story high string of firecrackers outside the AIA building. That was rather impressive. I enjoyed that. USIS had two branch posts, one in Penang, where there was a BPAO, Phil Thomas. I had known him in Vietnam. He was one of our USIS province reps. in Vietnam. I was the BPAO in Kuching. I styled myself as director of USIS for East Malaysia. The country PAO, Earl Wilson, said, "Oh, that's fine." He didn't really care. So, I said, "Okay, that's the title I'll use." I was very fortunate in Kuching. I had a tremendous staff headed by Alfred Lee. The staff was all FSNs. They had no other Americans on the USIS staff. Our principal officer in Kuching was John Heimann. His tour ended about six months after my tour began. John was our consul. We had a couple of other Americans in the consulate. Then I handled the USIS program. Alfred Lee, who was born in Sarawak was the senior FSN. I had a lady named Elizabeth Murphy, who ran the library. Then I had a general factotum guy who could run the film

projectors and so forth. And I had a secretary. I was so fortunate. Amy Hung was her name and she had been trained to be a secretary. She had gone to the UK for a couple of years of secretarial school. I had the benefit of being able to dictate, something I hadn't done since prior to going into government. So, for my reports and letters and cables, I would just dictate and she would come back shortly thereafter with everything written up. As you know, in the Foreign Service, most officers end up typing their own drafts of things, so that was something I really appreciated. That was the little staff.

We had a library, so we had a lending operation. We did quite a bit with donated books, film showings, circulated films, and we went out and showed films directly.

The issues had to do with our presence in Southeast Asia, especially Vietnam. Within two weeks of arriving in Kuching, a fellow named Kennedy, who was the head of the British High Commission office in Kuching, through him, I was over speaking to the Rotary Club on why the U.S. presence in Vietnam was necessary and why we were contributing to nation-building. I did a lot of public speaking about Vietnam. Other issues had to do with nation-building. In particular, there was a film called "The True Story of an Election," a USIS film. I must have worn that thing out, I either invited to my house or to the USIS office the senior members of different political parties in Sarawak to show them that particular film and to discuss democracy, how it worked in America, how volunteerism was so important and so valuable for American democracy. That was a major issue, the idea of political development.

Q: You said you were for eastern Malaysia?

PETERSEN: Yes.

Q: How would you depict eastern Malaysia, the population there, and how it fit into Malaysia?

PETERSEN: It was distinct. If you permit me a very brief tangent, there were two states in East Malaysia. Sarawak came about in the following way. In 1842, James Brooke, the White Raja, outfitted a little sloop and sailed on behalf of the Royal Geographic Society. He was sailing around Southeast Asia and he sailed up the river to the little town of Kuching and there happened to be a rebellion underway. Some local rebels were rebelling against the Sultan of Brunei. About 300-400 years ago, the Sultan of Brunei ruled a wide area of Southeast Asia, but 150 years ago it was reduced in size mainly to the area of North Borneo. There was a rebellion underway and James Brooke fired off one of the cannons, maybe the only cannon, aboard his little sloop, on behalf of the Sultan and helped put down this rebellion. In return, the Sultan ceded to him a little parcel of land. Over the next 20 years, that parcel expanded. Brooke got additional concessions from the Sultan. Sometime in the 1860s, James Brooke died and his nephew took over as the second Raja of Sarawak and continued the expansion of the lands of Sarawak. Then sometime in the 19-teens around World War I, that person's son took over and was the third White Raja ruling Sarawak and ruled it up until the Japanese invasion World War II.

So, for 100 years, this land had been the land of the White Rajas, these three men in succession, these three British subjects. In World War II, it was a Japanese possession. Following World War II, the third and final raja concluded he could not rebuild the country following the wartime devastation and he arranged for the Crown to take it over as a Crown colony. It was a Crown colony until the formation of Malaysia.

Saba, the other state in East Malaysia, started out as a patent to the North Borneo Company, much like the East India Company. It was governed by a company. I forget whether that went through a period as a Crown colony. It must have. It became the Crown Colony of North Borneo and then it became part of Malaysia.

Sarawak, because of the 100-year-rule of the Brooke family, had a real sense of identity as a state, as its own state. It had had its own health and educational system, its own postal system, its own set of postage stamps. It had its own sense of history, its own constabulary, etc. So, when it joined Malaysia, it had this legacy of an independent being and it caused friction within Malaysia. Saba less so. Saba had also been an independent state, but it had also been this colony. As a result, it fitted into Malaysia a little more easily than Sarawak did. Sarawak was in some ways a burr under the saddle for the Malaysian government in Kuala Lumpur. But in Sarawak, unlike peninsular Malaysia, the majority community group there consisted of the aborigines, the Iban, the Dayak people, the Kadayans, and the other groups. Similarly, in Saba, the native communities were in the majority. Then came the Chinese. Then came the Malays. The Malays were a distinct minority in East Malaysia. The Malay population was scattered throughout Sarawak and Saba, of course, but it was perhaps more concentrated up near Brunei.

Q: Looking at the map, I take it that a big hunk of Borneo that belonged to Indonesia at the time was relatively inhospitable to government.

PETERSEN: Yes, it was. Sarawak and Saba were distinct from West Malaysia. They had different resources. They had huge amounts of timber. I've heard now that much of that area has been devastated by timbering. There were mineral deposits and fishing to some extent. I remember factories to process and can fish, prawns and so forth. Timbering seemed to be the big thing. Not to be too cavalier in describing this, but part of the tension in Sarawak was between the Malays, who said, "We're here to be good people on Earth," compared to the Chinese, who said, "Let us roll up our sleeves and get in there and really exploit this land and make the land useful." The Malays would say, "The land is just there. We're just using it. Economic development isn't our priority. There are other concerns." That was partly one of the real tensions.

Q: Was there concern about Indonesian agents trying to do things?

PETERSEN: Not really. A lot of my work was with the police. There was a Sarawak counter-insurgency training school for the jungle forces. A fellow named Nathan (his surname) was in charge of the school and I spent quite a bit of time over there. Working with him, one of the films that we got through USIS – and I practically wore it out

showing it to police and military units and working with them – was about how to fight a guerrilla war. The purpose of it was to understand how guerrillas fought so you could counter what they were doing out there. At times, I would become very frustrated in dealing with Nathan and some of the other people. I remember one time saying to them, "If you really want to be successful in defeating the people you describe as 'communist guerrillas' in the border area, you should follow what Mao Zedong said. Consider the people a pool of water and the guerrillas the fish. Stop mistreating the water because you're making the water hospitable for those fish out there." But these guys, I would get reports through the Chinese community of the mistreatment of Chinese civilians who were suspect, Chinese farmers and others. The military and police forces felt they must be supporting the guerrillas because they were of the same community. Part of what I would do with the police and the military was talk about experiences in other countries -- how you had to determine what the real situation was, and that it was foolhardy to go trampling around over the civilians in the area. Certainly, they were going to resent the government, which would make them more open to possibly supporting the guerrillas in that area. I used sports, particularly basketball, as a vehicle to get in and communicate with a lot of people. We had quite a number of basketball films in our USIS inventory. I had a particularly good one that featured the role of Bill Russell of the Boston Celtics. On one level, it was just a straightforward basketball film showing this man's great skills and how the team worked together. But a subliminal message was, you had an African-American who was this key part of this team that featured important white players. So, there was a subtle message about how communities can work together as a team. I used to use that film a lot as an introduction. I would go out to a Hammer village or to a detention center and show the film, and then follow on, talk about the situation people were facing. In Hammer villages, people would be allowed out to till the field during the day and then they'd come into an enclosure at night so they would have no contact with the guerrillas. I forget whether the premise was to protect them or to keep them from supporting the guerrillas. In the detention centers, it was different. These were people who had been locked up for infractions of one sort or another. In any event, I used these basketball films and it gave me an opportunity to show some other type of film having to do with political development or government and have a conversation and whatnot. I made great use of the old film projector there.

Q: How did you find government officials at your level? How did they respond?

PETERSEN: I was very young, very inexperienced. I was still 25 when I arrived. The government officials I was dealing with were a generation older than I. This was a challenge, how to be seen as someone of a certain gravity. But I found the politicians, the officials, quite accessible, quite open. I'm talking about Sarawak and Saba, not Brunei. It was a little bit different there. The U.S. and Malaysia had very friendly relations. We had a little tiff over our policy on tin and on rubber at one point. But that was really a problem in KL (Kuala Lumpur) at the national level, not at the state level where I was working. People were interested in the United States. The following year, 1969, was the year of Apollo and people were fascinated by that.

Q: This was the landing on the Moon.

PETERSEN: That's right. We got films on Apollo and showed those quite a bit. I don't recall particular difficulties in dealing with government officials. Sarawak was divided into five residences. This was a legacy of the Raja Brooke's regime. Each of the residences was then further broken down into districts. There was a district officer in charge of every district. Then above the district officers were the residents. There were five of them under the governor who ruled the state. At one point, I was looking for information about what was going on up in Third Division and a Third Division resident said, "Look, come with me and we'll go up there and look around." It became a little adventure for me. I was meeting with him in Sibu, the capital of the Third Division, the major city on the Rajang River. This happened in '69. I worked out the details with him in the course of a few minutes that we would meet a week later upriver at a landing zone. But I took off from Sibu early one morning in the Kapit Express, a river launch. A half day later, I landed at Kapit upriver. I had been there before. On this particular trip, before setting out to go further upriver, I visited a hospital. There was a huge hospital in Kapit, 90-100 beds. I was impressed because they sterilized things using wood-burning stoves. They cooked their food with chopped timber in the stoves. They had their own chickens to produce eggs for the hospital. The guy in charge was a tremendous entrepreneur to run that place. After a day in Kapit, I made arrangements and got a longboat, a super canoe, a dugout. Where we were going, through some very heavy rapids further up the river, we equipped that thing – and I did this through the district officer in Kapit – with two outboard motors and set off with two Ibans, Dayaks.

I remember in the morning going down to the wharf at the river and getting in that boat and sitting down at water level. I had a guy in the back running the engine. Then I had a guy up front who had a shoulder weapon. That was just in case as we got up where the water was not running as swiftly up in some of the smaller areas we ever had a crocodile get too close. Supposedly, he was going to keep the croc away. That day, I was filled with terror because above Kapit there was some tremendous rapids. I did not want to get out and try to walk around, although there was a trail, but I think the leeches had more terror for me than the water. At one point midway through those rapids, we took shelter in the middle of the river behind a huge boulder that must have risen a good 20 feet out of the water and there was a still pool right on the leeside with the running water on both sides and huge waves crashing over rocks, waves that were three to four times the height of our little dugout canoe. These guys maneuvered around all that and got us safely through. But I remember sitting there thinking, "I'm not going to survive. I'm not a swimmer." Of course, there was no such thing as a lifejacket or anything like that. But we did make it. Obviously, these guys had done it before. I was terror stricken. But they were older than I was. They had lived longer. We're up above the rapids and I remember that first night staying at a little place on the river that had a wooden floor. There was no electricity, no water. We had a bucket where we caught rainwater off the roof and that was my source of water. Then I went further up. Later in the week, I reached the rendezvous point and a little plane came by in a clearing and swooped down and out the resident – the guy I had met in Sibu, hopped with a police officer who was going to make the trip with him. We

hooked up and ended up with two or three longboats for the rest of that trip that we got from some Iban longhouses. That was quite a trip, going up different tributaries. We carried with us rice and some live chickens. At midday, we would nose the longboat onto a gravelly sandbar and we'd make a fire and chickens would be killed, plucked, and cleaned, and we'd have chicken and boiled rice for lunch. Plus, we had canned goods with us, stewed tomatoes or whatever. At night, we stayed in different longhouses on the river with the resident, who was a VIP. We'd gather at the longhouse, generally go down to the river with a bar of soap, stand immersed waist deep, and then crouch down in the running water to neck height and wash. The longhouses were long structures up on bamboo stilts with room after room in a row with a thatched roof. In longhouses, the population was counted by doors. You didn't count the number of men or elders. You certainly didn't count women. You counted the number of doors. I guess it was a standard number assumed to live behind each door. Each door represented a partitioned room. Everything was communal except sleeping in that room. There were some huge longhouses. I don't remember the number of doors, but some of them were pretty big. At night, we'd gather, have a meal (rice and whatever, maybe something in the pot). Then we would sit and drink either tuak or burak. I guess it was the same thing but tuak might have been the Iban word for "rice wine" or "fermented rice liquid" and burak might have been the Kadayan word. On this particular trip, the resident would always get up and give a speech. Then the policeman would give a speech. I had to get up and give a speech, too. Here I was, speaking extemporaneously in my halting Malay. I don't know if anybody ever understood me, but there I was. I would talk about what the United States was, where it was. It was a pretty simple. I was showing the flag. Then we'd sit and talk. I would listen and try to determine as much as possible. People talked about their interest. They wanted schooling for their kids; they talked about the need for a school. They talked about the desire to have better water, better support for crops, all the things that were on their mind. I don't ever recall direct conversations about guerrillas. To talk about communism would have been ridiculous. People were talking about things that mattered to them and their families. It was an opportunity for me to really see for myself what the government was doing. I visited the development projects on some of the longhouses. I heard directly from people. It was a good opportunity.

This was all in response to your question about dealing with the government officials. I never really had any great difficulty. The officials were open. Certainly they were courteous, open, receptive to our efforts, and our informational and cultural programs. They were very cooperative. It was delightful.

I'd like to finish by telling you one thing about this particular trip. The resident and the policeman had been dropped off by this tiny plane but they couldn't go back that way. They were going to go downriver all the way by boat. When we headed downriver and got to those rapids that had terrorized me so much a few days prior, we all got out and took the trail around the rapids, walking downriver. Sure enough, we all stripped down to our undershorts to walk on that trail so we could see those leeches and pick them off. They just seemed to be everywhere. It was a responsibility of each guy behind the other one to flick off the leeches of the guy in front. The last guy in the trail… Who looked

after him? As you can see, leeches left a real impression on me.

Q: What about Brunei? Did you have any responsibility for that?

PETERSEN: In between Vietnam and Malaysia, I had taken the consular course. I had had a consular exequatur from the king, Negara, from Malaysia. And I had a very nice one from Queen Elizabeth. And I had both of them up on the wall in my office. But the one from Queen Elizabeth was to permit me to operate in Brunei, a British protectorate. Of the different posts I served, except for Okinawa when I was there with an international exposition, I never traveled nearly as much as I did when I was assigned to Kuching. I would regularly go traveling around Sarawak and to Brunei and up to Saba. In general, I would call on newspaper people. There must have been about 20 important Chinese newspapers in that area. I would always go in and have tea or lunch or dinner with the editor or the publisher and talk about what was going on, provide materials that could be published in the paper, deliver some books, and go back to Kuching and write up what I'd learned.

Brunei was a little different. Maybe there was only one newspaper in Brunei. I don't remember anymore. But the Daily Star was one. Dennis Law was the editor. He was an Australian fellow. I used to meet with him all the time with the head of the rehabilitation center (for political rehabilitation) where they kept detainees. It was a prison. I met with the minister for education and the minister for information. It was interesting. In Brunei, the ministers were Brunei Malays. I would have a courtesy call on them and then I would spend the bulk of my time meeting with their deputies who were always Brits and would work with them. Except for the ministry of religious affairs, all the ministries had Brits as the deputies. I remember one time in Brunei being dismayed in talking to the director for rehabilitation about prisoners and rehabilitation efforts. I described what we had been doing when I was in Vietnam and what we continued to do in Vietnam - the Chu Hoi program, for example – and what had gone on in other areas of the world to rehabilitate political prisoners. This guy said, "Save your breath. These guys raised their hand against the Sultan. That's the same as raising their hand against God. There is no forgiveness. They'll never be let out." I remember thinking, "My gosh, what an atmosphere."

By the way, I never met the Sultan of Brunei. I saw him once. He was out speeding down the road in his Mercedes. That was the new Sultan. The old Sultan, the father, abdicated in 1968 in favor of his son, who was in his early 20s, so that Brunei could have a political system. He became the head of the only political party. He ran that and the son became the new Sultan. There is not much I should say about that. The Sultan of Brunei is renowned for his riches and his huge palace. My interests there were primarily in the issue of political rehabilitation and working with the education department and the information system. But compared to Sarawak and Saba, we were not nearly as active in Brunei.

Q: Were there universities in the area? This often is a target of what we're after.

PETERSEN: There was a teacher training college in Kuching. There were nursing schools. But for genuine degree-level university education, people left, went to West Malaysia or elsewhere for their university training. I worked a lot with secondary schools, government secondary schools, Methodist, and some catholic secondary schools. I remember one time visiting a Chinese secondary school to check on how the books we had donated were being used. The principal proudly showed me that all the books were in perfect condition and they were all locked up on his shelf in his office and he had the key. He opened the glass front and showed me the books in pristine condition. I said, "Gosh, you've missed the point." I think sixth form was the highest level in the secondary school system, equivalent to a high-school senior. The donated book program, film program, our library program at our lending library in Kuching was an important part. That was an audience, but I seemed to put most of my effort into working with the different political parties directly and with the police and the military while I was there, and with the Malaysian information service and its branch offices everywhere. The schools broadcasting service, which existed in Sarawak, used to broadcast lessons or information for the school systems. So, we would try to get material place there.

Q: What about American exploration for petroleum minerals and also missionaries?

PETERSEN: I don't recall American exploration for minerals. Timber was an important export, but I think it was going up to Japan. One particular thing that was exported to the U.S. were broom handles. There was a broom handle factory near Kuching. From our regional service center in Manila, we brought down a freelance writer who was writing for one of our worldwide magazines. I remember taking him out and showing him the broom factory and getting interviews there. I think he published an article about making the link between Malaysia and the United States, the economic link, and there was an article about the broom factory and broom handles and how America couldn't sweep up dust if it wasn't for those broom handles coming from Kuching.

I remember exploration for minerals, but I always seem to recall bumping into Japanese businessmen in that connection up in Saba. As for the timber and the oil, Royal Dutch Shell was big. Off of Brunei in their oil fields, it had to have been British companies. I don't really recall the details of that.

Q: Did the communal riots spill into where you were?

PETERSEN: No. The communal riots began in May of '68. They were horrendous in West Malaysia. We went for about three days - I was in Kuching at the time – with absolutely nothing happening and everyone very nervous and hoping something like that wouldn't occur, but knowing that this was an ideal opportunity for somebody to try to exploit the situation. About the third day of all the rioting in West Malaysia, the government rest house in Kuching burned down. It might have been the governor who got on the radio and said it was due to faulty wiring, an electrical fire. It might have been, I don't know. There were a few incidents but it was relatively minor in Sarawak. In part, that was because, unlike West Malaysia, where there was close to parity in numbers

between the two major communities, in Sarawak, the Malays were a distinct minority. The military was a national force. The senior officers were Malays. In Sarawak, John Ritchie was police commissioner. John was of a mixed community background. His deputy, Ramsy Gitan, was an Iban, the highest ranking Iban in the police. There were lots and lots of natives, lots of Ibans, in the police force. It goes back to that point that Sarawak had a different sense of identity from West Malaysia.

Q: What were you getting from the people you were talking to? Being in Southeast Asia, our involvement in Vietnam was a major topic. What was the basic reaction to what we were doing there?

PETERSEN: I'll give you an answer now and hope that upon reflection I don't conclude that I gave you a completely wrong answer. There was a mixture of bafflement as to why we were involved and fear. The fear was whether we were really there for the long-term? Could we be relied upon or not? Malaysians were searching for their own identity as a new nation. They were part of, along with the Philippines, Thailand, and Indonesia, the economic/political pact of the area, ASEAN. There were tensions among the states. We have already talked about the confrontation between Indonesia and Malaysia. But shortly after my arrival in Malaysia – in fact, the story broke while I was on a trip in Saba and I remember reporting to our consul in Kuching and then simultaneously to the embassy how the people in Saba had reacted with a great deal more concern than the government in KL was reacting to the revelation that there was a guerrilla training camp in the southern Philippines. The alleged purpose of that was to instigate an effort to take back from Malaysia some lands that belonged to the Philippines because they had once been part of the Sultan of Sumu's area of control and the Philippines was going to exercise its rights to these lands. This excited the people in Saba a great deal because they would have been on the frontlines of this and it would have been their territory that would have been taken back by the Philippines. I saw it as just a pretext by the Philippine government - whatever it was going through in early '68, I can't remember – to just divert attention to some other issue away from some problems in Manila. I remember alerting people in KL from where I was up in Saba, meeting with people, about how they were really very concerned. There was a series of these tensions among the different Southeast Asian states. People wondered what interest did the United States have and what kind of a partner would we be? While I was in Malaysia, there were complaints, criticisms, and so forth levied against us about our tin policy and our rubber policy. We had released some of our strategic reserve of those materials and this upset the Malaysians mightily because these were their earning raw materials. Trying to improve people's understandings of how the U.S. reached economic and political decisions was a constant challenge.

Q: You had a consul in Kuching, too?

PETERSEN: Yes.

Q: How did you get along with him or her?

PETERSEN: John P. Heimann. John and I got along very, very well. I was very fortunate. I had tremendous American colleagues there. John and Judy were delightful. They were replaced by John J. Taylor, John and Betsy Taylor and their youngsters. Both the Heimanns and the Taylors had very young children, five, six, seven, eight years old. I had good relationships with them. I used to write a monthly report for USIS in Kuala Lumpur. It was an important document for me. I'd spend a day dictating that thing and then having it typed. I would spend a couple of days or a couple of evenings thinking about it before putting it together. It was a huge document. It ran 10-12 pages, probably nine or 10 pages more than anybody ever wanted to read. At one point there was some negotiation and agreement that I would henceforth, after I had been there for seven or eight months, share my monthly report with the consul and another American at the consulate, so they would be informed. I developed quite an extensive network of contacts, mainly journalists and people in the ministry of information and ministry of education. My second year in that assignment, the real emphasis was on what the embassy referred to as PSYOP work (psychological operations). I was working a lot with the police and the military. I had information that provided a different perspective on some of the information that was given to us through official channels.

When I left Malaysia, one of the things that bothered me was a long conversation, probably the final conversation I had with the guy who published the major Chinese newspaper up in Sibu. I remember telling him how I saw things. I remember him saying to me, "Well, you've got it wrong. After two years, you drew the wrong conclusions." I think at that point I was enamored of some of the good things that the Malaysian military was doing, or that I thought they were doing. I remember him saying, "No, you draw the wrong conclusions. Those guys in the military never leave the road. They're always on the road. Robert, you missed what's happening off the road in the jungle." He may have been right. I may have been too sanguine about future prospects. That was 30-plus years ago and things have turned out all right.

Q: Particularly in that period, we had had the Cuban experience and other experiences where guerrillas all of a sudden became extremely important. You never knew.

You left there in 1970. Whither?

PETERSEN: When I was in Kuching, I concluded that I would love to work in Japan. I had visited Japan a few times by then and was fascinated with things Japanese and what was going on with Japan. I remember remarking to someone once at that time that I thought the Japanese were dealing with the same things that the U.S. was dealing with, on the real cutting edge of societal organization and economic issues and so forth, technology and science, and I'd love to live in a society like that for a while. So, I said what I wanted to next was study Japanese and go to Japan. After I left Malaysia, I was assigned to FSI to study Japanese.

Q: You studied that for how long?

PETERSEN: One year, late winter or so of ’70 to 1971, when I arrived in Sapporo, Japan. I remember having a conversation one day walking around Kuching with some visitor from Washington. It was either Dan Alexi or LeVan Roberts. He said, “Well, youngster, what are your goals?” I guess I laid out how I’d like my career to develop. He said, “Bad idea. Let me give you some advice. Just enjoy yourself. Your career will either be a good one or a bad one and you’re not going to have that much control over it. Don’t plan out what languages you want to study and where you want to go and exactly what positions you want to be in five years from now. That’s nonsense. It doesn’t work that way. Just enjoy yourself.” I remember thinking about that and saying, “I’d really enjoy being in Japan.” Of course, that was different from two years previously when I had written a document when I was in Vietnam saying, “I want to go to Taiwan, Thailand, or Malaysia.” I guess it was still East Asia, so it was some sort of career track.

When I was studying Japanese, I got wind of a problem in Japan. It was learned through the grapevine that there might be an opening in Sapporo at the branch post there. Well, I loved being a BPAO. When I was in Kuching, I used to communicate mainly by pouch with KL, occasionally cables. The whole time I was there, I received a telephone call twice. Jim Elliott was the IO. He called me. When he called me, I can’t remember who the first person was, but I remember telling him, “Jim, you’re only the second person ever able to get through by telephone. Congratulations. You’re a very patient guy.” It took some effort to get a telephone call through. I liked that. I had a certain independence. I wasn’t a loose cannon. I made sure that what I was doing fit into the country plan. But I would go over and consult Earl Wilson and the country team about my programs and work with the consul, John Heimann and John J. Taylor. So, it was all coordinated but I had quite a bit of latitude because of my geographic location. I really liked that. I remember one time traveling from KL to go back to my branch post. I think I took the night train out of KL and got to Singapore the next morning, sailed that evening, which was now more than 24 hours since I left KL, on a ship around midnight, spent all the next day at sea, and it was the following morning before we arrived in Kuching. How’s that for being in the same country and being somewhat removed? Actually, on the Malaysia-Singapore airline, it was just over an hour flight between Singapore and Kuching and about an hour between Singapore and KL. In a half day, I could leave Kuching early in the morning and be in KL by midday. It wasn’t that far away, but the sense of latitude I enjoyed. So, I was looking forward to being a BPAO again in Japan, although that hadn’t been in the cards when I was assigned to study Japanese.

Sure enough, it came about. I was struggling in Japanese. I was very frustrated. Sitting in a language lab, in a language classroom, to me is the worst form of torture. After nearly a year of that, I was just ready to pull my hair out. I went in and mentioned that I understood there was a need to take somebody out of Sapporo and wanted to let them know that it had been my lifelong goal to be the BPAO in Sapporo and my bag was packed. After a few weeks of bureaucratic maneuvering, it was agreed that I could go to Sapporo.

Q: Were you married by now?

PETERSEN: No. Mr. Park, the scientific linguist at FSI, said, “Oh, Robert, this is terrible for you.” I said, “Don’t you worry. I’ll improve my Japanese much more rapidly in Sapporo.” He said, “No, you may become fluent, but you’ll never improve your grammar. You’ll never really master this language going out after a year. You’ve got to have the second year in a structured learning process.” I said, “No, not me.” Well, he was right. He knew what he was talking about. I was always illiterate, never really could read Japanese. Whatever fluency I attained, it was replete with all sorts of horrendous structures and so forth.

I loved Sapporo.

Q: You were there from when to when?

PETERSEN: From early ’71 until mid-’73. I left in July of ’73. I was there during the Winter Olympics of ’72.

Q: Sapporo was the major city of Hokkaido.

PETERSEN: Yes. It was over a million population. It was a huge city. It was that part of Japan that had been an area of competition between imperial Russia and imperial Japan for centuries. It was not until the 19th century that Hokkaido became an integral part of Japan. It was absorbed into Japan under the Meiji era when they had all the samurai who had to be resettled during a great transformation in Japan. A number of people were induced to go up to the snowy, cold north in Hokkaido and settle that area. Before I was assigned to Sapporo, I had spent part of a week as a tourist in Kyoto and found it fascinating, but once I had lived in Sapporo for a brief time, I went down to Kyoto and I remember thinking, “Gosh, I am so lucky to be in Sapporo” because I found it fresh and open and exciting. Everything was in the future in Sapporo and in Kyoto, there was this tremendous cultural, historical legacy among the people of Kyoto and elsewhere in Japan as well. I just found Sapporo to be open and forward leaning, looking to the future. I liked it immensely. I had never in my life seen a ski slope before I went there, but once I found out I was going to Sapporo, I told myself, “I’m going to love being a skier.” I went out and bought ski boots before I went to Japan. As soon as I got there, I bought a set of skis and started learning to ski the week I was there. Skiing was an important part of my time there, one of my enjoyable recreational activities.

Q: You were in Japan during an interesting time. You had the Nixon shokus and all that. How different was the work you were doing and the reception to the work you were doing in Hokkaido?

PETERSEN: Night and day. In a certain sense, going into the branch post in Sapporo was going into the traditional work of the U.S. Information Agency, if you would consider USIA’s efforts in Vietnam as somewhat of an aberration for the Agency. The emphasis on PSYOP, working with the police and the military and with the department of prisons and

so forth that I did in Malaysia and the kind of work I had been doing in Vietnam, yes, it used the concepts and the tools, the resources, of USIA, but in Sapporo, the structure was different. When I arrived in Sapporo, I was already nearly six years into my USIA career. I have to acknowledge that I had a very poor understanding of USIA at that time, how it functioned, the bureaucracy, the roles of different positions and so forth. JUSPAO in Vietnam was a one-off structure. My work in East Malaysia, I kind of designed the organization and had a great deal of latitude to do so. In Sapporo, I was running a branch post that mirrored the other five branch posts in Japan. The same personnel structure, except the one in Tokyo was first among equals. It was bigger and more important. But the other five were all basically the same branch PAO, same number of staff, identical collections. The themes we programmed were identical. The PAO, Allen Carter, made a major point of saying, "There is only one foreign policy and the days of the branch PAOs programming according to what they felt were the appropriate themes for their area are gone. We're all speaking from the same textbook, all singing from the same sheet of music." I had some bureaucratic structure added to my life that had been lacking up until then.

But once again, I was further from the USIS headquarters than any of the other branch posts. I enjoyed that immensely. I worked with two different consuls in Sapporo. The first one, Martin Heflin, was there just a brief time. He left and Sunao Sakamato took over, became the consul.

Q: Sunao has a fascinating history. He was a Marine. He was my deputy in Seoul.

PETERSEN: He went from Sapporo to London.

Q: He came to Seoul later.

PETERSEN: He was delightful to work with. While I was there, the major concern was Japan. You asked about the Nixon shocks and trying to add useful background to those issues was quite a challenge. Melvin Laird became the new Secretary of Defense. I remember using a lot of things he said to try to urge Japan to assume a greater role, share more of the burden for defense in East Asia. One of the challenges was trying to help the Japanese understand more clearly how it was that some of their exports could indeed harm the United States. The Japanese would talk about being the younger brother and the American being the older brother and America being very powerful and Japan being very weak. There was that popular image, but things such as textile exports were indeed creating havoc in part of our economy. I remember efforts through USIS in meeting with journalists, educators, others, to publicize the fact that, well, you've got to understand where textiles are located in the U.S., where that industry is located, and the fact that through a seniority system in our parliament in the U.S., the people from that area exert a lot of control on our government. You've got to be more sensitive to your export policies and more aware. One of the popular examples was just talking to a member of the executive branch of the United States isn't sufficient for the Japanese government. It should be also communicating with our Congress to understand us. So, through our IV

(International Visitors') programs and our speakers programs and so forth, we were trying to increase this understanding of how we worked and how our two economies and two political systems could interact.

We also had the issue in Sapporo of the effort where we were trying to open up a little bit toward the Soviet Union in the period of detente. Our place there involved very carefully orchestrated meetings between the Soviet consulate and ours. We would go to their place. They would come to ours. I remember the first meeting in our consulate. I think there were three of us Americans there, the three Americans in the consulate. The soviets were sitting there rather stiffly. And we went to their place and sat rather stiffly. It seemed like we did this once a month; maybe it was less often. We exchanged views. Our two governments were trying to understand each other better. So, we would talk about Japan, about our interests and so forth. One of the things that impressed me immensely in dealing with the Soviets was the wealth of resources they poured into training for their diplomats. They would tell us about the preparation they had for their assignments to Japan and it made us envious of how much they got. We talked. A big high point was, they expressed interest in the cultural center that we operated. I discussed this ahead of time with our consul. We were ready for this, but they were absolutely shocked and delighted when I invited them over and said, "Come on in and we'll show you around." I specifically invited the one man who said he had cultural interests, but the whole team came over. In any event, I was very pleased to show them our center and let them see what we did and all the holdings we had. That was one aspect of the work, dealing with them.

But I was there to work in support of our country plan on Japan. We had a very active program in Sapporo. When I was assigned to Japan, we had nine branch posts, nine cultural centers. Allen Carter, the new PAO, reduced the nine to six and make the six of them identical, gave them all up-to-date resources, revamped them so that much of my first year was involved in the reconstruction of our center and retraining the staff. The center itself was active. Lots of speakers. A lot of outreach. I worked a great deal with Hokkaido University. One of my big projects – and it was supported by Dave Hitchcock, the deputy PAO in Tokyo – Dave took a particular interest in that and really pushed hard – was to have an interdisciplinary American studies program take root at Hokkaido University. The mantra for us was, we don't care if someone's studying law or medicine or history or literature or chemistry, but in the course of that student's stay at the university, that student should have the opportunity for at least one course about the United States --American history, literature, foreign policy. We worked very hard at that, bringing in people who could substitute and teach for Japanese professors who would take a sabbatical to go to the U.S. We provided other support to the university as well in terms of resources. But that was taking root when I left. That was something I took a real interest in. I felt that was a major long-term accomplishment for the program.

Q: Did you have to go into high gear in Sapporo when the first Nixon shock, the opening to China, came? How did that hit your area? How did you all respond?

PETERSEN: Definitely. I don't remember the details of where I was when I learned about it. But yes, there was a flurry of activity. We were out meeting with people, getting our talking points, and then rushing off to meet with journalists primarily. That was the immediate concern, the media portrayal of this. There wasn't a crushing need to speak to government officials in Hokkaido, since that was being done at the ministerial level in Tokyo. But the media, the Hokkaido Times, the Hokkaido Shimbun and so forth. I went rushing over there as quickly as my legs could carry me to give them the latest material explaining the background of this. There was a sense on the part of the Japanese that we had peremptorily done something when we should have to properly reflect our relationship with them, we should have been consulting them about the impact this would have on Japan. There was great concern. Alleviating that, we were in high gear.

Q: Going back to the Soviet thing, the fact that the Soviets were hanging on to those northern islands was probably the greatest boon to our policy with Japan for 50 years.

PETERSEN: It was interesting. In Sapporo, when I'd be in a movie theater, before every film would begin, there would be on the screen an outline of the northern territories. There would be a banner statement "The northern territories must be returned." Some – enough that it made quite an impression on me – Japanese I would meet in Hokkaido, if I turned over their business card, on the back would be the statement "The northern territories must be returned" and an outline of the islands. Go down to Tokyo, and people would shrug. It wasn't an issue that moved them. I even had a Japanese tell me down in Tokyo, "You know, it's kind of embarrassing the way the people in Hokkaido carry on about the northern territories because it interferes with some of our foreign policy initiatives." One of the messages I would carry down to Tokyo to the country team was, it may be artificial in the way it's engineered, before a film is shown in the cinema, having that appear on the screen, or putting it on a business card, but artificial or not, it was a first-line issue up in Hokkaido.

Q: Was this something that you could kind of drop, a card you could always play, say, "We support you fully on that?"

PETERSEN: We also held Okinawa. While I was in Sapporo, Okinawa reverted to Japan. I don't want to say we were crass. We were subtle. We didn't have to be out shouting about it. People could draw their conclusion. We were astute enough to let the issue speak for itself. That doesn't mean we didn't put out a lot of information about the reversion, because we did.

Q: This had been in the cards for a long time. It was taking a long time and we weren't negotiating with the Japanese on this. We were negotiating with the United States Marines.

PETERSEN: And still are.

Q: And still are.

How did the Olympics go?

PETERSEN: The Winter Olympics of ’72 went off like clockwork, beautifully planned. I had an interesting involvement there. I arrived and began working in Sapporo a little less than a year before the Olympics. In that year, 1971, I remember participating in some public panel discussions. I think one time it was in the big meeting hall of either the Hokkaido Shimbun or the Hokkaido Times. It was a panel discussion about how could Sapporo best prepare for the influx of all the foreigners. There I was, talking along with a few other people about what the city should do, reminding them that taxi drivers are vital, that that often is the only contact somebody has. The Japanese preparation was very well done, very sophisticated. I wouldn’t begin to suggest that I actually contributed anything to that. They left no stone unturned and that was indicative of the efforts.

Q: Did we have any problem with star American athletes acting a little bit prima donna-ish or anything like that?

PETERSEN: I don’t remember that.

Q: I’m not thinking of any incidents, but it’s always a problem. This is true of any country.

PETERSEN: I don’t remember that. I remember Avery Brundage, an American, head of the International Olympic Committee. There was the opening ceremony in an outdoor stadium. But then there was some other kind of opening at an indoor venue a couple days prior to that at which Avery Brundage spoke. It was relatively small, maybe 1,000 people or so. Maybe it was the opening of the meeting of the International Olympic Committee. I remember Brundage getting up and I could only describe him as irascible. He talked about how the person who founded the modern Olympics at the turn of the century would be turning over in his grave at what had become of the Olympic movement and especially the Winter Olympic movement, which has all these pseudo sports and all this advertising effort put into it. Brundage was a purist and was very critical of the idea of having a Winter Olympics and certainly of the effort to advertise in connection with it. As far as American participation, I remember the American hockey team because I met the guys on the team, but I don’t remember how they did. I don’t recall any great exploits by American athletes. There may have been some. But I do remember a Frenchman, Jean-Claude Killy, who was the hero, the great downhill skier. He cut a swath. Then for Japan, a fellow named Kasaya, who won a gold medal in the ski jump, the 70 meter. I was there and watched that. I later had the honor of presenting him the Helms trophy that is given to the outstanding amateur athlete of the year. I remember we arranged a presentation at USIS. It was covered on TV. I remember a cousin of mine in the U.S. told me he saw me on TV making that presentation later. I guess it had widespread coverage. But a lot of Japanese were just delighted with that. It was thrilling. The Emperor saw it. It was exciting.

Q: What was your impression of the Japanese media, their provincial media?

PETERSEN: Energetic. I was illiterate. I could piece out what an article in the newspaper might be about and get it right occasionally, but I couldn't actually read the article. I could recognize perhaps enough of the characters in an article to kind of figure out what it was about, not much beyond that. So, in terms of what was in the newspaper, I relied on secondary sources. My impression is mainly of the journalists that I got to know. They were very energetic, very… I want to say opinionated, but that's unfair. It's just that they did have decided views on things. Very critical of the government. I don't want to use the word "cynical," even though it's the word that comes to mind. In a sense, they remind me a lot of journalists I've met in a lot of countries, particularly wire service people and others, American journalists abroad. Very skeptical about what they heard and learned. Always looking for the real story behind the story. They would keep me on my toes.

One of the things we did, because we were still immersed deeply in Vietnam, was set up a monthly off-the-record meeting at the center and invite journalists in to talk only Vietnam. I'd bring people up from the embassy in Tokyo to talk. I would speak, drawing on my own experience and following events there closely. I remember, I would always say at the beginning of these sessions, "This is off the record and our purpose is to share information so that you will draw your own conclusions. Your conclusions are your conclusions. We're not trying to tell you what to conclude, but we want you to form your opinions on as accurate information as possible." We would answer questions that we could answer and present information that they might not otherwise be aware of. Most other sessions were on the record. The Japanese wanted to know about our opinion of their going in to try to exploit Siberian resources. Would we be supportive? Would we interfere.? That was an issue. What would the U.S. view be of Japan really making an effort to develop mineral resources in eastern Russia?

Q: I can think of nothing that would cause a more difficult response than getting something from the government. This is usually going to be an ad hoc thing when it happens anyway. To come up with a considered, quick response from USIS would be very difficult.

PETERSEN: I remember being very impressed by the econ officer who was head of the economic section from the embassy. His answer was, "We've got this very close and special relationship between us, but Japan has to make certain decisions that are in Japan's interest and we understand what Japan has to do." That was a summary of maybe a 15-minute long answer he gave. I was very impressed by that. The man did a very good job.

Q: Is there anything else we should cover in Sapporo?

PETERSEN: I can't think of anything.

Q: In 1973, where to?

PETERSEN: I went to Princeton on a mid-career fellowship.

Q: We'll pick this up in 1973 when you're off to Princeton.

Just to add one thing, we talked off-mic. You were talking about when you were in Malaysia, how as a single man you were living in a fishbowl and the difficulties thereof as pertains to the opposite sex.

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Today is August 6, 2001. You were mentioning how you lived in a fishbowl. Could you talk a little about that?

PETERSEN: When I referred to a "fishbowl," I meant that in Kuching, Malaysia, and to some extent in Sapporo, Japan, I was easily identified and fairly widely known. In Kuching, I was known because I was out constantly meeting people and saw them officially and socially. In Sapporo it was a little bit different, but my picture was in the paper and occasionally I would appear on TV. Because I was one of the few Westerners in Sapporo, a city of a million-plus people, I was easily known. My point was that whatever I did, but certainly including social activities, I was observed and evaluated. It certainly was not like being in the U.S., where you just blend in. You asked specifically about meeting women. To the extent that I met or was introduced to eligible women, since I was a bachelor, it was a very serious situation right off the bat. I remember a few social gatherings where it was clear to me that the hostess or host had sort of an ulterior motive including me, and it was to meet someone in particular. Taking note of that, I was aware that any development of a friendship and so forth would be closely observed and monitored – what were my intentions? Was I looking for a wife or just looking for a girlfriend?

Q: You mentioned that in Malaysia, dating wasn't much in the cards.

PETERSEN: It wasn't. Dating in the American sense of pairing up and going off to some social activity, taking in a movie, going to a dance, really wasn't. I didn't do any of those activities because the moment I would have suggested to someone having dinner together or going to a dance at one of the clubs or going off to a movie together, it would have been, "Well, is this young diplomat interested in becoming connected to our family? Let's find out before he walks out the door with our daughter." Luckily, I was really very busy. I'm amazed at how much time I spent not just during the day, which had been dealing with the in box and the out box and writing reports, but my evenings were just chock a block with contact work, journalists and businesspeople, the military, the police, getting together. I spent an awful lot of time in Kuching golfing. Fortunately, people from the Malaysian information service, Radio Sarawak, the police, and so forth had some of the people who were of interest to us in a business sense who did like to golf. Our ambassador set a great example with his weekly golf match with the prime minister. I

spent a lot of time on the course and then afterwards just sitting in the club for an hour or two drinking and chatting. There was plenty of casual social activity but not any courtships to speak of.

Q: In 1973-'74, you were at Princeton.

PETERSEN: I left Sapporo in July. I had met Paul McCracken when I was in Sapporo. He came over to do some programs for us at USIS. He was chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers. He and I were talking about something and he thought, "I'd better write to the President about that." I called in my secretary and he dictated – and she really couldn't take dictation well, so we ended up doing a rough draft. I was so bowled over. He sat there in the office and wrote a letter to President Nixon and signed it. We sent it off. It wasn't going as a cable. He had some ideas and he wanted the President himself to look at them. I thought to myself, "This isn't just chutzpah. This guy's probably writing a letter that President Nixon is actually going to read personally." I remember thinking, "Wow." I spent a little time with McCracken and told him how the economic relationship with Japan was so important and how sometimes I felt absolutely at sea in doing some of the programming we did.

I told him I wanted to improve my grasp of issues involving international economics. He said, "Come to Michigan." I guess he was affiliated with the University of Michigan or had come out of there or had some connection with school there. He said, "Get the Foreign Service to send you to Michigan and go in the master's program there and you'll be better equipped." I thought about that. I was tentatively slated to go into the economics course at FSI that was just starting up. It was a six-month course at the time. But as I headed off to a somewhat abbreviated home leave that summer when I left Japan in July, I forget how it came about, but I was offered the opportunity to go instead to Princeton for an academic year on the mid-career fellowship program. There were 10-12 U.S. government career employees who were also in the Woodrow Wilson School for Public Affairs at Princeton along with probably 120-140 regular students in the master's program. We were there for one year on fellowship assignments.

So, in September, I studied at Princeton. In some ways, it was a great opportunity. I had a lot of courses on quantitative analysis and economics. I even arranged to go into a course on Japanese history with Professor Smith and enjoyed that immensely. It was a frustrating year in some respects because I found my mathematics didn't equip me to handle a lot of the work I was doing. I wished that I had a stronger background in math. The narrative work, the historical side, particularly for the quantitative analysis, that was challenging, to be able to handle the amount of reading that I was doing. The economic history, Japanese history, and so forth was a breeze. The other thing that bothered me was a relatively minor irritation. I felt that the amount of money I had available to purchase study materials, books and so forth, was just so minuscule in comparison to what I really needed. In my end of assignment assessment for the Agency, I took note of that and suggested that anyone else in the program in the future be given a more robust book-buying budget.

There were two of us from USIA there. Paco Gomez was the other fellow. There were a couple of fellows from State. The CIA was there. Transportation. GSA and so forth.

I made use of that year in another way as well. When I was in Sapporo, I decided I wanted to learn how to fly a sailplane. So, as soon as I arrived in New Jersey in September, I went to Trenton Robbinsville Airport, found a flight instruction school, and said I wanted to become a glider pilot. The flight instructor said, "Gee, what a waste to get a sailplane license. Go ahead and get a power license." I thought about it and said, "All right, I will." While I was at Princeton, also on the side, I went through the classwork and then the practical in the air and got my pilot's license, single-engine land. Then there was a simple transition, just a few hours more, to get my sailplane license. Because I decided when I was in Sapporo that I really would like to be able to soar and see what it was like. It was like before I went to Sapporo and decided, "I'd definitely like to ski downhill" even though I had never seen a ski slope in my life. I just knew that certain things would be enjoyable.

So, when I left Princeton in the spring of '74, I had a little better grasp of international economic relationships and some new friends. I get constant requests for donations from Princeton, of course, so I'm part of that alumni network. I had two new pilot's licenses in my pocket as well.

Q: Having served in Vietnam, did this come up at the university? What sort of atmosphere did you find?

PETERSEN: One evening for my peers, the other government people, we set up a formal discussion and talked about public diplomacy work and what we were doing in Vietnam. I can't remember that clearly, but I remember getting into it with them and having some casual conversation with some of the regular master's degree students at the Woodrow Wilson School. I don't recall any deep discussions that would go on more than one session with anyone. I don't recall anyone who was working on Vietnam research or who had a particular political point of view. I can't recall anybody ever upbraiding me for having been involved and committed in Vietnam. What I observed among the graduate students was a driving determination to get on with their own careers. It never occurred to me until this very second that there was a surprising lack of interest and involvement in such things as Vietnam, but that would be unfair. Now I do recall that some of these casual conversations really were extensive, talking about restructuring Brazil and the economic problems in the Western Hemisphere. It's just that I don't recall conversations that zeroed in on my particular areas of experience: Japan, Malaysia, and Vietnam.

I had a particular regret. There was a point during that year when I could have gone to a meeting with Jacob Bronowski and I didn't. He's now dead. But it was only after the opportunity to meet him and talk with him had passed that I started to become aware of this marvelously talented person. He must have been a British subject. He did a book and a BBC series, <u>The Ascent of Man</u>. I saw that series later after I left Princeton, looked at

the book that accompanied it, and thought, "Gee, what a disappointment that I missed an opportunity to directly listen to this person." But I had other opportunities to meet some very interesting people. It was at Princeton that I met former ambassador Reischauer, who had been in Japan. I enjoyed that immensely. I don't know if I knew it at the time, but he was also an Oberlin alumnus. His books on East Asia and Japan. I had consumed long before. There were other opportunities to meet other people as well, people who were in public life who were involved in the issues and interests. The governor of New Jersey spent an afternoon or an evening in a seminar, a one-time event, talking public policy. That was on the state and local level but still of great interest to me. And there were similar opportunities throughout the year as well as in the classroom. It was a marvelous, refreshing year in that sense.

I left Princeton and was slated in early summer, June, of '74 to go into the Latin American Office at USIA and work for the area director, Dorothy Dillon. I had been interviewed by her in the spring and that was my next step. As I left Princeton, I bought and broke in a pair of good study hiking shoes, got a pup tent and a sleeping bag, and left Princeton and drove out West. The previous summer, I had found a book by a historian and used it as a guide and started following the old Oregon Trail, which I had found fascinating, going out and finding old gravestones and marks, indentations in the land still left over from the wagon wheels. I had gotten as far as Idaho in '73 on that abbreviated home leave. So, in '74, I picked up that again and did a little more of that. In the Grand Tetons, I went to climbing school. I felt strong enough to resume something a little more active. At Princeton, I had also taken up squash. My leg had healed enough after a skiing accident in Sapporo. That summer of '74, I went into climbing school. I enjoyed the climb of Mount Kinabalu in Malaysia but that hadn't really been technical climbing at all. At the technical school, I learned how to use different devices and ropes and so forth.

While I was hiking around somewhere in Wyoming and keeping from time to time in contact with Washington, probably through my family, at one point I got a message that I should call Lou Cross in Personnel. I had to go find a pay phone and make a call to Washington. He said there was an opportunity to get right back to Japan. It was arranged that I would go and support the U.S. pavilion at the World's Fair, a special international exposition that was going to take place in 1975 in Okinawa. I curtailed my hiking and climbing and zipped back to Washington, drove a couple days to get back. I went to work for a man named Chuck Clark in the exhibitions section of USIA. I spent my first few months there. I started working in August of '74. I spent my time working up a lot of budget data for Chuck as we prepared the budget for running the U.S. pavilion at the expo. Then sometime in the autumn, I went out as part of a three-person recruiting team to Ann Arbor, the University of Michigan; Denver; went up to Seattle; San Francisco; went down to Brigham Young University. We were looking for people who were fluent in Japanese and who also had certain skills that had to do with the oceans. The theme of this special international exposition in Japan was "The Sea We Would Like to See." Our pavilion was in the technology section. There was a section on history, on resources in the sea, and so forth. Our pavilion, along with the Canadian, the Soviet, the Italian, and some other pavilions was in the technology section. We were looking for people with

experience in research on possibly floating cities of the future or aquiculture, farming the ocean, deep sea drilling, mining manganese nodules from the ocean bottom, and that type of thing, all of which was going to be covered among the exhibits in our pavilion. Meanwhile, we were out looking for people to serve as guides in our pavilion.

Q: Why Brigham Young?

PETERSEN: Looking for returned missionaries, people with Japanese language skills. It was a treasure trove of good material for people to work as guides for us.

Then I went from San Francisco or Honolulu, the last stop on the trip, and back to Japan in late November of '74.

Q: You were in Japan from '74 to when?

PETERSEN: I left again in '76. I went to Okinawa and set up shop in a Hilton hotel. If I wanted to sum it up in a couple of sentences, I could describe the whole expo. It's like the circus coming to town. You go in, you put the tent up, you do the show, take the tent down, and away you go. That describes to some extent what I did. I was the executive officer. The person in charge of the pavilion was hired from outside the Agency, Allen Beech from Seattle, who had had experience working at international fairs in different capacities. He was hired to be the pavilion manager. As a deputy, the Agency provided him a fellow named Nikita Gregorovich Barski from USIA, a career employee. I was the executive officer, handled the administration, which included personnel, security, maintenance, and so forth. Quite a change for a public diplomacy specialist. When I got to Naha, I think I was the third one to arrive. Al Beech was there. Nik Barski was there. When I left in '76, I was the last one to leave, turned out the lights. It included tearing down the site and returning the land to the same contours that it had before the pavilion was there. It was an impressive building. It was modular in design. We had an administrative module and about seven exhibit modules, one that had to do with weather forecasting using satellites over the ocean, another that was all about deep sea drilling. In one module, we had a huge saltwater aquarium. In addition to the fish, we would have people go in with television cameras and they'd be filming the artificial reef and filming the fish. We'd have monitors outside showing what the people were filming inside. It was very interesting. From late '74 until sometime in late spring of '76, I was attached to the pavilion. We had 75-80 employees, maybe more, who were direct employees. I had security and maintenance teams who were just contractors who were hired. It went smoothly to the visiting public and was very impressive. Of course, behind the scenes, it was just an incredibly mixed up, challenging thing to provide support, see that the pavilion was constructed according to plans, that the exhibits got there, were installed properly. I continued recruiting personnel once I got to Okinawa. My first couple of months there, a lot of time was spent on that, interviewing and hiring appropriate personnel. I did not hire some of the technical people, the people doing filming. I certainly didn't have anything to do with hiring anybody involved in construction per se. That was all done under a blanket contract. It was mainly to hire guides and

administrative staff, support personnel. I hired a librarian to set up and run our library at the pavilion.

Q: How did you find the interaction? Okinawa is out in the boondocks for most Japanese.

PETERSEN: One of the reasons for having the exposition there was to help with Okinawan development. Reversion had occurred in ’72. The Okinawan prefectural government and the Japanese national government, was looking for ways to develop Okinawa. It was felt that tourism could, would, and should play a major role in Okinawa’s economic future. It was felt the International Expo. would be a good way to kick off an effort to increase tourism to Okinawa, both Japanese and international tourism. But also it fit in with road building, developing roads to the center of Okinawa and into Nago and out to the Motobu Peninsula, where the exposition was placed. All sorts of infrastructure upgrades, not only such things as roads, communication upgrades and so forth, but beautifying Okinawa, planting the palm trees along the highway and doing other things to really make it attractive to tourism, building additional hotels, increasing hotel space, restaurants, and so forth. It was all designed to not just ease the way into increased tourism, but to really jumpstart tourism to Okinawa. Behind the scenes, for us, it was a real challenge to not only get it constructed but to put appropriate exhibits into the pavilion. Congress provided what could be described as seed money. But to have exhibits and so forth was dependent on going out and going to organizations and getting them to donate exhibits or material that could be used as part of exhibits. Lockheed provided something that occupied all by itself one of the modules, a model of a future floating city that showed how you could have a self-contained thing that a few thousand people would live on. It used the thermal difference in the temperature between the surface water and deep water to set up a circulation that powered this floating city. It was a grandiose, greatly expanded floating oil derrick. It was a model made out of plywood or something. It showed how such a thing could operate. The Jansen company was approached and provided some of the costuming for our guides. Bayliner provided a boat to us. We had a nice inboard-outboard 28-foot Bayliner. I’ll tell you a funny story. From the company’s point of view, it was an opportunity to show off one of its products to people who would see it in the midst of this exposition. I was an executive officer, so I guess you could call me a bean counter. My fellow bean counters back in Washington took a jaundiced view of this and were disturbed that we had this boat on our inventory there. There was discussion about how it would not only be used for representational purposes by the commissioner general of the U.S. pavilion but that it would be available for emergency commuting from near Kadena Air Base up to Nago when the roads were not passable because of construction and so forth. It may have been used that way a couple of times, but it was a several hour trip by boat, much longer than going by highway when the highways were open.

In any event, at one point during the exposition, word came down from Washington that we had to get rid of that boat immediately. We got rid of it just prior to the end of the expo. Somebody in Washington was disgruntled that we had that boat there. I had to find a buyer and sell the boat.

Q: Did you find that you were bringing in Japanese tourists?

PETERSEN: The expo was a bust financially. People who invested money, the collateral people, not the official exhibitors, of course, the big company, Mitsubishi, had a nice exhibit there, and other major companies did. It must have been part of their marketing budget and they accounted for it as marketing. People like us, it was an expenditure for our government, the seed money. For some of our exhibitors, I don't know which ones, there was a marketing benefit. But the people who invested money in restaurants, hotels, and particularly souvenirs didn't make out very well. I know some of them were extremely disappointed. They said that the estimates about the projected number of visitors had been highly inflated by whoever was originally in charge of conceiving the idea of the expo. There was a lot of disgruntlement by businesspeople.

Q: Looking at it from a distance and not knowing the territory, I would think you've got Okinawa, a relatively poor area with not a huge population. You'd have to rely on a lot of Japanese particularly flying down there. I wouldn't think Okinawa would be the place the Japanese would fly to.

PETERSEN: The number of visitors did not reach the projections. There are lots of reasons and explanations, everything from the general state of the economy, to the remote location, but it's true that it was not an expo that provided a lot of monetary benefit to people who invested in the collateral parts of it.

Q: I realize you were really tied up with the Expo. Okinawa had reverted to Japanese control just a few years before. How was this working?

PETERSEN: Aside from just a brief airport visit once on my way to Malaysia in '68, I had not been in Okinawa until I arrived again in '74. The return of Okinawa to Japanese control had been in place for a couple of years. There was still a rather healthy expatriate American community there. People were involved in business, many of whom supported the American military presence, a few who had branched out and were just a regular part of the Japanese economy. I got to know quite a number of them very quickly because we turned to them for some services, some work that we needed at the pavilion as well as just general guidance as to what was going on in economic and business sense in Okinawa. But a few things stand out. One time, an American schoolteacher who taught in the military school system there for many years, said to me at a social event, "This was terrible, this reversion. This was a number one territory that the U.S. needed. We'd developed it. We should keep it." I remember looking askance at her and thinking, "I never thought I'd hear…" She was a schoolteacher but employed by the military system, so technically she was a U.S. government employee. I was surprised to hear a fellow U.S. government career employee talking in that fashion. I heard echoes of that from a few other Americans who were irate and felt that we had done so much and that our contribution to developing Okinawa was not appreciated. These people said to me, "Every Okinawan wanted to remain part of the United States." I was thinking, "Oh, are

you out to lunch. What nonsense!” I forget the technical word for someone who wants to hang on to a territory that way. I heard a few stories told half humorously about the bumpy transition to Japanese control. One of them might be an urban legend about a Japanese businessman who was visiting Okinawa and was caught speeding in his car. He told the policeman, “You have no right to arrest me. Okinawa belongs to Japan. I’m a Japanese. You can’t do this.” He was talking to an Okinawan Japanese policeman supposedly. I’d hear stories like that. I heard a lot of nonsense, frankly. I did not observe any significant difficulties, wasn’t really aware of any.

Q: Recruiting from former missionaries, did you have any problems with them reverting back to missionary reflexes?

PETERSEN: Wanting to prosthelytize, they’d go out and spend their free time going door to door? No. That was not an issue. I don’t know the number of former Mormon missionaries we got in, probably six, certainly fewer than 10 out of the total number of guides that we had. We had quite a diverse group. We ended up recruiting quite a number of people who had grown up in Okinawa, sons and daughters of longtime residents, people who had U.S. citizenship but who had grown up and lived in Okinawa, gone to American schools there and were fluent in Japanese. Our guides were divided into different groups. Some were the outside greeters. All the guides were costumed. Some of them on the exterior were welcoming visitors and would be dressed in American colonial costumes, the men in the colonial seaport look. We had some models and displays of American sailing ships showing the development of seafaring technology in the U.S. from the first years of the Republic. The women guides were dressed in colonial period, something like hoop skirts and bonnets. Inside, depending on the location, we had some people dressed as oil-rig people with hardhats and so forth as they’d look if they were working in oil exploration. Others in the modules having to do with future technology were dressed in futuristic costumes. It was quite a diverse group of men and women as our guides.

Q: In ’76, you moved on. Did the fact that the fair was sort of a bust carry over?

PETERSEN: It did. Having been associated with it didn’t work to my advantage in terms of a corridor reputation. At the same time, it would be greatly exaggerated if I suggested that was some significant impediment to me in any way. You know how it works in Washington. You come back and meet somebody on the elevator and between three or four floors you exchange your recent vita. If you’ve come from a hotspot and done something, you get off the elevator and that person’s mind says, “Wow! So-and-So is up to great things and just continuing with his stellar career.” If I said to somebody, “Well, I just got back from this expo, it wasn’t the greatest thing in the world.” They’d think, “Petersen’s on a downward slope.” But it was a frustrating, difficult experience.

I was the last person to leave the expo staff. We finished it in January of ’76. All the others had departed over a period of many weeks. Come late spring, I was still there returning the last of our equipment and vehicles that we’d gotten on long-term loan from

the U.S. military.

There is a little interesting sidelight. Congress provided seed money but we had to go around and get donations in order to make this thing work. In one sense, we were living hand to mouth. We needed a fleet of vehicles. When I got to Okinawa, it was arranged that we would borrow them from the U.S. military. I went over and in a series of meetings with some of the DOD people worked out an arrangement where we were going to be provided with six passenger vans.

This technicality was that the rules of participating in the exposition were that you had to import the things you were going to use. Other countries that were participating had to purchase an imported vehicle or actually physically import vehicles that they were going to use for their pavilions. No one else had a military presence on the island. I patted myself on the back for being able to figure out a bureaucratic way of dealing with that. We took those U.S. military vehicles and technically exported them out of Japan and then reimported them a few seconds later with the appropriate paperwork. We weren't doing anything dishonest and we weren't doing anything that the Japanese didn't agree to and know fully well what we were doing. We imported the vehicles for the use of the U.S. pavilion on paper. But then we took the vehicles and had them all repainted from the olive drab and painted over any identifying marks of the military, painted them all white, and then had the USA pavilion logo stenciled on the sides of the vehicles. It made a very handsome fleet of vehicles. When I left, I had to go through the whole thing again, export those vehicles and have them reimported by the U.S. military. I dropped them off at some military lot. Presumably, they repainted them back to olive drab again and put them back into use. We did that with a number of things.

There were all sorts of things that I went through in dealing with personnel, security, and shipping. I'm often asked about what it was like to work in Japan and I sometimes use as an example my experience negotiating a shipping contract, which I did shortly after arriving in Okinawa while we were still housed in the Hilton Hotel and using the Hilton as our office base. All the pavilions, all the national exhibitors, had to have shipping contracts to have things shipped in, as did we. I went into this and the negotiations took a couple of weeks. It was an elaborate and not unsatisfying act that we went through sitting down with the team, never fewer than five or six people across the table from me from the Japanese representing the expo organizers. They offered us an array of potential shipping companies that had been approved by the expo organizers. I was free to select among them. I knew going in prior to the first meeting that they knew which one they wanted me to pick and I wasn't sure they knew that I knew they knew. But we went through these long negotiations. At the end of it, although we talked in great detail about what would and wouldn't be covered, what the fees would be, could we get a discount here or there. I'll never forget standing up, reaching across the table and shaking hands and knowing in my heart of hearts that, yes, eventually we're going to put pen to paper and sign the contract but this thing was going to work because I was dealing with a Japanese company whose reputation was on the line and once the handshake took place, that was it. There would be no deviousness on their part, nothing unfulfilled. They were

going to make sure that we were happy. I also knew or suspected that everybody on the Japanese side knew the outcome before we began, certainly which of the companies I was going to be steered to. I felt we got a very good deal on the shipping contract. The same thing happened on contracting with the security company to provide a staff of guards. I enjoyed it. I since have had some experience negotiating with American companies and sometimes there can be a big difference. But there was this certain sense of honor and confidence that I could really trust. I knew the outcome would be good and indeed it was. We never had any problems with any of the Japanese companies that we dealt with. We had problems with some American companies, but not the other way. But I don't want to come across sounding like some naive Japanophile here. It's not that. But it was an interesting process, the negotiations.

Q: In '76, you're finished with the expo. What did you do?

PETERSEN: I could no longer escape serving in Washington. The expo counted as my fourth overseas assignment, although technically on the books, I could also, since I was on TDY for the whole time, technically, Washington might have carried me as being on the books in Washington. In talking it over with Personnel, I had a few long-distance phone calls between Okinawa and Washington prior to my return to the States. I said, "I'm ready for another overseas assignment" and was told, "Not on your life. You've got to come back and become acquainted with Washington. You've got to serve in headquarters now." For lack of a better plan, it was agreed that since I had been headed into the Latin American prior to going to Okinawa, "We'll send you there." So I was assigned as a desk officer to the Latin American office. I liked to joke about that. This was 1976. I had been in the Foreign Service for 11 years – other than training, it was my first assignment in Washington except for those first couple of months in '74 when I was assigned to the expo but actually worked in Washington before getting out to Okinawa. I used to joke with people and say that the Agency in its great wisdom found out that when I was in Princeton for New Year's, I had gone down for my first-ever visit to Mexico. I went to Mexico City and then to Acapulco, for a little vacation. I said, "Somehow the Agency found out about that and knew that I was Latin American material." I had not studied Spanish in the Foreign Service. I had studied Vietnamese, Malay, and Japanese. But I was put in as a desk officer in the Latin American office and served there for a year. I was like a rover, thrown into the breach. I take that back. I wasn't a desk officer. The term was "program officer." I was a program officer concerned with English teaching programs, supporting cultural center library programs, and so forth. But throughout the course of the year, I did sit in when desk officers would be gone and I would handle those desks for weeks at a time, different clusters of countries.

Q: You were there from '76 to '77?

PETERSEN: Yes.

Q: Any problem areas that stood out while you were there?

PETERSEN: You know how we in the Foreign Service, and I think quite correctly, complain about political appointments that go too deep into our organizations. It's understood that certain ambassadorships or a certain proportion of ambassadorships will be political appointees. I don't think anybody in the Foreign Service seriously opposes an "appropriate" number of these. But at times when the political appointments get too far down under too many layers into the organization, there are concerns raised. At one point, I was on the telephone speaking to a rather senior Foreign Service officer who was a PAO at one of our major posts in the Western Hemisphere and telling him -- here I was with no real experience in the area and I was an unknown quantity, someone he wouldn't necessarily trust or even know from Adam -- I was telling him that he had to change his country plan (this was early '77) and that human rights had to play a significant or a more significant role in his country plan. I remember him telling me, "You don't know what you're talking about. That's just that political stuff from the White House. I know how things operate down here. That will never work. We can't program on that. That's impossible. Are you people out of your minds?" over a series of phone calls. I remember musing about that and thinking, "Now I realize why the political leadership does feel that the career service isn't loyal." What was coming out of the Carter White House was a new emphasis on human rights. Here I was talking to a career FSO who was saying, "No, I'm going to resist that. That's not going to work." This person was arguing based on his experience, his firm beliefs of what was good for the United States and our foreign policy and so forth. But he was dead wrong. That spring and ever since, I thought about how I can understand the frustration of political leaders and their desire to put "trustworthy" people in key spots to make sure their policies are carried out with the proper amount of enthusiasm. Such examples are extremely rare. It doesn't mean we can't be critical among ourselves of some of the policies, but this really stood out because it was so different from what I experienced over most of my career.

Q: In '77, whither?

PETERSEN: In '77, while serving in the Latin American office, I had been tentatively thinking about an appropriate Western Hemisphere assignment. But when I got ahold of a list of what was going to become available in the following year, I went to see one of my A-100 classmates, Virginia Warfield, a desk officer in the African office. There was a new post that was going to be opened in Mauritius. I knew next to nothing about Mauritius other than vaguely where it was located. But from what I had quickly read about it, it sounded intriguing. I went and talked to her and a few other people who had been there and they said, "This is a real opportunity. Nobody knows what a great place this is." What intrigued me was that the issues had to do with our presence in the Indian Ocean. I knew a little bit about Mauritius because of its connection with Diego Garcia. I was interested in issues having to do with the "Indian Ocean zone of peace" concept that was being pushed by the Non-aligned Movement. To make a long story short, I put Mauritius on my bid list along with some others. I was slated to go and open a USIS post in Mauritius.

When I left the Latin American office, I went into the Operations Center. I was working

there but the major thing that took place in ’77 was that I got married. I had met my future wife in Japan when I was in Okinawa. She is a Japanese who left Japan. She was working in New York for a Japanese trading company. She decided to leave that and go back and visit her family in Okinawa. She applied for a job at the U.S. pavilion. Her brother was in the prefectural government and she came back for an extended visit with her family. He suggested to her, “There is going to be this exposition. You’ve got experience in the United States. You can probably work for one of the Japanese exhibitors or maybe even the U.S. exhibitors. Why don’t you look into that?” She applied. She was interviewed and hired. She worked as one of the guides in the U.S. pavilion. After the expo was finished, the following year, I kept in very close contact with her. She returned to New Jersey. In ’77, we were married. We’re now at a quarter century of married life. I have to mention that because that was a factor in considering my next assignments. Up until becoming married, it was simply what kind of adventurous place, challenging place, exciting place, interesting place that I would have on my bid list. But now that we were married, I had to take into consideration what would be of interest and fulfilling for Kioko. So, I bid on Mauritius and got it. I went into full-time French language training and Kioko also started taking some. Although she was still studying English, she also took some French language training. I remember one time going over the post report for Port Louis and explaining to Kioko the demographics of the country and a long list of things that were recommended that we should take with us; we needed to go to the local Safeway or Giant and buy cartons of this and that because you need a supply that will last for several years. I remember going down this list of foodstuffs and saying, “Gee, we’re going to have to go buy this and that.” I remember Kioko stopping and saying, “Wait a minute. Didn’t you tell me about the people living there?” I said, “Yes. There are Afro-Mauritians, Franco-Mauritians, and a small Chinese community.” She said, “That was it: Chinese. Oh, there are Chinese there. We don’t need to take anything. We’ll be able to eat. I’ll find every ingredient I need. Don’t worry about that.” That was her approach to planning for the assignment.

Q: You ended up in Mauritius in ’78?

PETERSEN: Yes. We left Washington in December of ‘78 and arrived at the very beginning of January.

Q: From ’79 until when?

PETERSEN: We left in early ’82. It was a full three years in Mauritius.

Q: What was your job?

PETERSEN: I was the country PAO. I set up the post. I don’t want to be unfair to others, but once I was committed to going to Mauritius and started trying to prepare more seriously for the assignment, included in that was discussing with my superiors why we were opening a post in Mauritius. Frankly, there wasn’t a good answer. We were opening a post simply because we ought to have a post. I think you understand that sometimes we

just do things because it just seems you ought to do them. The real reason was that it came down to one thing: we were getting hammered on the issue of being on Diego Garcia. They wanted public affairs to deal with that. I was told at one briefing either at the NSC (National Security Council) or at the Department before going over, "Your job is to get rid of this public affairs problem we have with Diego Garcia. We're getting hit on that and we want that addressed in a public affairs way."

Q: You'd better explain Diego Garcia for the record.

PETERSEN: Diego Garcia is a group of small islands that's northeast of Mauritius, south of India. It was part of the British Indian Ocean territories. It was governed when Mauritius was a British colony as a dependency of Mauritius, which means that the British administered it from their offices in Port Louis. They had some copra production on Diego Garcia. They had some year-round people working in the coconut plantations there. I forget the exact dates when we agreed that it would be good for our navy to take over Diego Garcia as a basing area, a prepositioning area, for our forces in the Indian Ocean. We negotiated with the British and it was agreed that the British would lease it to us. I think the lease agreement is for 99 years. But we stipulated that the territory that we leased from the British should not have any population on it. Technically, from the British point of view, the people working there and living there were not Diego Garcians. They had come from elsewhere. The people who were there might have considered it their rightful home after spending a certain amount of time there. But the agreement was that we would lease Diego Garcia from the British and use it for military purposes. The people who were living and working there were taken off of Diego Garcia and placed in the Seychelles and Mauritius prior to our arrival. At least that's how I understand the history of it. Either these people or others on their behalf placed some claims against the British. When claimants would come to us, we would say, "We lease from the British. This is a British issue, not an American issue." In terms of public affairs, it was an American issue, but legally, we would say it was a British affair, not an American affair. Money was paid into a fund for the people from Diego Garcia who were resettled elsewhere. The money was intended to support them and assist them in resettlement. There are arguments and claims and counterclaims about what happened to the money, whether all of it, most of it, some of it, or none of it got to the Diego Garcians who were being resettled as well as arguments about how the money was used. Was it used properly or improperly? From our point of view, we had a lease agreement. We took over an area that wasn't populated. From the British point of view, they made appropriate payments to the appropriate officials for the resettlement and if something happened after that, after the fact, they couldn't be held accountable. So, when I got to Mauritius, there were – and there had been for some time, sometimes at a low level, sometimes at a more active level – demonstrations, protests, complaints, legal maneuverings and so forth having to do with our presence in Diego Garcia and how the people who had lived and worked there had been ill treated and cheated, how they had rightful claims that weren't being properly honored.

Q: We must have taken a look at this. Was our reading that the money had disappeared

into the coffers of Mauritian officials and Seychelles officials?

PETERSEN: First of all, we weren't a responsible party, but we have a responsible attitude. We looked into it, but it truly was a step removed from our direct involvement. I frankly at the time knew this in great detail. I no longer recall. I'm certainly not going to accuse any specific individuals or even a particular government of siphoning the funds off. If this weren't an international thing but was just something that took place in the U.S. where you move a population in order to move the land, if you build some housing and put in roads and agree to add teachers at a local school to teach the students of this new population, you could argue, "Well, I used the money appropriately." The population might say, "No, you haven't. I wanted that money to spend on food and clothing. I didn't want it to improve the school system, which serves other as well. I didn't particularly care for the way the road was done." There certainly were arguments in Mauritius – I don't know about the Seychelles so well – in the Mauritian government, in the Mauritian populace, about whether the people from Diego Garcia had been treated fairly, unfairly, or in between.

Q: Before we move to what you did, let's talk about how our embassy was constituted and the Mauritian government.

PETERSEN: I'll start with the Mauritian government. The prime minister was Sir Seewoosagur Ramgoolam. Mauritius was part of the OAU [Organization of African Unity]. Seewoosagur was the only Indian national ever elected to head the OAU, quite a claim to fame. He was the prime minister. There was a governor general responsible to the British Crown. The parliament numbered 40 members. I went to some parliamentary sessions and was very impressed with the pageantry, the demeanor, and the energy of the debates in parliament. Seewoosagur's party was the Labor Party of Mauritius. An opposition political movement was the MMM, the Mauritian Militant Movement. A key leader of that was Paul Bérenger, a young Franco-Mauritian who people sometimes said grew up on the barricades of '69 in Paris and the student revolts of '68 and came back and was leading protests in Mauritius.

Ambassador Sam Gammon was ambassador. He had been in Paris prior to that. Tom Burke was our DCM. I have to mention our admin officer as well because he played an important role. Don Lynch was the admin officer. I mention him because I arrived there in January of '79. In that year, we moved the embassy. As Ambassador Gammon said, "Two moves equal one fire." Two moves and you can destroy an embassy. It was quite a challenge. We moved from one office building in Port Louis. We moved to a brand-new office building down closer to the port called the Rogers House. Rogers was a holding company that controlled Air Mauritius and a variety of enterprises. They put up a brand-new office building and we moved our embassy into the upper floor except for a penthouse or a cafeteria or something on the floor above us. Very nice. It wasn't a high-rise. It was maybe four or five stories. So, we moved to a brand new space. Don had the challenge of handling this and getting it done. You asked about my role as PAO. It was a very tiny post. I had a couple of very good FSN employees. I hired a few more while I

was there. I also got Washington to send out a JOT for a training assignment. I considered that a feather in my cap to get a second officer there. The powers that be in Washington - I took it as a compliment – accepted my arguments that I could provide good training opportunities for a JOT. I'm just delighted that I still maintain contact with a couple of the FSNs who are still doing great work for that embassy there.

We did a lot of the usual things. We had a library. But one of the decisions that I arrived at after I had been in Mauritius for a while was that we really shouldn't maintain the library ourselves. So, we moved stuff over to the University of Mauritius. I felt it would be more accessible and better used there. We did have some cultural programming. We had some very good groups that came out and did the soft power part of international relations.

But the big issue was Diego Garcia. In a nutshell, the way that was handled was, we determined in the embassy that if more Mauritians had an economic stake in the current activities up in Diego Garcia, it would defuse the protests. Instead of the protest being "Get the Americans out of Diego Garcia. Get the Americans to leave," which was something that our friends in the Non-aligned Movement would endorse, we said to ourselves that if Mauritians had an economic stake in what's going on up there, they wouldn't be so eager to protest and argue that we should be leaving. After Ambassador Gammon left, Bob Gordon became ambassador. With him, we brought over some representatives of Morrison Knudsen, the big construction company. The officials who came over from the company were from New Jersey and Texas and it didn't matter whether they were from New Jersey or Texas, they all wore Texas cowboy boots. We had some meetings and talked it over. The company's point was that they had a pool of trained people from the Philippines and Korea, where they had done lots of work, where they were well known and they had a system in place for bringing in people to do the kind of work that they were contracted to do up at Diego Garcia. To suggest using Mauritian workers would cause difficulties because of the need for training and becoming acquainted with their system and so forth. That was one of the issues and we talked through that. The outcome was, over a period of negotiations among ourselves, our military and then the Mauritian government, it was agreed that we, the U.S. government through its contractors, would employ a certain number of Mauritians to go up to Diego Garcia and work and be able to send money back to their families in Mauritius. The first planeload to fly up there, we had the Mauritian foreign minister come out to the tarmac and pose, everybody was smiles and happy and so forth. It defused the issue. It was a win-win situation for everybody. Everybody seemed pleased with the outcome and it worked out quite well. That was one of the major things that I was involved in.

The other was preparing for the inevitability of the ousting of the Labor government. That was difficult. We had some real hot debates in our embassy. The Labor government had been very supportive of the U.S. government. There was great concern about what the Mauritian Militant Movement – some people called it the Mauritian Marxist Movement – what it meant. The MMM was highly critical of us. My position in our debates was, "Look, there is a certain inevitability of what's coming."

Q: Did you have the feeling that there was going to be a series of changes of government? Or was the Labor government sort of going downhill?

PETERSEN: It was an open question. I'll say this for the government in power. They were extremely concerned about any public appearance of the U.S. embassy being close to or getting close to the MMM. I was the one who went out and made a lot of contacts with the MMM. At one time, the foreign minister got up in the parliament and by name criticized me. What was this guy at the American embassy doing? It became nasty at times. A lot of journalists were sympathetic to the MMM. There were a couple of publishers who were not, but their staffs were. Through them, I got to know quite a number of the MMM politicians. I succeeded in overcoming internal opposition to getting some of them onto our IV program, which upset the Mauritian government. But my argument all along was, "There is a change that's coming with the next election. It's inevitable if you just go out and take the pulse of what's going on." Others in the embassy with different responsibilities, better attuned to the senior economic group running Mauritius, the plantation owners and others, would insist, "They'll never take over. Nobody's going to vote for the MMM." The people I was talking to were saying, "We're going to get rid of that Labor government and the MMM is what we're going to support." So, we had some real debates in the embassy as to what was going on in the country. At one point, I argued that we ought to go ahead and take the criticism from the government that would come with it, but go ahead and invite on the IV program the head, the titular head, of the MMM, invite him to the States now. My end of it was, "If you wait until the guy's elected, it's too late. You want to get him now." I'll never forget, Ambassador Gordon finally said, "Yes, we're going to do it." He and I went over and met with Anerood Jugnauth and invited him. We went to his chambers. We issued the invitation to him. There were others as well.

Q: Did he go?

PETERSEN: Yes. I left Mauritius before the election, but when the election came, it was a clean sweep. It didn't make me happy. I think it was a fantastic tribute to the fairness of the government that was there and its commitment to democracy. I thought it was a fair election and they got trounced. Then they came back.

Mauritius had the most marvelous press. Wide open. You could read the most scurrilous things on the left and the right. People put up with it. It was best summed up by either Paul Bérenger or someone else. He said, "Look, yes, we have serious disagreements with one another. They're very serous. But we're an island. We have nowhere else to go. We've got to live with each other. We've got to find a way to hold the country together and work together despite our disagreements." That seemed to be the touchstone that all Mauritians had.

There had been an outflow of Mauritians at the time of independence. I don't know the exact number, but it seemed that there were certain prominent people who left Mauritius,

migrated to Australia, Canada, and Rhodesia, which soon became Zimbabwe. They were concerned about losing their position in Mauritius to what they thought -- once the British left and it was no longer a colony -- would be an Indian domination. Two-thirds of the population of Mauritius was of Indian origin. You can read whatever racial/political/ethnic/cultural undertones to those concerns and attitudes you wish, but some people did depart and decided not to stay around and be part of the new Mauritius. But those who remained said, "It's our country and we love it. We have these serious political disagreements, but we're going to find a way to make it work."

Q: How did the French and English language work out?

PETERSEN: Mauritius was known to the Arabs 1400-1500 years ago, but there is no evidence that any Arab seafarer ever went there. But it's mentioned in some of their navigation charts and maps. The first known landing was by the Dutch. They settled in, killed the dodo bird to extinction, and set up factories and stayed for 50-60 years and then left and said there was nothing of value in Mauritius. Between the Dutch and the Arabs, the Portuguese might have landed at Mauritius to get water on their way to Goa and so forth. Then the French came in after the Dutch left and planted sugar. It became a French colony. Then the French lost it to the British in the Napoleonic wars. It became independent in 1968. It was a British colony for a century and a half and yet it was still French culturally. The British, when they had taken it over, had agreed not to disturb the French institutions and culture and so forth. By and large, there was a veneer of British control, but the big sugar families, the ones who ran the plantations, were Franco-Mauritians. The parliament was conducted in English, but the *lingua franca* of Mauritius was Creole. Much more of the press was published in French than in English, although there were some English language newspapers. In the French language newspapers, there would be articles scattered about in English and in the English language newspapers, there would be articles scattered about in French. It was more or less assumed everybody was bilingual, and if you were a Mauritian, trilingual: Creole, French, and English. The radio broadcast the news in something like nine or 10 different languages. A number of Indian subcontinent languages were used. The most popular TV programs were in Tamil or Hindi. There was a tremendous mosaic of languages and cultures and religious festivities and so forth. It was much more than a French-English divide. It was a mosaic of South Asian, French, African, and English.

Q: We'll stop here. We'll pick this up next time in 1982. Whither?

PETERSEN: Israel.

Q: We're off to Israel in 1982.

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Today is January 18, 2003. We're back in business again. Israel. You were in Israel from when to when?

PETERSEN: I got to Israel in June of ’82 and left in June or July of ’86. It was a four year tour.

Q: Who was the ambassador when you got there?

PETERSEN: Sam Lewis. He had been appointed ambassador under President Carter and was currently serving as ambassador under President Reagan, a Democratic and then a Republican administration. He was there for seven years, quite a tenure for anyone.

Q: What was the state of American-Israeli relations in ’82 and how would you describe Israel at the time?

PETERSEN: The key thing to remember is that this was the Israeli move into southern Lebanon.

I had left Mauritius in January of ’82. The intent was that I was going to study Hebrew until late in ’82 before being assigned as CAO (Cultural Affairs Officer) to Tel Aviv. I had begun my Hebrew language training in Washington. I think I was at about chapter 12 or 13 of the FSI book. I think there were 24 chapters. Suddenly, I got a call on a Wednesday morning in June telling me that I had to get to post that coming weekend. I really hadn’t been planning to go for another five or six months. My wife and I were in the midst of house hunting to buy our first house. I politely said, “This is quite a change. I’m not prepared to go. This isn’t what the plan was. No thank you.” I got another call shortly thereafter, an hour or so later, from someone higher up the food chain who said, “You ought to get there this weekend.” I again politely declined. By midday, I got another call from the deputy area director at USIA. He said, “Remember, you’re in the Foreign Service. You either go where you’re told when you’re told or you resign and get out. That’s your choice. We want you there this weekend.” I got there that Sunday. From Wednesday to Sunday, I shifted gears. This was June of ’82.

The reason for that was that the CAO in Tel Aviv, Sally Grooms, had been suddenly selected to do something for USIA, to take charge of a new youth exchange program.

Q: I was interviewing her yesterday. She is now Sally Grooms Cowl.

PETERSEN: I don’t know if she described that part. I was just tangentially connected to it. As I was told before I got to Tel Aviv, the USIA director wanted her immediately for this position to start up a new project. This was Charlie Wick. The ambassador in Israel had said he wasn’t going to release his CAO until the new CAO was there to replace her. Thus, they told me to get out there that weekend, and arrive by Sunday to go to work the following morning. To make a long story short, I arrived that following Sunday. There was about a week where we were both there. Then Sally left to rush back to Washington to head up this new youth exchange project for Mr. Wick. I was in the position that I had wanted and been tapped for from late the previous year but I had to forego the balance of

the language training.

In June of ’82, there I was, the new CAO in Israel. What was it like? What was our relationship like? The Likud had just recently come to power. Menachem Begin was the prime minister. This was a tectonic shift for the Israelis. The Labor government was out after so many years in power. The new Likud and everything that it represented in political thinking and in sociological/cultural outlook was quite a shift for the Israelis and our government, which had an excellent, close relationship with the Labor government and politicians and was hard at work maintaining that type of relationship with the Likud government. At the time I arrived, the job of the embassy was to make sure that there was good understanding, that they understood us, that we interpreted properly and correctly what the Israeli government was doing. That to a large extent was exactly what was happening, although both Israelis and we Americans were perhaps concerned and at times baffled by the efforts in Lebanon.

Q: When did they go into Lebanon?

PETERSEN: I forget the exact date. It was that spring.

Q: The Israeli army was in Lebanon in force.

PETERSEN: Yes.

Q: Was the siege of Beirut going on?

PETERSEN: Yes. The duties I had were such that - every officer in the embassy was aware of and following events in Lebanon - but my focus was on the relationship with our counterparts, our contacts, in Israel proper both in the government and outside the government. We had a fantastic, well established, excellent cultural affairs program at the time I arrived. It was a joy to step into it. I use the old cliché that it was vibrant and exciting. We had a cultural center inside the embassy in Tel Aviv with an excellent library/research facility. There was a separate USIS officer in the consulate in Jerusalem, but the embassy in Tel Aviv maintained a cultural center in Jerusalem that was separate.

Q: This was the peculiar thing where our consulate general in Jerusalem reported straight to Washington.

PETERSEN: Yes.

Q: There was a certain rivalry.

PETERSEN: From what I observed under Ambassador Lewis and then later under Ambassador Pickering, I wouldn’t use the word “rivalry.” There was a certain recognition of the importance of maintaining a sense of independence, but rather close cooperation, not rivalry. But I know that is an issue and a lot of people might want to depict it as

rivalry and have good explanations as to why, but from my point of view, it was really cooperation.

Q: It also depends on the personalities, particularly of the consul general and the ambassador.

PETERSEN: Yes. Wat Cluverius and Brandon Grove were the CGs (Consul Generals). They attended the weekly country team meeting in Tel Aviv. They would sit next to the ambassador. There was a sense of emphasizing both their independence and their importance and their relationship with the embassy. No effort was ever made to trample on that independence.

Anyway, in June, I got launched on that assignment.

Q: Tell me about the invasion of Lebanon. How was this viewed in the embassy as you arrived?

PETERSEN: The concern was how to resolve the situation. Very early on, we had shuttle diplomacy with Phil Habib. I had actually met him in Saigon. He was head of the political section there. He played a key role in trying to establish the negotiations for an Israeli withdrawal. Much of the embassy support went into that. My colleague, Arthur Berger, the press attaché, must have spent 95 percent of his time on that, speaking to the press every day at the sites of various talks and negotiations.

I, on the other hand, was spending 99 percent of my time, if not 100 percent, on other things. The cultural program that I was responsible for was not a part of the embassy resources being applied to helping resolve the Lebanon issue.

Q: When somebody arrives and is new on the block, often they can sense the mood clearer than somebody who has been there. There is a difference. Did you find any disquiet among the officers over what the Israelis were doing?

PETERSEN: Yes. In general, yes. A great deal. First of all, in the largest sense, there was concern about U.S. interests in the area and concern about stability in the Middle East. But also concern that the Israelis weren't doing something that was in their own interest. A great deal of disquiet.

Q: In your cultural activities, what were you getting from your contacts? I am told that in Israel, it's vibrant and if nothing else, everybody is articulate as all hell.

PETERSEN: The same sort of disquiet. Articulate, very vocal expressions of concern from some of the contacts. Others expressed general frustration and determination and a sense of being absolutely pushed to the limit, that something needed to be done, that they couldn't put up with the constant threats, that terrorist activity, the bombardments, the harassment in the form of shells landing in their kibbutz and so forth up in the north. A

real anger, determination to accomplish something, but perhaps also a recognition of how hard it would be to target the right enemy. It was the entire gamut of feeling.

Q: What were we doing on the cultural program?

PETERSEN: The two libraries had excellent research facilities and were in great use at providing material for scholars and journalists and people in the arts and so forth. We were busy - the word “showcasing” comes to mind – providing insights into American thinking and developments, individual arts and the performing arts. When I arrived, one of the very first programs – I hadn’t set it up, but Sally left and I got to manage it and take whatever managerial bows – there was a major dance company that came over. We were involved in bringing theater people. At the Tel Aviv Museum, we had a Gottlieb exhibit, a major effort to showcase an aspect of the American visual arts. We had the dance company I mentioned. We got involved in everything over the course of the four years in the realm of the arts. Opera. We brought over Sarah Caldwell. We had a variety of street theater companies. I used to work with a number of the Israeli dance troupes, theater groups, to facilitate their efforts to show the development of the arts in Israel to the American audiences in the U.S.

We had the IV program. The program we had was a major resource for the embassy. We had great involvement from the political section, the economic section, the DCM, Bill Brown, and then Bob Flatin, who later was ambassador in Rwanda. The DCM was involved in our IV selection committee. In some embassies, it becomes a stepchild of the CAO. USIS may jealously guard the IV program, and give lip service to making it nationwide. But in Tel Aviv, it was absolutely mission-wide and there was great participation not just in the selection of grantees but in the prepping of them for their visits to the U.S. and their debriefings and the follow-up activities with them. We had quite a number traveling.

We had a fantastically adept FSN, Helena Michelle, who administered the IV program and relieved me of a great deal of the administrative burden and allowed me to focus more on the substantive issues of searching out and evaluating good grantees.

We had a very important academic scholarly exchange program. We had the Fulbright effort, the USIEF, the U.S.-Israel Educational Foundation. The executive director was Dan Krauskopf, who had been there for decades. It was a marvelously administered program under Dan’s leadership. We had a six-person board with three Americans and three Israelis. The DCM was one of the board members. There was a professor who had come from Columbia University who was in Jerusalem at Hebrew University. And I was the third American board member. We had three Israeli counterparts. We had a vast array of scholars who made a real difference in scholarly exchange between the two countries. I’ll mention that the Fulbright program there really was a significant force in academic exchanges. Every year, we would go through the roster of applications for grants for Americans to come to Israel. I remember instances of American scholars explaining that it was essential for their careers, not because they were scholars of Israeli history, but

people in scientific fields, and theoretical mathematics. They would say, “It’s essential that I spend time at this or that institution in Israel for the development of my own career, my institution’s development, and so forth.” There were good and close ties.

I suppose I could sum up my life there as CAO. Kioko and I look back on that as one of the most hectic times of our lives, one of the most intellectually stimulating assignments I had in the Foreign Service. Every evening it seemed, I was out at some event or other mixing, meeting people, either at the theater, at a performing arts event, gallery openings, whatever, out mixing and hearing, talking to intellectual/cultural leaders of Israel. It was very exciting. We used to treasure our Friday evenings, the beginning of Shabbat would be the one quiet evening of the week. After dinner, sometimes we’d go and have dinner outside the house, but more often than not, after dinner, we would then go out and sit around over coffee and fruit with personal friends and have a relaxing evening. But it seemed as if the other six evenings of the week were all business, out working. But I loved it. When I left Israel after four years there and had to come back to Washington, it was such a downer. After the intense life that we lived there, returning to the routines of Washington was such a contrast and such a disappointment.

Q: Because of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the subsequent activities there, was it hard to get American cultural types to come to Israel?

PETERSEN: No. I suspect now it’s much more difficult.

I think it’s difficult now because of the security concerns, the danger. Yes, there were people who would express concern about the danger of visiting Israel under some sponsored program. That did happen occasionally, but it doesn’t stand out as anything significant. I remember much more clearly a couple of cases of Mauritians in my previous assignment who had expressed misgivings about visiting the U.S. because of the danger in the U.S., the danger of violence in our society. I remember that more than I remember the Americans expressing concern about visiting Israel. Both Kioko and I noted when we first got to Israel that in the first few weeks, we were very conscious of security issues – having bags checked when we’d go into a supermarket or a mall or things like that, the sight of the reservists on weekends going home, traveling with their weapons. You’d see kindergarten groups always accompanied by an armed guard. But after a few weeks, that became so routine that you didn’t pay attention to it. But at first, I was certainly aware and took notice of it.

Q: Was there any feeling that you were getting either from the embassy or Israeli contacts about the settlement policy?

PETERSEN: The wonderful thing about Israel is that, unlike some countries where people are somewhat reticent to talk about things, in Israel, I don’t recall anybody ever saying, “Oh, I don’t want to discuss this or that.” Not only were people willing to discuss it, they were willing to proselytize you with their view and try to win you over. From Israelis, I heard expressions of deep anguish and despair about the settlement policy in the

West Bank and how it would inhibit any eventual accommodation with Arab states or with Palestinian nationhood. Then I heard others who said, "It's our land and we certainly should be entitled to live anywhere in our land." In between those two extremes, every expression you could imagine. After all these years have passed, I don't recall one or the other of those two diametrically opposed viewpoints being more predominant than the other.

Q: It seems to me the society is quite divided.

PETERSEN: Quite. In the election results of certainly the last three decades have shown that even when there was a shift in power. When I was there, there were calls for power sharing, national unity governments, which are a recognition by any political system that you have gridlock or near gridlock and that there's not going to be one side or the other gaining sway.

Q: How about visitors? Were you deluged with them?

PETERSEN: Yes. You've heard the jokes that for an American politician to have the "three I" visits: Iowa, Italy, and Israel. Yes, we had CODELs constantly. It seemed that Israel was setting a world record for CODELs. This was one of the things that made working in our embassy there as a CAO so delightful, the fact that Washington paid attention, that it cared. I use the IV program as an example. There was great interest in who traveled on that IV program not just from within the embassy or within USIA but other parts of the U.S. government where they were very interested in who some of the IV grantees were and where they would travel in the U.S. and appearances they would make and so forth. I had the opportunity as CAO to be involved in some of the CODELs, taking groups around, traveling with them. It added a great deal of spice to the work. It was important. The situation there is so nuanced and difficult to understand and appreciate. I think it was really important for members of Congress to visit, to see for themselves, and for as many Americans as possible to visit. It's one thing to look at the maps and read about the issues. It's quite another to see for yourself what the West Bank consists of, the topography of Jerusalem. It helps your understanding to stand there on the hillside and look at it and begin to grasp what it is and certainly to visit places like Gaza and elsewhere.

One of the things that really was important while I was there… I worked for two different PAOs. For the first two years, it was Maurie Wee. The last two years was for Howard Lane. Particularly under Howie, we were able to use our program, make an effort to reach out to more of the Arabs living in Israel to get them more involved in our programming, going up to Nazareth, a city preponderantly Arab, and doing more of our programming up in Nazareth, trying to reach out to Arab-Israelis, and involve them, get them involved in our programs, get them into the IV program. In the Fulbright program we looked for opportunities, sought ways to support Arab scholars. I'm not referring now to the non-Israeli Palestinians. I'm referring to the around 17-18 percent of the population of Israel that was Arab. We tried to make sure that the program was inclusive and reached out so

that the same things we were communicating to the Jewish people of Israel we were trying to communicate to the Arabs of Israel and to get them involved in traveling to the U.S. in the same way and participating in programs and learning about us.

Q: Did you have any problem with the Israeli government with this particular thrust?

PETERSEN: No.

I recall another thing that was significant the last year or two I was there. Based on some research that we were able to do and get access to, we determined that the generation growing up in Israel, the generation in school, was less open to democratic ideals than the previous generation. We consulted the ministry of education about this, talked about it among ourselves, got involved with some American think tanks and others, and developed a project in USIS to try to help revise the educational curriculum by including more material on multiculturalism, on the ideas of democracy and so forth.

I don't want to give the wrong impression that the work of the CAO was all going to the theater and dabbling in music and dance. We were trying to bring about changes that were in the interest of the United States and that were for the betterment or in the interest of Israel, trying to support efforts where we had the cooperation of the Israeli government in trying to bring about some changes using soft power.

Q: You mentioned that the next generation was not as attuned to democracy. Was it just that Israel was becoming more Middle Eastern?

PETERSEN: I would approach it a different way. A few minutes ago I described it as the young generation being less open to democratic ideals. I suppose I should just say "less tolerant" of differences. What we sensed from our focus groups, polling, and other research was that the coming-of-age generation was just not as open and as tolerant, rather, they showed an inclination to be less tolerant than the preceding generation. They were drifting away perhaps from the founding ideals of Israel. I don't want to over-dramatize that, but there was a sense, a concern, and we tried to address that.

Q: The great exodus from the Soviet Union, had that taken place?

PETERSEN: No, the great exodus hadn't yet begun. During my time there, we were still hard at work lobbying, cajoling, using whatever means we could with the Soviet Union to get the release of Soviet Jews, so that they would have the opportunity to emigrate if they so wished whether to Israel or to some other country. The floodgates hadn't opened, far from it.

Q: You left in '86.

PETERSEN: Yes.

Q: You went back to Washington.

PETERSEN: Largely because of my experience with the Fulbright program in Israel, I took a great interest in educational exchange program. When it was time for me to leave Israel, Washington said I had to come back for a Washington assignment. I was caught in one of those generational things where they said at my grade, I had to come back. I think I bid on three jobs in Washington and two of them were in the educational exchange area. One would have been in East Asia and the Pacific. The other was for North Africa/Middle East/South Asia. That's the one I got.

I went back and spent a couple of years as a branch chief for North Africa, Middle East, South Asia, for educational exchange programs in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. It was interesting. I could sum up the two-year assignment very quickly. I had a substantive job. I wasn't involved in policy or some of the higher profile work of Washington, but I controlled the budget for my area and I had genuine power. By putting more funding into programs in one area or shifting funds, I actually made a difference. It was a good job in that sense. One of the major issues during the two years was the concern of who was to make the decisions as to who gets to participate in these educational exchange programs? Should it be the Washington Foreign Service bureaucracy or should it be the educational institutions in the U.S.? Who owns them? Congress provides the funding, but to whom do the programs belong? I was involved in the effort to get American schools, colleges, universities, to be more liberal in providing sabbaticals to their scholars so that they could accept grants to go abroad and also to waive fees and recognize the value of having foreign students on their campus and making it easier for foreigners to come to the U.S. I remember attending meetings where college managers of state schools and administrators would talk about the pressure they'd get from their state legislature saying, "You're using tax money from our state. It's not to be spent on non-residents of our own state." We would deal with those kinds of issues. I enjoyed the two years but wasn't at all unhappy when they ended and I moved on.

Q: People who work for USIA for the most part, the real fun is overseas. You're not very narrow. You're doing quite a few things. When you come back to Washington, you're managing a program, which can be interesting but it's not the same as being overseas, much more so than many of the jobs with the State Department, where you're involved in major international political matters.

PETERSEN: Yes, I would agree with you on that. Charles Wick's predecessor in the job had talked about how Washington really only existed to support the field, that the field called the shots and it was just there to provide resources to the field, not to try to provide more than the minimal amount of guidance necessary. Of course, there are those who argue that that's ridiculous, that the field simply exists to help carry out the policy developed in Washington. But for the information and cultural work, you pointed to something that is quite true.

Q: At this time, '86-'88, when you're selecting professors and exchange people going

out, these are people from all across the spectrum. There had been accusations on all sides that sometimes there is a black list, that so-and-so is too much to the left. Did you get any feel for approved or non-approved types?

PETERSEN: As for a black list or the existence of a list, no. As for strong feelings about the appropriateness of certain people to travel abroad on behalf of the U.S. government or to be brought to the U.S., yes, there were people who would question why someone would or would not be considered for a grant or why a particular institution would or would not. Some of the arguments would be, “This person has been constantly criticizing what we’re trying to accomplish. Why would we ever want to send him abroad to criticize us to the very audiences we’re trying to win over?” I do recall, interestingly, that there were a couple times when I had congressmen call me to question grants that I was making. These were not merely zealous congressmen looking after constituents in the normal course of making sure their constituents got something they had been asking for from Washington but actually questioning me, the branch chief, as to why some individual was going to be chosen or was not going to be chosen for a grant to travel somewhere. I liked that. I wasn’t afraid of that.

Q: How did you respond?

PETERSEN: I didn’t find it at all difficult. The shop I ran used reasoning that we would defend. I was astute enough to recognize an effort to interfere and wasn’t afraid to say, “This was the reason and that’s that.” I remember a congressman expressing great disappointment in me, but so what? Unless he was then prepared to contact the director of USIA, which he maybe did or didn’t, I don’t know. There were never any repercussions. I’m being cavalier talking to you, but I was polite but firm and explained our reasons and that was it. I didn’t hint or suggest that I was going to take the suggestion from the congressman just because he was a congressman. Maybe a couple, maybe two or three, instances of that over a couple of years.

Q: Were there all sorts of people using you as a contact to get their friends or themselves on the list?

PETERSEN: No, not really. If somebody tossed in a name over the transom, it simply got tossed in the hopper. The programs were run according to very clear, very solid guidelines. I’d have to say without exception, people were very concerned about there not being a perception and certainly never being a reality of people getting rewarded with a grant to travel somewhere, an institution being rewarded simply because they had friendly ties. But we would travel to academic conferences. We were there lobbying constantly, trying to get the academics to loosen up a bit and make our programs easier for us to administer and get more schools to add certain expertise to their faculty and so forth, find new opportunities for their students to travel. Amidst this, there were policy decisions made to maybe not constantly reward the same institutions that always did well but to try to reach out and find others. The effort to involve more historically black institutions is an example. We would focus an effort to get such schools involved in our programs. The

fact that on a couple of occasions I had somebody on Capitol Hill give me a call was not typical of the day.

Q: Did Wick's office ever intrude?

PETERSEN: Not directly to me, no, and not really. I didn't detect that in the way the Agency was run. I remember one instance where I had funded a publication that was a resource for college admissions officers in the U.S. to assess the academic credentials of people from abroad who were applying. A whole series of these publications were done for different countries. I funded one to be done for Israel and the West Bank. It was either two separate publications or a publication clearly demarcated. I got called on the carpet by one of our political appointees in the bureau who was very upset at the wording that had been used for Israel and the West Bank. He told me this was absolutely wrong. I said, "Hey, I have checked this before we agreed to the publication. I had checked with the State Department. This conformed to the policy of the U.S. This was the wording to be used, etc." He said that he didn't care about the policy, he was concerned about the political perception. He was very upset. I said, "This is the way it has to be." I explained the reason that the decision had been made and that was the way it had to be. In the end, he metaphorically shrugged his shoulders and said he wasn't at all happy. But what could he do?

Q: You left there in '88. where did you go?

PETERSEN: I went to the National War College.

Q: How did you find the War College?

PETERSEN: I like to say it was the best year of my life professionally and personally. Interesting curriculum. Wonderful library for research. I enjoyed the student body, the camaraderie. We were pampered there. We were in Roosevelt Hall at Fort McNair. We had a wonderful series throughout the year of guest lecturers who would come in. It was an excellent balance between the required courses and the electives. I enjoyed it immensely. The purpose behind it is to prepare the military officers and the civilians in the student body for the next level of their careers, for the military officers to prepare them for a flag-level assignment so they understand "jointness." It was fascinating to look at the beginning of the year, the wariness with which people would treat one another and to see throughout the year the gradual appreciation and understanding of the different cultures. In my homeroom one time, at a study carrol next to mine, a Navy flyer and an Air Force flyer were talking to each other and saying, "My gosh, I never realized that." They had flown similar aircraft but to learn how the Air Force viewed that plane and how it was used and how the Navy viewed it and how it was used was just a completely different approach to their profession of arms. We civilians tried to explain the State Department/USIA/Foreign Service contingent, showing what diplomacy was, or trying to bridge the gap between understanding between military and diplomacy. One of the electives I took was on the Civil War. It was immensely fun. Another elective I took was

with Gene Rostow, who had been in the State Department in World War II, a great scholar and man of public affairs. His seminar was on international law and how it applied. Most of the people in our seminar were Navy officers. The seminar met once a week. Week after week, they would express their concerns: could they put a ship here, could they travel that strait? Rostow finally in exasperation after a couple of months said, "Listen, you guys, when you've got to do something or go somewhere, you do it. You can always find the law to support it later." It was a good year. I enjoyed it.

Q: Being from USIA, up against the military… what's this performing arts, music, exchange thing? Did you get appreciation for what you were doing?

PETERSEN: Oh, yes. First of all, the role of the Foreign Service in the War College was to help bring some understanding of other cultures and the way other political systems worked, how people abroad viewed the United States, and why they would have goals that might be different than ours, how they could come to a different conclusion about some issue. The background of the people in State and USIA and some of the other civilian agencies that worked abroad were excellent in contributing to that. As part of the curriculum at the War College for the 160 Americans there, 40 civilians, 40 from the Army, 40 from the Air Force, and 40 from the sea services, including the Coast Guard, was an end of year trip to some area of the world. Part of the second semester included courses preparing you for the end of term trip and the research that would go on there. We were involved in issues of diplomacy and foreign policy. All of us in the Foreign Service could contribute to that.

Your point about USIA just being culture. There is so much more than that and that quickly became a resource in the classrooms at the War College. I had to do maybe a little more research than some of my military colleagues when we were talking about issues of missile defense. At one of the courses I had, we spent time on the question of whether to base retaliatory missiles on railroad trains or whether to bury them in hard silos or have a sea-based system. They may have started out the course with a better understanding of some of the various systems we were talking about, but certainly I held my own with them when we talked about what would be the political impact of having this in your state and what would be the economic effects of this and so forth. It's called the National War College and it is a military thing, but it's certainly more than merely a military viewpoint of things.

Q: In '89, whither?

PETERSEN: In '89, after the War College, I spent a few months in refresher French training and headed to Cote d'Ivoire, got there in November of '89.

Q: You were in Cote d'Ivoire from '89 to when?

PETERSEN: To September of '92.

Q: What was the government in those days?

PETERSEN: The government was the government of Houphouet-Boigny, the founding president of Cote d'Ivoire, a great man in many ways. His greatness stemmed in large measure from the role he played in the government of France in the 1940s. Up until the Ivorian independence, he was a contributor to some French legislation on the handling of the colonialization.

Q: Was he a deputy?

PETERSEN: I've forgotten what position he had.

Q: But he was part of the government.

PETERSEN: Yes, he was. He was the founding father of Cote d'Ivoire. He had some wonderful ideas, including a very liberal attitude towards countries around Cote d'Ivoire -- providing economic opportunities and refuge for people to come to Cote d'Ivoire. He presided over a good economy in the early years of independence based on cocoa and coffee. But he was a man who stayed too long. He never could find the opportunity to step down, a terrible flaw. Unfortunately, it outweighs or certainly significantly diminishes so much of what the man did.

Q: You were there towards the end of his rule.

PETERSEN: He died late in '93, about a year after I left. I had the honor to meet with him a couple of times and spend some time with him. When Ambassador Ken Brown paid his farewell call on the president, I was the one who accompanied him. The three of us sat together. It was a tête-à-tête between Houphouet and the ambassador, but I got to sit there and be the third pair of ears to our conversation. That was kind of thrilling. Houphouet-Boigny was a towering, great figure. It's just unfortunate that he couldn't step down. Quite justly, he could never be judged solely on the good things he did. The bad was kind of bad.

Q: What were you doing there?

PETERSEN: I was the PAO. The big thing going on while I was in Cote d'Ivoire was the war in Liberia. Charles Taylor went into Liberia on Christmas Eve of 1989, a little over a month after I got there. The Liberian war got underway. I forget when they got into Monrovia, but by June of '90, the Taylor forces had forced us to evacuate the Americans from our VOA (Voice of America) relay station in Liberia. By August, we were off the air. Our FSN staff had kept the relay station operating, on the air, for a couple of months after the Americans had been forced to depart. Our embassy in Abidjan got involved very early in 1990 in trying to help some of the refugees who started streaming over the border into Cote d'Ivoire. Early in 1990, we arranged to get a planeload of medicine flown down from USEUCOM (United States European Command). We arranged for some immediate

support to go to the Ivorian Red Cross and other organizations that were involved in aiding the refugees -- including vehicles, some cash, and other things. I remember the sense of commitment and urgency. We had a mini-country team meeting. On a Friday, the ambassador and four or five of his senior people were there about the need to provide some help to the Ivorians to deal with the refugees who were coming in. Someone at the meeting had suggested there wasn't anything that could be done with the weekend approaching, but come Monday we really had to get on this. The head of the political section, Tom Pryce, became very upset and said, "We're dealing with people's lives here. We'll work through the weekend. We'll get this done." Sure enough, on a Saturday, the next day, we had some of the donations already going into Ivorian hands. It was the Foreign Service at its best.

By spring of 1990, we were arranging for evacuation flights for Americans. They would be brought in from Monrovia to Abidjan, transferred and then flown out from there to the U.S. Over a period of weeks, we had a number of flights of people who were brought in to spend part of the day with us getting ready for the long flight to the U.S. and get them on board. It was horrible to hear about what was going on in Liberia and to see these people streaming out.

To get back to the relay station, the FSNs at the relay station were told that if they could get to Abidjan, get overland into Abidjan, to report in to me and then I would try to assist them. When they got there, I felt a particular concern, responsibility for the relay station personnel. I didn't know any of them individually or personally, but the fact that they had kept the relay station going after the Americans had departed I felt was a rather noble and important thing. I was very frustrated about the way I perceived we weren't doing enough to help them, but in truth, what could be done? The relay station was not in Monrovia. Some of the personnel from the relay station did indeed get to Abidjan over the month after the station was closed. They had gotten my name, were told to come to me. When they would come in, we'd try to arrange what we could for them in terms of support, everything from cooking material to a place to stay and some clothing and so forth. There were some real horror stories of what people had endured, the threats they had lived through, the attacks. A lot of people arrived distraught. Eventually, there was an effort made to set up a special visa program, where appropriate, to provide some visas to go to the U.S. Later on, both while I was still in Cote d'Ivoire and later when I was in Morocco, I remember getting a few letters from some of the people from the relay station who had gotten into the U.S. Some of them had relatives that were the lever that got them a visa. Others got in on special programs where they were entitled to some benefits until they could get a job and so forth. I got a few letters that touched me deeply, people just letting me know how they had ended up.

Q: In Cote d'Ivoire, the French influence has always been very strong. Did you find yourself in competition or in cooperation?

PETERSEN: In terms of the programs that I was directly involved in, I wouldn't call it cooperation. We did have meetings where we would meet some counterparts from the

French government, share some information about what we were trying to do in terms of providing training for journalists, that type of thing, and see where there were complementary programs. But by and large, competition is the wrong word, but also we didn't cooperate in the sense that I would tailor my programs and they would tailor their programs or that we would make significant adjustments. When I was in Borneo, I had worked with the British consul and I would arrange through the British consul some of their grantees that they were sending to Britain, we would take on a visit over the Atlantic so that people could come to the U.S. and also I would arrange so that they could pick up some of our grantees for a stay in Britain when we were sending somebody all the way to the U.S. I don't recall anything like that.

Q: What about the press? Were you trying to get America treated well? How did you find the Cote d'Ivorian press?

PETERSEN: The issue wasn't being treated well; it was being treated fairly. Our concern was for accuracy.

The concern was to try to bring more accuracy to portraying what the U.S. interests were in Cote d'Ivoire and in West Africa and what our contributions were. We were seeking fairness in the press. Some Ivorian journalists were also concerned with seeing that the press operated according to good journalistic standards, with accuracy and not overly editorializing in describing what was going on. The press was a very important part of our concern there. That was seen as a real building block for a freer, more open political system.

Q: What were we trying to do there?

PETERSEN: First of all, we had a good relationship with the Ivorian government, which was supporting us in endeavors elsewhere in Africa. We had overflight arrangements and some landing rights and so forth that were important for us. One time, it was described at a country team meeting that what Washington expected was for us to push the Ivorians to be more democratic and to do it at the same time without interfering with this very good relationship that was so important for other interests elsewhere. That was a real tightrope. The ambassador had a real challenge in trying to carry out what Washington was after with Cote d'Ivoire. The country in some senses was in a bad situation during the time I was there. Violent crime was an important and significant factor in our daily lies. The Italian ambassador was killed one evening in a shootout involving a crime in a restaurant. There were other instances of diplomatic personnel getting shot, car hijackings and robberies with threat of violence and so forth, not to mention the threat against Ivorians and other foreigners, non-diplomatic personnel living in the country. So, this was a problem. I've forgotten the rating system that was used, but if I have it correctly, Abidjan and maybe Rio de Janeiro were the two cities in the world that were on the security watch list, given the highest priority because of the danger of crime to personnel assigned there. This was a problem.

So, this was indicative of the problem that the Ivorians were facing -- the government, the business community, and so forth. The economy was in a bad way. Cote d'Ivoire had been one of the most prosperous West African countries up into the 1980s based on cocoa, coffee, and so forth. By the time I got there, there had been significant reversals. The coffee industry was no longer as competitive as it once had been. The type of coffee grown there is the Robusta, not the Arabica that has become the preferred coffee bean around the world. On top of that, the marketing strategy that the Ivorians had tried to use didn't work out as well as they had hoped. The quality of their crops had gone down. A lot of the money income from coffee sales and cocoa sales got siphoned off, and didn't get back to the growers who could reinvest it in improving the crop. That was a problem. Much of that siphoning off was putting hands in the till.

Much of the forest had been logged out so the great, hardwood forests for future generations were not going to be there. This nation that had started out so well was mired down. The embassy was trying to assist economically with better approaches for the development of infrastructure, use of crops, marketing strategies, and so forth. To deal with the problem of deforestation, one of the things the embassy was trying to do was help come up with alternatives to just logging the forests into oblivion. One idea was to develop ecotourism, maybe get livelihood for the people in and around the forests from looking after tourists. In order to do that, you had to preserve the forest itself. I remember one trip I took up to the Tai forest in Cote d'Ivoire and met with some people from the World Wildlife Fund and looked at the possibilities for developing ecotourism. But by and large, the country had a lot of challenges, a lot of problems. It was still, comparatively in West Africa, an attractive place to be and to visit but it was going downhill from its economic and political heights of a few years before. And then there was the concern about Cote d'Ivoire's political evolution. We had elections while I was there. I remember going out on election day and being part of the embassy's monitoring team, traveling to polling place and reporting on what we saw. Someone once summed it up again at one of our country team meetings as saying that the government, Houphouet's government, had really taken to heart and truly believed in democracy and the need for a very strong and good opposition. The one last step they couldn't possibly take in their own minds was that the opposition could ever take over as the government. That's been a failure of so many governments around the world. It seemed to be true there.

Q: There is now a war that doesn't seem to be able to wind down.

PETERSEN: Yes. They've got talks in Paris this week. They're bringing some of the leaders in for that.

Q: How did you find the Ivorians socially and all that?

PETERSEN: Interesting, fascinating. Culturally, everything from the designs that one would see on… Cote d'Ivoire is famous for the *pagne*, the wax cloth that is produced there. Ivorian women who can afford to be are very fashion conscious and wear the beautiful cloth. People were very social, very open. One thing I did find off-putting was –

and I hesitate to say it – but a certain lack of confidence in dealing without outsiders. When I would be in an Ivorian's house for an Ivorian meal, I had a sense that the host had gone all out to entertain me, to make the meal really special, beyond what he could afford and beyond what really was appropriate to entertain someone. I had a sense over the years I was there that this belied a lack of confidence in one's own ability. I don't know how to express it really accurately but it used to make me very uncomfortable.

Q: Did you have the feeling that the French influence had anything to do with it, that the French culture was the culture and that any African culture was secondary?

PETERSEN: I don't know. I do know that you'd hear snide remarks about some of the leadership in Cote d'Ivoire being more French than the French themselves. Certainly there was a veneer of an adoption of French culture. I'm not sure. I do recall, and it was refreshing when it would happen, that there were instances of Ivorians who would take great pride in showing me something that was Ivorian and not French, something of the country, maybe a food. Instead of serving just a French meal, sometimes they introduced something else that the host would explain was Ivorian. I was looking for those kinds of things because I wanted to see them. There weren't that many instances but they were refreshing when they occurred. And I heard a lot of complaints from a lot of sources about the French and how they had stultified the development of something more indigenous in terms of a culture, but I don't want to engage in French bashing because I certainly heard the remarks and the complaints and the vilification of the French, but I don't share in it per se. And I'm not a Francophile either.

Q: You left there in '92?

PETERSEN: Yes, in '92. My next assignment was to be in London. I left Abidjan and flew to London, went into the embassy and met the people I would be working with, even went and saw the building where my flat was going to be, where Kioko and I were to live. We were pleased. We were prepared to go to London and went on home leave after that. During home leave, I was told, "You're not going to go to London. We want you to take a Washington assignment instead." I was asked to choose from a list. I was rather disappointed to be going back to Washington after only one tour out. I said, "I don't really have a preference." I ended up going in the autumn of '92 as deputy director of the Office of Policy in the Information Bureau of USIA. Then the opportunity to go to Rabat came up and I leaped at it. It came up fortuitously for me because the previous PAO had been pulled out of Rabat in the summer and it was off-cycle and they were looking with someone with some real strong management skills to go into the post. They asked if I would go and I was delighted to go there. I arrived in Morocco in December of '92.

Q: And you left Morocco when?

PETERSEN: In September of '96.

Q: Who was the ambassador when you got there?

PETERSEN: Vreeland. He left around the third week in January, right at the end of the Bush administration. Then Joan Plaisted was our chargé for a year. Then Mark Charles Ginsburg became ambassador.

Q: What was the state of American-Moroccan relations?

PETERSEN: Excellent. When I'm talking about Moroccans, to answer that type of question, I'm talking about the three-to-five percent that form the elite, the political/social/economic elite that we would deal with. That's not to say that most of their opinions weren't reflected by others. But the Moroccans would remind us of how good the relationship was. There was this little minuet we would all dance that Morocco had been the first country to recognize the United States.

Q: Anyone who has served in Morocco has always mentioned that.

PETERSEN: Indeed there is the letter. Excellent relations. An historically good relationship. Morocco is such a beautiful place in which to live and to work. It helps color your view of everything. I do recall that much of what we tried to do, got involved in there, was welcome and was generally supported.

Q: You were public affairs officer, but where did you find you were putting most of your effort?

PETERSEN: Well, at least initially, the bulk of every single day was spent on the usual things that a PAO would be involved in. We had 60-some people at USIS. I was managing the staff of that. That includes the Americans and the FSNs. We had two cultural centers, libraries, one in Rabat and one in Casablanca. We had a very good press section involved in providing a great deal of material for the press. There were cultural programs that we presented, the cultural exchange programs, the IV program, all of that. Management of the post was the bulk of every day.

But at least that first year, I spent a lot of time involved in the preparation of the new VOA relay station up in Tangier. We'd had a station up there from the end of World War II right on the outskirts of Tangier. We were preparing a move later in '93 into a new 1,100-1,200 acre antenna farm about 30 kilometers south of Tangier on a coastal floodplain. Much of the construction was nearing completion. My first trip when I got there was down to Casablanca because we had a program going on with the Roosevelt Library where the Roosevelt Library and the Moroccan government had flown in a group of people to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Anfa Conference. We had the descendants of Churchill and Eisenhower and de Gaulle. We had scholars. We had Schlesinger there. Pamela Harriman came. They were feted and flown around Morocco for much of the week to Fez and Marrakesh, would have a scholarship discussion in the morning and tourism every afternoon. Then my next trip was up to Tangier from Rabat, up to the relay station. There were some public affairs issues about the move. Some

significant time was spent that first year preparing for the move and the opening of the relay station and working with community leaders in the area to assure them that the relay station was going to be a good neighbor and wouldn't bring harmful effects to the environment or to the economy. For example, that grazing would still be permitted for flocks in the antenna field. I know that maybe some people in Washington felt that I was a little overreaching my responsibilities, but I got involved in communicating directly with Washington with the VOA about the need to have better barriers around the antennas and so forth to prevent people or animals from harm by electricity and so forth. We were dealing with public affairs issues having to do with the effects of the possible medical problems that could be caused for people living near high-powered antennas and those kinds of issues. It involved sending our IO (Information Officer) to talk to people, meet with the press. I spent a lot of time on the road back and forth between Tangier and Rabat.

Q: Was there any discussion at that time about antenna fields being outmoded and satellites taking over?

PETERSEN: Yes, oh, yes, a great deal. I don't think anybody would argue that at some point in the future, all of us are probably going to get our radio or broadcast signals direct to something we wear on our wrist from the satellite in outer space. The only question is when? In our generation or the next or the one after that? If an antenna field like that is going to have a 30 or 40 year lifespan, should you build it? Will it be overtaken by technology before its useful lifespan is used up? Those kinds of discussions were taking place. When I was in Israel, there had been a proposal to build a big antenna field out there and our PAO, Howie Lane, spent most of his time working on that. But now and then, I got involved in that issue as well when I was in Israel. There, the thing ended up not being built because of concerns about flyways for migrating birds. There was concern the proposed site would inhibit annual migrations of birds. But in Morocco, yes, at the time that plans were laid to build the new relay station, there was that discussion and arguments. And there were concerns that the antenna farm was too big, 1100-1200 acres, and the argument was that we lost our relay station in Liberia and when we did it forced us to go off the air for a huge swath of area and there were people who argued it's much better to have a lot of smaller relay stations instead of investing so much in a major single station. I've heard that the one in Morocco is probably about the last of the big ones that was to be built, that in the future, they'll be smaller and scattered more widely as we continue to use shortwave relay stations.

Q: Back to Morocco, who was the king at that point?

PETERSEN: The king did not die until 2000, four years after I had been there. But there were periods when I was there when there were concerns expressed about his health. Every year, annually, we would gather and review our paper to Washington that was on file as to our predictions as to what would happen with the demise of the king.

Q: One of our goals has been to promote democracy. How did that play in the country?

PETERSEN: Democracy under a monarchy seems to not go together. Those of us working in the embassy all did acknowledge that Moroccans – and I'm not talking about the elite, I'm talking about the entire country really – by and large regardless of the criticisms of the excesses of the monarchy or its shortcomings or its blind eye to certain things, took pride in the monarchy and they supported the institution of the monarchy. So, that's the starting point. If you're talking about democratization, it was not some effort to pave the way for something other than the monarchy and a strong monarchy in Morocco. But we worked with the parliament. We had a variety of programs. One in particular exemplifies this. USIS was working on a project to help develop a research capability for the parliament, I won't say something modeled on the Congressional Research Service, but something inspired by that, so that Moroccan parliamentarians if they wanted to do some research on possible legislation had the means at hand, had a structure, a methodology, for having some research done for them to develop a bill. This involved such mundane things as getting them some computing technology, but also providing information about how such a research service could be thought out, what kind of personnel you would have in such an office. That's an example of contributing to the democratization process. Another example of this effort at empowering people to take more control over their lives. Joan Plaisted was still there. We had a meeting and instead of in an office she convened it at her house over lunch. There might have been Joan and one or two others from the embassy and myself and then six Moroccans representing different parts of Morocco including Fatima Mernissi, a sociologist of some international renown who writes on women's affairs. We had representatives of different groups. The point of the meeting was to talk about how to help Moroccan women. One of the conclusions was, well, maybe set up a hotline, something not modeled on but inspired from the things we do in the U.S., where we have hotlines for battered women. A hotline where Moroccan women could get some information, guidance, and support. That's one example. The parliamentary research service idea is another. There were a lot of these types of things underway, all of which would contribute to Moroccans taking more control over their own lives, recognizing their rights and being able to do more. I came up with the idea of handling our annual Human Rights Report differently. In the past when the Human Rights Report was submitted to Congress in January every year, I think every country was provided a copy the day before. In some countries if they're on their toes and working well with us, they probably know very well what's in it long before anybody in the foreign ministry gets a courtesy copy. I said, "Let's do it differently here in Morocco. Instead of just acknowledging that it's been submitted to Congress and we're required to submit it every year, let's talk about it at the cultural center. Let's have some representatives from the political section responsible for doing the document stand up with the document in the week after it's been submitted and respond to questions and talk about what goes into it and how it's put together and who we talk to." We did that for several years when I was in Morocco. I think the first year, there was a lot of misgivings on the country team about having such an approach. Credit to Ambassador Ginsburg for authorizing us to try this and do it this way. But at each of our cultural centers, we had programs on the document. We'd have a panel of people and say, "We write it. This is how we see it. This is why we see it the way we wrote about it." I don't know that that's

been done in many, if any, countries. That type of thing doesn't result in a program or a new project like the parliamentary research or women's hotline, but it contributes to the idea of democratization. I'll give you one final example. There were dozens and dozens of these. In Morocco, there is the issue of Berbers and the Arab culture and who is a Berber and who is Arab. It's difficult for Moroccans to deal with this directly sometimes.

Q: Algerians are having tremendous problems with this.

PETERSEN: But it's something that needs to be addressed in the process of democratization. Our approach was, "All right, we'll talk about the American issue." We searched and found a French speaking American Indian who was a lawyer who could come to Morocco to talk about tribal legal rights in our democracy and how it worked and he could do it in French. It would have been even better if he had spoken Arabic, but that was too much to hope for. We brought this person over as part of our cultural program. This person went around and talked about this issue in the United States, how tribes were recognized, fought for, protected their rights, asserted their rights, what they were. People could make the connection. We didn't have to talk about Berber-Arab relationships. We just simply talked about this in the United States. People could then draw their conclusions and apply it to their own democratization. We also had more straightforward programs with the University of Chicago School of Law. We brought scholars over over a period of a couple of years and had exchanges with people from the ministry of justice and the judicial system in Morocco, direct exchanges examining issues of how the court systems were working and so forth. Dozens of types of programs like this all looking at issues that were related, some very obviously, some less obviously, to the democratization of a society.

Q: Did you feel you were being monitored by the government on this? Did you feel inhibited?

PETERSEN: Monitored closely and not inhibited. You meant the embassy or USIS or staff?

Q: Yes.

PETERSEN: Monitored closely because we'd go out of our way to keep people informed and let people know. Not inhibited, no. It's interesting. So often, I've seen people dance around something instead of just dealing with it directly.

In Mauritius, there was a Libyan information and cultural center with the "Green Book" of Qadhafi and all the material. They had a resident Libyan in charge. They were trying to propagandize in Mauritius about the great way of Libya. A couple of visitors from Washington told me, "Gee, this is fascinating. I wonder what they're up to and how they're doing it." I thought, "Well, this is silly, so I walked over and walked in and introduced myself, told the director who I was. He was flabbergasted, but within seconds we started talking and I said, 'I want to look around and see what you're doing.'" I

walked around and looked and then took some visitors from Washington. I've always felt that sometimes a direct approach can pay great dividends.

Back to Morocco, we were monitored, observed, and didn't feel inhibited. We were very careful never to confront the monarchy in any of this. We had no reason to. The monarchy was a great contributor to the stability of that country. The monarchy as an institution has great shortcomings.

Some of the things, the excesses of the monarchy, are wrong and are unfortunate and are not in the best interests of the country from my vantage point. But we had no reason to confront the monarchy.

Q: Did Israel come up while you were there?

PETERSEN: Oh, yes. The Moroccans had an Israeli government office in Morocco. I don't know how many Israeli diplomats were there. One of the king's titles was "Protector of the Faithful," but he looks after his Jewish subjects. The Israeli office was there and accepted by the Moroccan government because there is -- it's no longer a large Jewish community -- but there still exists a small Jewish community in Morocco. And the Moroccans tried to engage in the Middle East peace process. The Moroccans have a role to play. The Moroccan monarchy has some standing on this issue and the future of Jerusalem and so forth and makes useful interjections from time to time.

As PAO, I did not have a great deal of contact with the Jewish community in Morocco. I did go over to a synagogue at the time of Rabin's assassination. From time to time, I would visit the Israeli office to talk about some of the developments in the peace plan and about some of our programs in Morocco. There was Israeli involvement in some of the investment and development in the Moroccan economy, too.

The ACAO (Assistant Cultural Affairs Officer), Laura Berg, came up with a concept for what came to be known as BELL, Board of English Language Libraries. We took our two libraries and interconnected them. This was in the 1990s, the dawning age of computing and cyber resources. We interconnected 40-50 English language libraries in Morocco. Some of them were real libraries – the British consul and others – and some were significant English language collections for research in different institutions, thousands and thousands of volumes in some of these collections in different scholarly organizations. And some were smaller. But throughout the country, we linked together this organization and coordinated some of the activities of these collections and the interlibrary lending and the use made of these English language library resources. It was a good idea and the credit goes to the ACAO, Laura. She was the spark. She was well supported by others. Our senior FSN librarian, Malika Baiz, the CAO and others all supported, contributed, helped. But one of the things I looked back on when I left Morocco was that BELL was a wonderful organization. I don't know its status today, but I do know that before I left Morocco, my last year there, posts and area offices in Washington were asking us to send them information because they'd like to start up their

own similar organizations in their areas using the BELL in Morocco as the model.

Q: In ’96-

PETERSEN: In ’96, I TICed out.

Q: That means “time in class.”

PETERSEN: I had been promoted into the Senior Foreign Service while I was at the War College. After seven years, I did not make minister counselor. So, it was time to leave. I retired at the end of ’96.

Q: Just a quick addendum. You might explain what you’re doing today and the challenges.

PETERSEN: Since ’99, I’ve been working for SAIC (Science Applications International Corporation) in McLean, Virginia. At the beginning of 2002, I was assigned to work on a contract supporting the office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations in Low Intensity Conflict [SOLIC] at the Pentagon. As part of that contract, SOLIC assigned me to the State Department to provide support for international public information. The reason for that assignment is a presidential decision in 1999 establishing what’s known as IPI, International Public Information, which includes public diplomacy, includes international military information, includes psychological operations, includes public affairs and so forth. IPI is the umbrella of all these information programs. Under that directive that was issued by the White House, there was to be an interagency working group to organize IPI and it was to be directed by the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, a position that did not come into being until October 1, 1999, when USIA ended and it was merged into the State Department. In any event, the Department of Defense was tasked to provide personnel support for this effort and I am part of that personnel support. I am a contractor working for DOD, which has assigned me to the State Department as its contribution for what was called International Public Information but which is now called Strategic Communication. The reason it’s called Strategic Communication is that under the current administration, the terminology has changed and we no longer use IPI. We use Strategic Communication. I work in the Office of Strategic Communication in the International Information Programs Bureau equivalent in the State Department and the office that I work in has been designated to serve as the secretariat for Strategic Communication for the Policy Coordination Committee that is co-chaired by someone from the NSC and by the Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. That is a mouthful.

Q: It really is. It points to the complexity and the relationship of private contractors who usually consist of people who have left the services they are now contracting for. There is a life after.

PETERSEN: Yes, there is. I have to say that until I left the government, I used to deal

with contractors from time to time. I used to think of them mainly as people who would work for State and USIA, but I would see a lot of contractors working for AID in particular where I would get a sense of the extent of contracting support for some of the things we were doing overseas. But I didn't fully grasp the degree to which a lot of the resources are contracted for until after I left the Foreign Service. It's hard to say whether I'm seeing it from the outside or the inside.

Q: Yes, the designation gets a little bit foggy when you get there.

PETERSEN: Yes.

Q: Well, I want to thank you very much.

PETERSEN: Stu, it's taken us a couple of years. Since I got in this office at State, I've just not been able to get out here.

Q: I think we should put on the record that both of us are giving up our Saturday to do this.

End of interview