

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
Foreign Affairs Oral History Project

MARY CHAMBLISS

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
Initial interview date: March 8, 2010
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INTERVIEW

Q: This is an interview with Mary Chambliss, C-h-a-m-b-l-i-s-s, and is being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies & Training and I am Charles Stuart Kennedy. And you go by Mary?

CHAMBLISS: Yes.

Q: Alright, well we'll start at the beginning; where and when were you born?

CHAMBLISS: I was born in Roanoke, Virginia and I grew up in Buchanan, a small town near by.

Q: When were you born?

CHAMBLISS: Mm, long ago; August 20, 1942.

Q: You're a kid; I was born in 1928.

CHAMBLISS: Oh. Anyway, I was born in Jefferson Hospital in Roanoke, Virginia and actually I lived in a small town half way between Roanoke and Lexington, Virginia, which we natives called *Buchanan*. But it was spelled like President Buchanan so when I got to college I learned that it should be pronounced *Buchanan* but those of us who lived there said B-u-c-h-a-n-a-n. It's a small town, less than 2,000 people when I was born and is still that population.

Q: Alright, well let's talk about your family. On your father's side, do you go as, is it Chambliss, or - ?

CHAMBLISS: No Chambliss is my married name. Teaford is my maiden name, T-e-a-f-o-r-d.

Q: Is that why the middle initial is a "T"?

CHAMBLISS: Yes, it is for Teaford. I am old enough that you know, we did not hyphenate the names; if I were doing it again I would have hyphenated it.

Q: Well can you talk about your father's side of the family, what you know of.

CHAMBLISS: Sure. That family, Teaford family, had a farm in Lexington, Virginia. You can actually trace the Teafords back to one immigrant who came into Philadelphia sometime in the 1720's I think, came from somewhere in the border region between France and Germany. Anyway, this family traveled down the valley, emigrated from Pennsylvania into the Virginia Valley, the Shenandoah Valley. They had a farm; my father was one of five children, one of which died very young so I never knew her. My father was the only one of the four who survived who married, which was a little unusual back then, in fact very unusual. He was the youngest; his name was John Luther Teaford

– his oldest sister was Bess and when I knew her she was both deaf and mute. Bess, if I remember correctly, got the measles during the epidemic that came through in the early 1900's and ended up being affected so I don't think she was born deaf and mute. My father could do some sign language; so she was the oldest sister, she was beautiful actually but in that condition certainly was not likely to get married. Then his oldest brother was Uncle Lewis and he never married either, and then Aunt Marguerite was next and she never married; so those three ran the family farm.

My father was the only one who left the farm, he did not finish high school but he went to a little business college in Staunton, Virginia, and then came to Washington very briefly and worked; he was the kid who was clearly going to leave the farm. He actually worked at the Lincoln Branch of the Riggs Bank and when I got to Washington of course that was still on Connecticut Avenue so I knew where he had worked. He did not stay in Washington very long, I want to say – I don't know what called him home but anyway he had to go home to help his family and then I remember him saying he was about to get on the boat to go to fight in World War I when peace came, so he never did that.

But as a child, and I didn't appreciate this until I myself came to Washington, we had a woman who worked to clean for us, Louise Barnett, a Black woman. And my Daddy used to say Louise has Connecticut Avenue taste on a Seventh Street income. And of course once I got to Washington I knew exactly what he meant. She was wonderful, she went north eventually. Anyway, so Daddy came back to the farm, didn't stay. Then he moved to this small town of Buchanan and I guess and he ran the company store. There are limestone quarries in Buchanan. There is still one left; there were two when I was growing up and he worked for one of them, Liberty Limestone. So he ran the company store and eventually moved into the management area. When I was born in 1942, Daddy was older when he got married so I don't know, he must have been - he was 35 when he got married, he must have been in his early 40's, anyway he was the secretary-treasurer of the company and then he became president of the company when I was in high school but it was a stock company and there was a battle for the presidency and he lost.

Q: How did your mother and father meet?

CHAMBLISS: I don't really know. My mother was 12 years younger than he was and she was from Buchanan and they just met. It's a small town and from her early pictures she was lovely and he was good looking – so they met. They got married in 1932.

Q: What was the background of your mother?

CHAMBLISS: My mother comes from a more German background. Her maiden name was Skidmore and her mother's maiden name was Hayden. And I don't know as much about her family; they came from Floyd County and Roanoke, Virginia. I really only knew my grandfather, my grandmother I guess she – according to my sister who is five years older, my sister remembers this better than I do, but apparently my grandmother was ill and in our house for several years and she died from cancer. But I was so young I don't remember. But my grandfather was William Paxton Skidmore and he lived with us

for a while.

My mother's mother Laura Skidmore was a music teacher, so there was a lot of music in the family and you know, these were certainly not affluent people to say the least, but for some reason my mother did go to Randolph-Macon Women's College, which at that time was an extremely good college. My mother I'm certain coming from Buchanan, did not have a strong academic background and she stayed at college less than a year. Whether or not she came home because she wanted to marry Daddy, I have no idea. I do know after she came home she took voice lessons at a near-by college and I remember she had a wonderful voice. They never talked much about their background, particularly my mother didn't, I know a little more about my Daddy's background than my mother's.

Q: Okay, let's talk about the town of -

CHAMBLISS: *Buckhannan* (Buchanan) you've got to pronounce it right on this oral history, come on fellows. Everyone who worked with me at FAS eventually knew how to pronounce *Buckhannan* (Buchanan).

Q: Okay.

CHAMBLISS: It's a small town, a typical small town in America; like I say it had two limestone quarries for businesses, the farmers came in on Saturday afternoon and did the shopping for the week – it almost died when interstate 81 went around but now it's come back at least a little.

Q: 81 being an interstate highway which bypassed it I take it?

CHAMBLISS: Right, went around it, just around it. My Daddy, I guess he was on the board of supervisors too, they tried to a close by exit – anyway, it went around and when I was in high school they were building it; that it was the 1950's. My sister and I and some of my friends say being middle-class in that small town in the 1950's in a small town has got to have been one of the best times to grow up, I mean it was just – if you were white, if you were white it was great if you were black it was not.

Q: Okay well let's talk about the town itself. First place, the racial, how stood things that you recall from your earliest years sort of racially in town?

CHAMBLISS: Well it was very segregated. The black people did housework you know, I had Floss who came, helped raise me, Floss came, Louise came, and helped clean the house and that kind of thing. James was caretaker of the Liberty Limestone company building and grounds – Buchanan is on the James River, so you go across the bridge and there's the river and there used to be there's this lovely white office building that was the limestone company and James Watkins who was the caretaker. So the first view after crossing the river were the boxwoods and the flowers. It was beautiful and James maintained all of that and he did whatever we needed at the house just to help out. And you know of course growing up you just take all of that for granted, although somewhere

along the line I began to realize the white/black divide. The white kids had, not a great school but still adequate, but the colored, the black kids had to go past the cemetery on a hill to a little building that was their school which I understand had a coal stove that you had to put coal in every morning. I am certain it was abysmal.

Now I'm not aware of any conflict you know, everyone just, well a lot of black people like I mentioned Louise who worked for us left for New Jersey with her family; Floss didn't, Floss stayed. So I'm certain there were a lot of people moving north that I wasn't aware of. The theater where I sold tickets my senior year in high school, the whites went downstairs and the black people had to go upstairs, so it was that kind of segregation. I'm sure they couldn't eat in the restaurants. And eventually I realized that Floss, I guess I must not have mentioned this her name was Florence Robinson, but when she would go to Roanoke, which is where you would go to shop, there was no place in the department stores for blacks to use the rest room. So they had to leave the main shopping area, go across the railroad tracks then N&W, Norfolk and Western, to the black part and then they could find so bathrooms .

After I left and went to college they did begin to integrate the schools in that county; by that time they had built consolidated high schools, two of them for white kids; when I was a senior in high school I went to one. Then I understand they started the integration at the first grade and then moved it through the system, but this was in Virginia and what was that awful phrase that Senator Harry Byrd had Virginia do, "massive resistance?" So I'm not sure how integration happened. But years later I learned that at least one of Floss's daughters went to a college.

Q: Yeah that is around 1955 or 1956.

CHAMBLISS: Right and Virginia was adamant about no integration. I graduated from high school in 1960 so it would have been in the 1960s when somebody down did integrate the schools and as far as I know it worked fine.

Q: Yeah. Well okay, as a kid what sort of things would you – did your family turn you out after school and you were on – you and all the kids kind of went together somewhere or did somebody - ?

CHAMBLISS: Well I walked to school because I was a townie; the other kids came in on buses. Sure in high school we'd all go up to the local drugstore afterwards and have a coke or whatever. I did the usual, I sang in the glee club, I was in the Beta club and future teachers, I was editor of t year book, and guard on the basketball team.. We were lucky, in the summer time we had a pool, a small concrete pool in the back yard Daddy had built, so we had our own pool and people came to my house and swam. So I tell you looking back it was an ideal life for some of us.

Q: Were you much of a reader?

CHAMBLISS: Yes I was.

Q: Where did you get your books?

CHAMBLISS: My mother. We had a lot of books in the house; she was president of the town reading society or whatever it was called, so there were always books around. I remember there was the whole encyclopedia Britannica which I probably didn't use much but I can still see it on the book shelves. My mother read a lot. My father didn't. My father had diabetes and I don't think his eyes were very good. But Mother was – was it the town improvement society? I don't know. Oh, there were always books around. My sister, she majored in English; I remember when she had Lady Chatterley's Lover, we had you know the uncensored version and I of course picked it up and read it in high school and I remember thinking gee if my mother knew I was reading this – I don't think my mother's read this one. (laughter) So yeah, I grew up reading a lot; I love reading.

Q: Basically what was the sort of family life like?

CHAMBLISS: Well I had a younger brother who was born with hydrocephalus, so there were three of us; my sister was five years older than me, then there's me, then there's Johnny. But Johnny never, I guess he came home briefly and they realized that he was hydrocephalic and then he went back to the hospital; he lived six years in the hospital. My earliest memories, among my earliest, are going to visit this baby with the very large head and wearing a mask. Then when I was about eight Johnny died. My mother never talked about it, my father never talked about it. So it really was just the four of us, my older sister and I, my Daddy who as I said he was in the limestone business, president of the local bank, chairman of the board of supervisors, and my mother was this, that and the other thing in lots of town organizations, so it was a good family life. Then my father lost his job as the president of the company and there was less money; the family life was okay but the stress and the strain took a toll and my daddy died a few years after that.

Q: Considering your father's jobs, okay it's a small town, but you must have been a big fish in a small puddle.

CHAMBLISS: Oh yeah particularly my sister, my sister says her friends now tell her they called her the princess, she was also lovely. I was pretty smart – of course we were big fish in a small town.

Q: School I mean was this big enough to have – it wasn't a one room school house was it?

CHAMBLISS: No it wasn't one room, oh no, no. And some of the teachers were excellent. It did not have a lot of sophisticated facilities, like I remember I went to Mary Washington for two years and of course so many of the kids came from this area, from Northern Virginia, and of course they had actually had biology labs and chemistry labs and whoever heard of such a thing? I mean we had a biology teacher, we didn't have a chemistry teacher and certainly no labs.

Q: You could find frogs and that sort of thing –

CHAMBLISS: No we didn't do that; we didn't have any lab facility, we had a classroom. But you know we had the grade school and in seventh grade we had our own little individual room in our own building; it was a little old house, and I had some very good teachers. I had a fourth grade teacher that was great, a sixth grade teacher and a seventh grade teacher, Miss Marshall, I still remember her. So there were some good teachers. Had a small library in the high school, it was probably, I don't know how many kids in the high school, it couldn't have been that many, maybe 200 kids. We had sports; we had basketball, had a good phys ed teacher, we actually did field hockey which was probably a little unusual down there back then, had a football team that didn't do that well, basketball team we were fairly good. So, we had a glee club that was – we had a good teacher, good music director of the glee club, I can remember that, she was very good and the librarian, I was editor of the year book and the librarian was our sponsor and she was wonderful, so that was good.

Q: Were most of your teachers' maiden ladies of that era?

CHAMBLISS: Oh yeah, well there were a lot of them that were but some of them were married. Mrs. Marshall for example, a great teacher was married, Miss Shaver was an old maid and a very good teacher. In high school I'd say about half and half, we had some men teachers, the principal was a man, the assistant principal was a man, we had some strange teachers in the 1950s. One I remember, I can't remember his name, I remember he threw furniture at a kid; he came back from lunch a little drunk and they got rid of him. Then we had Mr. Marion, he was wonderful, he taught a geography course, I think that's partly maybe why eventually I wanted to work on developing countries; he was just wonderful. And then we had a Mr. Halsey, another gentlemen who had come from Alaska, I could never figure out why – and he clearly loved Alaska because he showed us slides but for some reason he'd come from Alaska wound up in this town of less than 2,000 people in the mountains of Virginia, worked one year and then moved on. I often wondered what the story was because there had to be some story, this was not normal. And then we had one man teacher who was wonderful, he was a preacher, he was married but he was homosexual and when the system found out that they ran him out which is a shame because he was a really good teacher. So it was that kind of mix, some very good teachers, some that were not so good.

Q: Where stood your family politically?

CHAMBLISS: Democrats; Daddy ran for the county board of supervisors as a democrat. The party asked him to run for the house of delegates but for some reason he didn't, I don't know why since I expect he would have won. But I remember sitting on the back porch when Congressman Poff who was a republican, the federal building in Roanoke is now named for him, for some reason I remember Congressman Poff came down the hall and was talking to Daddy about something but I don't know what. But we were democrats and my mother was a died in the wool democrat.

Q: Well Senator Byrd was sort of the major figure in those days wouldn't you say?

CHAMBLISS: Oh yes.

Q: How stood your family for Senator Byrd?

CHAMBLISS: Well in high school in civics class I was amazed when the teacher said and "then of course there's the court house clicks as part of the Byrd machine" and of course my Daddy was chairman of the board of supervisors. I was a little upset with this - what do you mean the court house click? But certainly they were. I don't recall ever hearing my father say anything about Senator Byrd. I remember my father said once he only made one mistake in voting for president, apparently he voted to Eisenhower the first time around and then he went back to Stevenson; I don't know why. Again, he died in 1961 when I was a freshman in college and the only letter, after I got to Washington for graduate school, the only letter at that time I had written to a Senator I wrote to Senator Byrd on how his position on massive resistance was just whatever he called it wrong. My point being that the words a Senator used against the black population, the Negro it would have been then, by the time it gets heard by many of the people I grew up with down in the mountains of Virginia it becomes violence. You may be able to think you are doing this but you are not; what you are doing is encouraging and, validating you would say nowadays, you know that kind of racial attitude. I didn't get any response from Senator Byrd's office. But I doubt if my father ever thought of blacks people as different from white people and my mother was certainly a liberal for her generation.

Q: What religion, how important was it?

CHAMBLISS: Methodist. Daddy grew up Lutheran, the Teaford family was Lutheran and one Sunday a month we'd go back to the farm in Lexington and go to the little Lutheran church. I can remember falling asleep on my Daddy's lap in the Lutheran church, nice little church down there. But Mother, we were Methodists and attended the Trinity Methodist church in Buchanan, it was just across the street from our house. My mother sang in the choir and she did have a beautiful voice when she was young, I can still remember that and Daddy helped take care of the church finances. So they were very active in the church. I don't think they were very religious. You were active in the church because it was a social thing. And so the ministers came to our house and all the Methodist women. My Daddy used to make eggnog at Christmas with a lot of applejack brandy and of course Methodist say they don't drink. And it was amazing I think of how all those Methodist women like to come over and have Daddy's eggnog. (laughter) That's why. So they were Methodist and I was married in that church. I'm not religious; by the time I got to college I was not.

Q: When one thinks of a small town down in the lower depths of Virginia that you would, that the Baptists would, sort of the hellfire Baptists would be pretty strong.

CHAMBLISS: Oh yes the Southern Baptists. The church, when I grew up we had the Methodist church, the Presbyterian church and then we had the Baptists and that was all

in town. There was an Episcopal church, a beautiful old building, but it wasn't being used, it had been abandoned; it now has been brought back, it's beautiful. So there were the Methodists, the Baptists, Presbyterians; there weren't many Lutherans, there were brethren out in the countryside. The Baptists were the definitely Southern Baptists. We would all go to, all of us kids in high school, we'd go to the Methodist Youth Fellowship and then we'd go to the Baptist and then we'd go to the Presbyterian youth groups. But when I was in college I did two years at Mary Washington, my father had died as I said, so I came back for several reasons but one of which was I came back to Roanoke college in Salem to be closer to my mother.

At that time the town was deciding whether or not to have an ABC store, an alcoholic beverage control store. A town would vote on such at that time and so we voted and the Baptists sat outside the polling booth and noted everyone who went in including myself and another person who came from Roanoke College. We drove back to Buchanan to vote for the ABC store and it won by two votes and they said if we hadn't come back you see (laughter) – but anyway they kept track. They were very conservative, but they weren't as hellfire as you think of Southern Baptists now.

Q: Were you picking up sort of Appalachian culture of the songs, the –

CHAMBLISS: Well, without realizing it. On Saturday nights we would have in the winter time in the high school, it was still there then and in the summer the town council had built a concrete slab where you could play tennis. So on Saturday nights we would have square dances, which to me were just you know square dances. Now of course I realize it was the mountain blue grass music. When I look at the modern, what you see on square dancing nowadays, its not really what we did in the mountains.

So yes there was that, but we didn't think of it as Appalachia and it was not the really poor Appalachia. Now I realize when I think of the kids I went to school with, there were some we considered slow and my guess is that perhaps it was poor nutrition now that I understand the impact of poor nutrition on development. My guess is that was what we were seeing in certain families.

So there was some of that back in the hollows and the mountain but you see I lived in a little town and again it wasn't until years later that I thought about that was what I was actually seeing in certain families and the effect of poverty.

Q: Yeah. Well did you feel comfortable when sort of your, sort of whatever you want to – clique is sort of the wrong term but you know –

CHAMBLISS: Oh no there was a clique, there were five in my class and there were five in the one before us, we were ten girls and boy you couldn't get into the clique. Now I see how cruel we were about it.

Q: And did you, I mean the poorer kids they just didn't get into this, they just didn't have the - ?

CHAMBLISS: No they didn't; well some of the kids in the clique they were not rich. I mean I don't know how rich or poor they were; we all tended to be fairly smart okay? But then there were some really smart kids that didn't care; it was a clique but I don't think it was a clique in terms of lots of hostility. And none of us were rich – we were mostly I guess middle class.

Q: You went to high school there?

CHAMBLISS: Yeah, I went through my junior year in Buchanan high school, the senior year we had to go to that consolidated school which I didn't like as much..

Q: What were the dating patterns sort of like there?

CHAMBLISS: I didn't date a lot for various reasons, but I dated some. Well they tended to be, the girls and boys would get together and sort of date and stay through high school you know, some of them got married afterwards.

Q: The movies and the drug store for the coke and all.

CHAMBLISS: Yeah the movies and drug store were where we met. Eventually in high school someone opened a little place where you could go outside of town dancing and of course back then in Virginia, I don't know what it is now, there were two kinds of beer, 3.2% beer in Virginia you could drink at 18 okay? Now my house, I remember this must have been unusual at my house anyway; when we would do pizza we would do that horrible box pizza by Chef Boy-R-Dee, but in my family Mother and Daddy would let us have beer with our pizza. So of course my girl friends would come to my house to have pizza because at Mary's house you could drink beer with pizza, right when you were 15 or 16 or whatever you were. I don't know why my parents did that but anyway, they did. (laughter)

Q: Well of course in Virginia during this time had those crazy Blue Laws too.

CHAMBLISS: Oh yeah, we had bootleggers. The Bootlegger was up on Rabbit Run where the black community was and so Peg Leg was the bootlegger up there and down Main Street at the far end of down where there was another black community there was another bootlegger. Now Daddy of course, my family didn't go to the bootlegger. Daddy went to ABC store in Roanoke, and I told you he was diabetic and I remember that the doctor said if he was going to drink, drink good scotch; I always remembered that, if you are going to drink, drink good scotch.

Q: Well what, in reading, do you recall any of the books you liked to read?

CHAMBLISS: I read all those Nancy Drew books.

Q: Oh yeah.

CHAMBLISS: Of course. I really know Lady Chatterley's Lover obviously struck me as it would anyone at that age. I just read a lot of books so I don't remember titles, whatever was around I guess I picked up and read.

Q: While you were still in sort of high school did the outside world intrude very much? I mean –

CHAMBLISS: Well one of my earliest memories was in fifth grade; it was the year Queen Elizabeth was inaugurated. We had the second television in town, black and white, so my fifth grade class came up to my house and we watched the inauguration on the TV which back then had a lot of snow. But we could still see the event.

Q: Coronation.

CHAMBLISS: Excuse me. Coronation on the snow screen; I can remember that. I remember watching the 1956 democratic convention and I still remember JFK's speech when he did not win the vice presidential nomination, Estes Kefauver did. So even in high school I was watching that kind of thing; so it must have been because Daddy was a politician. But I can still remember that speech he gave when he lost was awesome. It was by far the best speech I thought from the convention so when 1960 came of course I figured he was going to win.

Q: Did you get involved in passing out leaflets or anything like that?

CHAMBLISS: No, no I don't remember anything like that. I do remember when the employees were unionized at the limestone company. There was the union and they were going on strike and my father of course was management. And I do remember when we would back up the car out of our little driveway Daddy would have us look to see if there were tacks and things because they were doing those kinds of things. But other than that, and I guess at that time maybe they didn't let me walk to the theatre to work, maybe they took me. I remember that and then there was tension at that time, I don't know I guess I remember in Virginia the board of supervisors appointed the school board and my Daddy appointed someone he worked with who was very good who was Catholic, the first time there had been a Catholic on the school Board, we used to get phone calls about that. I remember those angry calls. Those were the only two sort of uncomfortable things that I remember.

Q: Were you a movie buff?

CHAMBLISS: Oh yes, sure, I sold tickets so I could go for free. The local movie was closed for many years and the now the community has reopened it so I contribute to keeping it reopened.

Q: When you went to Mary Washington College in Fredericksburg, why Mary Washington?

CHAMBLISS: Well I could afford it, I could get in and I don't think I applied to any other college now that I think about it. I had a friend who was a year ahead of me; Jane had gone to Mary Washington so I knew about it. I don't know if there was a teacher, now that I think about it there might have been a teacher in the school that told me about it. I didn't want to be a teacher, you know back then if you were a girl and went to school you were going to be a nurse or a teacher and I wasn't going to be either.

Q: Or a secretary.

CHAMBLISS: Or secretary. Well, there was the best teacher I had in high school; she taught typing and shorthand, she was awesome; which is really good because a lot of people used those skills to earn their living. Back then the Virginia employment people, I love this, they came around and gave you these little tests and things to see what you should do and when I went in to get the results of my tests this nice lady says, Miss Teaford you're not planning to work with your hands are you because clearly I – (laughter) and I said no, I'm not and she said that's probably very good. (laughter) I don't know what she would have thought if I said yes right, anyway. So I don't know why I went to Mary Washington again now that I think about it maybe there was, anyway I could get it, it wasn't too expensive.

Q: It's a state supported school.

CHAMBLISS: Right, state supported school. Now I did, because by then there wasn't very much money. My sister had gone to William and Mary and then Roanoke College, but when my father died mother suddenly realized there was a note that my mother hadn't been aware of so I assume that paid for her college. But after my father died, I mentioned my Uncle Lewis who was not married, paid for my college including Roanoke College which was more expensive. And after I finished Roanoke I was going to get a second degree and Uncle Lewis who had been so wonderful, said one degree is enough, so I got a scholarship to GW. But my sister was the first person in our family to graduate from College; I was the first to get a graduate degree.

Q: Talk a little bit about Mary Washington College. You were there the two years from when to when?

CHAMBLISS: Well I graduated from high school in 1960, I was there the 1960-61, 1961-62, my freshman and sophomore year. It was a girl's school then, very nice. My roommates were generally from northern Virginia or from Richmond and Massachusetts, so it was you know, it was a good school, I enjoyed it. I remember the chemistry teacher, I was scared to death of her, she was very good; so they had some good professors.

My Russian professor, Dr. Brenner, was wonderful. After my father died I think I particularly was closer to Dr. Brenner. So I had some very good teachers. But unfortunately after I got to Mary Washington, I discovered that you could not transfer; that's what I was thinking: that I'd go to Mary Washington and then I could get to UVA,

it'd be an entrée to a bigger – I couldn't get into UVA from Buchanan high school. But when I got to Mary Washington, because I hadn't done my homework obviously, I realized you could only transfer at that time if you were in nursing, only nursing would let you transfer from Mary Washington, which was supposed to be a part of UVA. Well I didn't want to be a nurse, I was going to major in economics, I liked history but I figured economics would be better for getting a job and that was the one bad department at Mary Washington.

So that's why I transferred to Roanoke, for lots of reasons: one to be close to my mother, two to get the economics I wanted, then for things like that. But generally I liked Mary Washington, it was a lovely campus, Fredericksburg is a nice little town, you could walk downtown easily. My roommate Margie was from Northern Virginia so you know, we'd come up here and visit DC but I've lost contact with all those people. It was a good two years, as was Roanoke College.

Q: I got to know it fairly well because my son had gone to Syracuse for two years and then switched to Mary Washington and he would bring one smashing southern belle home on weekends, and (laughter)

CHAMBLISS: Oh there were a bunch of them. (laughter) The first snow a bunch of them went outside the dorm to see snow for the first time.

Q: Yeah.

CHAMBLISS: Yeah right.

Q: But you took what economics was it?

CHAMBLISS: Economics, I got my B.A. in economics.

Q: Where did you go after? You went to George Washington?

CHAMBLISS: Yeah. At Roanoke I had a wonderful professor, Dr. Sandwich, who tried to get me a scholarship to UVA and they would only give me \$500 or something. So then I think he felt really bad about that so he looked around and he found this Scottish Rite Scholarship which is a fellowship to George Washington, a two year fellowship, and I was able to get that. I think I was, again I think I was the first female in Virginia that had gotten that, they were a little dubious about giving it to a female. I remember the interview, Miss Teaford you know if you take this fellowship, we expect you to work for the government; you know, in other words, not just go off and get married. And I did work for the government for 40 years, so I met that obligation.

So that's why I came to – I applied to Georgetown, got accepted but no money. But I got into the School of Government at GW, loved GW, the Fellowship paid for the tuition and enough for the books and left me \$90 to live on, so I got a part time job both of those years – no, one year, and then the next year the second – the first year was classes and

then I started to work for the Department of Agriculture in 1965, eventually finished up my thesis by 1968 working and writing it and then got my M.A. in Government. I loved GW it was like a whole new world to me.

Q: Well let's talk about the whole new world. Did you really feel like, I mean Fredericksburg is not exactly the center of civilization –

CHAMBLISS: Hardly. But the philosophy teacher there was very different, he was a Buddhist expert, of course I didn't understand the philosophy courses I took but anyway, the Russian teacher was different, Dr. Vance the history teacher was also a wonderful teacher. So coming from a small town in the mountains, Mary Washington was wonderful. But I wanted to come to Washington, I wanted – don't ask me why.

Q: I mean, you were pointed towards Washington?

CHAMBLISS: Yeah, I was coming to Washington. Because I could have gotten a job with the Federal Reserve in Virginia I guess, maybe one place where Dr. Sandwich figured he could get me a job, but I didn't want to do that. So I went to the old Civil Service Commission, took the entrance test in some high school in D.C. and then got a notice that there was a job at the Economic Research Service in the Department of Agriculture. It was a job, so I took it as a GS5, earned \$5,000, that's what you earned back then, but I wanted to be in Washington.

Although I did, after I'd been here, after my Daddy had died, I actually remember stopping and thinking at the time, do I want to go home and try to get into local politics because I knew I had to go while the name Teaford still meant something. But then I was so enchanted with the city and the whole thing I said no I didn't want to do that; so I didn't, I stayed.

Q: You were old enough to having been influenced by the advent of the Kennedy Administration.

CHAMBLISS: Of course and the assassination, I'll remember to this day where I was when I heard and I couldn't believe it; and then Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy.

Q: On his inauguration you know, ask not what your country could do for you and all, -

C of course, I can still hear it.

Q: I mean, did this affect you and you might say some of your cohorts - ?

CHAMBLISS: I don't know about the cohorts, I don't think it affected the other kids at Roanoke College, but it affected me.

Q: I mean at some point –

CHAMBLISS: Well my father had some public service, he was a politician, and it was a public service then, not so much of what you think of nowadays. So I had that culture. I adored my father, I thought he was wonderful, so I had that whole thing and of course with Kennedy and “ask not”, that’s what I wanted to do, that’s why I got a Master’s in government. I had wonderful teachers, I still remember the budget professor from GW, he was so good. I did a lot of budget work in my career and remained grateful for what he had taught me.

Q: Well, how did you find GW, because –?

CHAMBLISS: Dr. Sandwich, my economics teacher at Roanoke College, really found it. Again, I guess there were a couple of girls in economics, but I was basically the only one in the economics down there then. And Dr. Sandwich and I got along really well; I think he was a retired executive from an oil company, I have a feeling I picked up somewhere along the line that his health, the stress had been too much and his doctors told him he had to stop this. So anyway he came to this little college, little Lutheran school down in Salem, Virginia, Roanoke College, and he and I got along well. And like I say he tried and help me find – he knew I wanted to go to graduate school in you know, economics or something business or something like that and he tracked down and I am only certain he felt like he failed me because he really let me think he could get me money to go to UVA and he couldn’t get enough. So I think he went out and looked for the Scottish Rite and the Scottish Rite takes you to George Washington and that’s what he found for me to apply for and he helped me to get it. So that brought me to GW. But I applied to Georgetown as well as UVA and Duke.

Q: Scottish Rite is Mason?

CHAMBLISS: Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

CHAMBLISS: Big time. They used to give two scholarships in each state. I think they still do it, I don’t know. My father was a Shriner so he was a 32nd degree Mason so I had some awareness of the Masons.

Q: Yeah. How did George Washington, you think of it being sort of the graduate school for the government in many ways.

CHAMBLISS: Of course, and it was a lot of night time classes.

Q: All of your classes were night time classes?

CHAMBLISS: I’m trying to remember, I think most of them were or there might have been one that wasn’t. I took one class out at AU on international organizations but even that I took the bus out late. I worked in the mornings, studied in the afternoon, and went to class at night.

Q: What were you doing?

CHAMBLISS: I had two jobs. The first – I don't remember which one was first but anyway, one of my part-time jobs was for a patent I don't know of he was an attorney, but anyway a patent attorney. So I would go down to the Department of Commerce when they used to have the patent office down on 14th Street and I would go in and for three hours talk into a tape machine; I would read patents and that was my job three or four hours in the morning. Anyway I did that for a while and the other job I had was really fun at Triple A. Triple A, I think they still do, but then they ran a nationwide contest for kids to make safety posters.

Q: Triple A is the American Automobile Association.

CHAMBLISS: Yeah, triple A is American Automobile Association. They were downtown then and they ran a nationwide contest for primary school kids to do these safety posters and they would send them all in. And Margo, friend from GW, and I and I forget the third girl, anyway we worked there under the direction of Gene Davis who is also a color painter who became quite well known eventually in Washington. I remember Gene Davis when he sold his first painting went out and got this great Jaguar which he took us for a ride in. So anyway, that was my other job. And then I took the Civil Service exam and was going to start a job in September; in the summer I went out to visit Margo in Oregon, I took the train out and the train back and it was a great trip, so that's what I did and then I went to work at USDA (U.S. Department of Agriculture). I lived at Connecticut and Florida Avenue at first, I shared an apartment with someone, I loved Washington. And it turned out my roommate's best friend was Heather Strawn who then became Heather Foley, as in Tom Foley's wife, and you know only in Washington do this kind of thing happen.

Q: Okay, you worked for the Department to Agriculture, when did you start working there?

CHAMBLISS: I started in September 1965 that would have been, right? I always get this confused; I graduated from college in 1964, so I came here in September so I started in the USDA in the economic research service it would have been in September 1965. I started out originally working with a home economist who did analysis of domestic price things. Roz Lindquist, I can still remember her, she was wonderful. I worked for her not for real long because I really wanted to begin to do work with developing countries. And at that time the Economic Research Service had a division called foreign regional analysis division, because basically they had desk officers like you had at State, and they covered different areas and they also had a branch that did a lot of work for the CIA. So I moved over to that division fairly quickly as a junior economist and I handled the African countries but since I was the junior one I got - where's your African map?

Q: Right behind you.

CHAMBLISS: Behind me, but anyway, I started with Chad, when Fort-Lamy was still the name of the capital before it became N'djamena. So I handled those countries and eventually they thought I was good enough and let me handle southern Africa. I remember where they had a report - we used to do reports then, right? And I wrote one and I insisted they had to call Southwest Africa Namibia because you knew the name would soon change to Namibia since it was the period when many African countries gained their freedom. But the bosses said State wouldn't like it. So I worked in that division until after my son was born in 1969. So in 1970 I began then to do PL 480 food aid work..

Q: Well, how did you meet your husband and when did you get married?

CHAMBLISS: I was 24 years old on the 20th of August and mutual friends were getting married down at St. Matthew's and Sam, my husband's name is Sam, he was the photographer, he was a friend of the bride, I was a friend of the groom. He was the photographer taking things and I always fell for the artsy types, right? So anyway, I met Sam, he was in the process of getting his second divorce. Sam was 18 years older than me. So anyway, we met that day, we stayed together, that was in August and we got married in March.

Q: How old were you then?

CHAMBLISS: Twenty-four.

Q: Twenty-four.

CHAMBLISS: He was 42; a little unusual back then.

Q: That's a big jump.

CHAMBLISS: Again, because my father had been 12 years older than my mother I didn't think about it as much, although maybe I should have.

Q: What sort of - as you arrived and you weren't going to be a secretary you were a full-fledged sort of on the executive track, this in the 1960's, how were you received?

CHAMBLISS: Let me tell you, when I got to - John Galvin was the person who hired me originally, I'd been working with Roz and John Galvin. He sent me to a meeting in the Economic Research Service, I'd been there I don't know, not very long, was still working on getting my master's. John sent me to a meeting and when I got to the meeting with these people, all men, they would not let me in the room, they insisted that I could not possibly be in the right place, I had made a mistake. So I said okay, I went back and got my boss John who came and told them, no I was there representing him and I was in fact to be in that meeting. So that was my introduction to the real world!

Q: Was there a tendency when you sat down to pass the yellow pad to you and a pencil -

?

CHAMBLISS: Oh yeah, and I would never do that. I would never take the notes, number one I have lousy hand writing, which everyone learned eventually so they didn't want me too, but as a principle I would not take the notes. I also never worried about interrupting men which you know, most women don't like to do; you have to learn to do it, you have to learn to do it.

Q: I'd like to capture this, because this was – you sort of - did you know what you were up against when you went? Was somebody telling you, look lady you got to break through here, you are going to tame these guys, and all of that?

CHAMBLISS: No, no one told me you know it was just the way it was and I just did what I did. (laughter) Now when I got, when I made the switch after about five years of the ERS which I really liked and enjoyed, there were some great people there that I worked with, some of which I am still friends with, but I realized you know, my personality and long-term research really didn't go together real well, so that's when I made the shift and began to work, it wasn't called FAS when I started doing the PL 480 food aid work.

Q: FAS being Foreign Agricultural Service.

CHAMBLISS: Foreign Agricultural Service. There was a split back then and it was actually the export marketing, EMS, Export Marketing Service, which was separated from FAS. But anyway, I applied and got a job to be the assistant in the food aid division, I don't remember the name of it back then, but it did Public Law 480, Title I, which was international food aid. Jim Bullion, retired colonel, hired me and I learned afterwards that he hired me over the objections of all - I was the first female professional, in that area and apparently he took a lot of grief. Now as I said afterwards, well those fools telling Jim Bullion not to do something guaranteed he was going to do it, didn't they understand what they were dealing with? (laughter) But Jim and I, we did the Title I programs, we had Southeast Asia, we had Vietnam and Cambodia, we had South Korea, we had Taiwan, we had Indonesia, we had a fascinating part of the world, of course this was during the war, and I remember the demonstrations against the war and the phone calls we got.

When I got there, there were four regional coordinators and they each had one assistant and this one, I can still recall it, used to try and send me for his coffee. And after Jim Bullion hired me as the first female professional, he then hired Rosalind, I can't remember her last name, she was the first black secretary. Rosalind was knock down beautiful, this woman could have been a model okay, and I remember this guy would number one call me Rosalind and he would tell me to go get his coffee; I finally walked in his office and I said, look she's black, I'm white, she's awesome strike down beautiful, don't you ever confuse our names again, and he didn't. So I learned eventually – but it was that kind of thing.

Q: Well, I'd like to go back to the research side of things. What sort of things were you doing?

CHAMBLISS: Oh we were watching the agricultural production. I remember there was some nice guy at the Agency would call and would want to talk about what crops you think they're growing in one of those African countries and that kind of thing, we did annual reports, assessed the production and trade of the countries. I remember a fascinating project, Dr. Quentin West headed the Division, interesting personality. Quentin was really good at getting money for the Division; he got a contract with Ft. Dietrich at that time, it must have taken months we worked on this contract. And what they wanted us to do was assess if something happened to some of the key crops whether they were cash or food crops, what would be the economic consequences and I remember they were particularly interested, and it was Rhodesia at that point in time –

Q: It was undergoing the what was it, the independent declared, it was under Ian Smith I think –

CHAMBLISS: Yes

Q: - and it was –

CHAMBLISS: About that time and Zambia was becoming not Northern Rhodesia but Zambia and Nyasaland was becoming Malawi. And so I remember that project was fascinating because we had some really interesting people at ERS, really old line economists and I sort of was the young kid who had to try to make sense of all the information some of these people had. I remember that and so we did a lot of that kind of thing but mostly we just did analysis of trade and production. But I remember we had a woman who was awesome on the Mid-East, I forget her last name but if you wanted to know what was going on in the Mid-East in terms of agricultural production and/or trade to say nothing of the general political, this woman was really good. So you know, some of them worked with State if they were important areas like that, they had the old China hands from the 1950s who had been in the Department and had done that kind of thing. So it did basically analysis of the countries.

Q: Were you getting your figures from State or the CIA or from the Foreign Agricultural Service, where - ?

CHAMBLISS: We would mostly get them from our own attaches of which we had some but not a lot in Africa, from FAO, some obviously from the Agency, worked with them, I don't exactly remember State, I really never worked with State until I got into food aid and then I worked very closely with the great folks at the Economic Bureau, worked with them a lot. But I remember in ERS, ERS it was the Agency, it was FAO, it was AID you know, that kind of thing, maybe State, I just don't remember.

Q: Well on the Vietnam side, this was when you switched over - ?

CHAMBLISS: Yeah and began to work on food aid.

Q: How did that affect you?

CHAMBLISS: Well, there were a group of junior professionals in USDA in fact we had – we sponsored a seminar where we had the people who opposed the war, that got our names on a list we were told in the Department, it didn't seem to make any difference, so there was a lot of tension back and forth. Now I had people that I worked with of course that went to Vietnam that did a lot of the work, I mentioned my division director, no my branch chief, was Ed Farnstead. I remember State and AID had him go to Vietnam, I worked with the Vietnam Bureau, I remember of course the building over here in Rosslyn that the Vietnam Bureau had - their own building and then when Vietnam fell apart as best I could tell they all went to work on Egypt – but I remember the Vietnam Bureau– So I remember a lot of people including some from my high school who died there. . Of course I did my job, my boss and I developed many food aid agreements with Vietnam, Cambodia – I remember when we you know, used Cambodia and got them in that whole morass, so –

Q: Did you feel particularly engaged in Vietnam; for or against it?

CHAMBLISS: I guess I felt torn. I remember we used to have an inter-agency meeting, I wanted the war over, I thought the war should never have taken place, I thought it was a mistake and that people died and suffered terrible consequences for something that was never going to happen and that we created this nightmare ourselves. And I remember walking into an inter-agency meeting that we used to have at State, AID, OMB, USDA and Treasury; it must have been the day after Saigon fell and I think I walked in young and foolish and said something like well thank goodness that's over, I thought they were going to kill me because there were a lot of different feelings. Well, no there was a lot of feeling I had back and forth but just never – most of the people I interacted with, although Jim Bullion now that I think about it, Jim was a colonel from the Army who had been in Lebanon or something but he had done I forget what you call it in the army, it's like the civilian civics what's the Army call that?

Q: Well there's civil military affairs.

CHAMBLISS: Yeah, right, well he had done that kind of thing, but now that I think about it Jim never talked one way or another about Vietnam. I mean I didn't in the office either I mean, we were there you know, we were supposed to do the agreements and I thought that food aid probably was – I objected to the war, I didn't object to the fact that we were providing food aid, maybe you know later in life I would have.

Q: In the Department of Agriculture, not necessary connected with Vietnam but it could be too, but this was still at a time sort of from the 1960s where if you were under 30 years old you had God's blessing, if you were over 30 you couldn't be trusted you know, this whole sort of youth thing. Was there any sort of gathering together of under 30's who were going to change the world?

CHAMBLISS: I don't think so. Like I was saying, there were a group of us, myself and the others, but no it wasn't that conscious or at least I wasn't because you know by then I was married, my son was born in 1969 so I working full time and taking care of a new baby. Like I said there were a group of us that got together and sponsored this one conference session whatever we called it, seminar, on the war and had people come down and speak against the war, but other than that I don't remember. And I don't particularly remember a lot of hostility although they all said that you know the Department's administration office had all our names but I think it was probably just a rumor.

Q: Did you find yourself engaged or aware of the various civil rights movements, the march on Washington, Martin Luther King and all those?

CHAMBLISS: Oh yeah, of course. Yeah, there are many things I regret in life, two of which are not coming to Kennedy's funeral and not coming to Martin Luther King's speech, I really should have done both. I remember watching the speech, hearing it and as I began to get older I realized of course that, in that small town I grew up in, it was totally segregated. I began to realize what the black people had suffered, how much - Floss had raised me, how close she was to our family and that kind of thing. And you know I often thought how could I been so unconscious and so unaware of it when I was young but you know it was just the world you lived in.

Q: By the way, how come you don't have a good solid southern Virginia accent?

CHAMBLISS: Because it's not southern Virginia, it's the mountains. You'll love this story, talking about my accent. I was once in Rome in a delegation for something and I gave an intervention, you don't speak at international meetings you intervene, so I gave an intervention and the people who were taking the notes didn't quite get it all so they went to the translator and anyway he said it's the southern, you know the woman from the south but not the deep south, and there were three females and someone said it must be Mary because she's from the mountains of Virginia. Now my sister sounds more southern, she stayed in Roanoke, Virginia; at least my son says she sounds more southern.

Q: Well then, when you moved over after away from research, what essentially was this outfit called and what were you doing?

CHAMBLISS: Well, I'm trying to remember, it was a long time ago, my kid's 40 and he was just born, so I was busy being a mother and working all the time. The Service was called EMS, the Export Marketing Service and it was you know, I don't even know why it separated from FAS or whatever, because there were a lot of FAS people and I can't remember the name of the division, I can't remember. I'm sorry. But we were responsible for the Title I Food Aid Agreement Development so I worked closely with State, Treasury on the terms because these were long-term loans, but I can't remember the name of the organization.

Q: Well the name is not that important. Were there specific food matters, food products, we were dealing with - ?

CHAMBLISS: The food aid program was under agricultural legislation which authorized long-term loan agreements through a quasi-governmental corporation at USDA called Commodity Credit Corporation, and the countries would make a request for a commodity or commodities, primarily wheat, rice, corns, soy bean oil, and back then tobacco hadn't been precluded, and cotton. These agreements were part of the political, economic relationship we had with these countries. So they would request, we would review the request both the commodities and the financial terms; you had to be certain first of all it wasn't going to interfere with U.S. commercial business, second of all with normal commercial trade, so you had to work with commodity experts and there were a number of requirements in the law you had to meet. You had to work out the financial terms, they were usually based on advice from Treasury or, within USDA, from the Economic Research Service. The terms could provide for up to 40 years with modest down payments. Also some provided for some payment in the local currency. Also the commodities were sold within the recipient country we were, along with AID, involved in reviewing and approving the uses of these local currencies.

In the case of Vietnam any local currency payments were always given back to the government of Vietnam for military purposes; for other countries they were more development uses. So you put together these agreements with a lot of political interest and attention from every commodity group that was going to make money, from anyone on the Hill who either liked the country or didn't like the country, State desk officers of course, were very supportive of doing this kind of thing. So we put together these agreements which State Legal office used to publish. At that time the budget for these long-term lone food aid programs was a billion dollars which were significant to several of the commodity groups as well as the U.S. maritime industry. By law a large percentage of the commodities had to be shipped on U.S. flag vessels.

Q: Was this about the time when sort of the Green Revolution was happening and miracle rice and that sort of—?

CHAMBLISS: Well the Green Revolution happened earlier in the 1960s and was for wheat, not rice. Most of its impact was in India and Bangladesh not countries the US was doing long-term food aid with.

Q: Did you find that this got you to following political developments in these countries I mean was this part of your task?

CHAMBLISS: Of course you had to follow the political and economic, because you had to know what they needed, when they needed, why they needed, why did the U.S. care, I mean, I remember going to meetings at State Department, with various security classifications, generally held at State on the politically important countries. So we spend a lot of time with State, worked very closely with State EB and then they would go to the region desk officers or the desk officers would come to us for certain things.

Q: Did you have any contact with the countries' embassies?

CHAMBLISS: Sure. Particularly I remember the South Korea and Indonesian embassy staffs. Of course we worked closely with the Vietnam Bureau at AID; I don't recall any South Vietnam embassy but guess there must have been one. I remember the South Korean aspect because of Tongsun Park.

Q: The Tongsun Park, this is known as the Koreagate.

CHAMBLISS: Right, yes. And there was a congressman from Mississippi who chaired the Appropriations Committee and he wouldn't give AID their money until we did an agreement on rice to take care of Otto Passman. I remember doing that agreement.

Q: There was a young lady, Suzie something or other, I –

CHAMBLISS: Oh yeah, I'd forgotten.

Q: Anyway, I had a small involvement in the Tongsun Park thing. I was consul general to Seoul from 1976 to 1979 and he was – they were having investigations so he sent an attorney from New York to the U.S. attorney there named Rudolph Giuliani, and I had to administer the oath to Tongsun Park, that was my –

CHAMBLISS: Well I went to a function at the Georgetown Club a few years ago, they still had his picture; you know the Georgetown Club is one of the things he founded, anyway, they still have Tongsun Park's picture there.

Q: But anyway, your organization was this at any point beginning to move into the Foreign Agricultural Service?

CHAMBLISS: It did. In the later 70s I left the Department of Agriculture and joined a little group over at the State Department for a couple of years of the Carter Administration. This was ICDA, the International Cooperation and Development Agency an idea that didn't work. Anyway, so for about two and one-half years I left Agriculture and worked at State Department, and during that time the Export Marketing Service went back into FAS. When Reagan won and was not going to keep the ICDA, I needed to have a job so I made some contacts who talked to the then administrator of FAS who brought me back to FAS.

Q: Well, let's talk about the State Department time, this is when to when?

CHAMBLISS: Well, when did Reagan win?

Q: He won in 1980.

CHAMBLISS: Okay, so by March 1980 I came back to USDA –

(Unnamed Person): No, it would have been 1981.

CHAMBLISS: 1981, right –

(Unnamed Person): Because he won in the Fall of 1980, sworn in January 1981 –

CHAMBLISS: Right, so I must have been at State in 1980, and 1979 and whether I went over in 1978, I don't remember, probably sometime in 1978, but about that time, about the time you were over in Seoul I was going over to State.

Q: Well did you find that you, was this an alien culture when you came to State or was it pretty much the same or what?

CHAMBLISS: Well I knew some people because I had done the food aid work. The woman I worked for was Ruth Greenstein who was wonderful. She had come from OMB and asked me join her for the IDCA budget work. The first thing different thing I realized was that IDCA was almost half female and male professionals so it was totally different from what I'd been used to in USDA. Most of the staff of IDCA came from the northeast elite, I come from the mountains of Virginia. Ruth Greenstein, her father was an editor for the New Yorker, Ruth had been to I don't know, Princeton. Most of the senior staff at IDCA has probably been to Ivy League Schools. So it was a different culture but I don't remember feeling out of place. I remember after I'd been there a few months Ruth told me that she spend a lot of my time translating my southern/mountain accent for the rest of the staff. But I wasn't aware of this.

So it was a different culture and I guess it was a bit intimidating. I didn't have the kind of academic background the others had. I got along well with everyone but it helped that I had known over the years people in State EB, some desk officers, and many people at AID. I loved EB, they were great folks especially their Friday afternoon wine and cheese parties. It was a wonderful experience and I learned a lot.

I also learned State Department kept its cafeteria open on Saturday and that nothing fed the ego at State like having to come in for a Saturday morning meeting. (laughter) Guys love that stuff right? It was great, I loved state and I learned to find my way around the building and that came in very handy when I came back to USDA, it's not an easy building to find your way –

Q: It's not.

CHAMBLISS: Oh it's a terrible building and we bring foreigners in here to try to figure out where to go, this is nuts.

Q: And of course some things change from time to time.

CHAMBLISS: Right, yeah and then we had the colored walls, right?

Q: Yeah.

CHAMBLISS: Right.

Q: In fact they still have the colored walls.

CHAMBLISS: Yeah they do have them there, very pretty. It is not an easy building to find your way around in.

Q: What were some the issues you found yourself while you were at State and EB?

CHAMBLISS: We were dealing with the budget, the idea was to try develop an integrated foreign assistance budget. So I remember Ruth and I working trying to rank the uses of the funds in the foreign assistance budget. In this account the U.S. would provide the World Bank, IDA, where did that rate versus the AID development accounts versus the international organization and program donation account. We were basically budget people, trying to screen the budget to identify the most productive uses of these funds. Now of course this approach has been expanded and takes different forms in the various US agencies funded under this account.

So we got lobbied of course by everybody in the building for their country and I quickly realized how much, particularly folks in the Latin American offices, both the AID and the State folks worked together best to obtain funds for their programs.. So we really worked on budget issues which organizations to give how much support to, and what criteria to use to make such allocation decisions. We worked on developing best performance criteria, so we worked closely with an AID office down office then, it was wonderful and its director, Alex Shakow and his key staff were excellent.

Q: This was a matrix, the PPC sort of –

CHAMBLISS: Yes it was programming, policy and budgeting –

Q: Yeah, and so you –

CHAMBLISS: So we worked closely with them –

Q: So you figured what your priorities were then and –

CHAMBLISS: Right, so we worked closely with PPC -

Q: And where you put it –

CHAMBLISS: And where you put the money –

Q: And where you put the money and all –

CHAMBLISS: Yes and everyone would present their cases by country and I remember once I – because you know in some of those small African countries, the guys arguing for money they didn't know anything more about that country – I once said if they can't tell you the name of the capital, let's not give them any money. That seems like a fair criteria to me. (laughter) But it was a great experience, I enjoyed it. I was sorry when Reagan won and we couldn't keep doing it but on the other hand I didn't think the idea of elevating the development agenda was going to work It was interesting then, that was when we had the, oh I remember, we had the embargo, remember when Russia invaded Afghanistan –

Q: 1979.

CHAMBLISS: And Carter stopped agriculture exports. At IDCA we ended up, working with the special assistant at the White House to find homes for a large tonnage of corn. Companies in the U.S. had contracts to move grain to Russia that couldn't be exported. So USDA, using the money and authority of the Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) purchased the grain. And because I knew agriculture and the CCC and was at State and I remember working with the White House special assistant to find a way to give much of the corn to Egypt. Also USDA purchased 4 million tons of wheat that had been scheduled for export. This wheat was used to create the Commodity Reserve which has evolved and now it is the Bill Emerson Humanitarian Trust. This has been a reserve to back-up the US international food aid programs. The US is the only country that had a reserve to back up such food aid commitments and of course we had it because CCC had to buy commodities from these commercial traders because they couldn't export it to Russia because the Russians had invaded Afghanistan where we are now doing major food aid programs.

Q: Yeah, this was when because the Russians invaded Afghanistan, we were doing everything, boycotting the Olympics –

CHAMBLISS: That's right and the USG wouldn't let the grain ready for export be shipped and so the USG using USDA's CCC purchased the grain from the trade and then had to find a home –

Q: For the grain, which annoyed the hell out of the U.S. farmers.

CHAMBLISS: No shit; excuse me. Yeah, tell me about it, I had to go and find a home, so –

Q: Yeah.

CHAMBLISS: I did a lot of that kind of thing, finding homes for various commodities over the years. It was always fun, interesting, challenging, different places I went I never expected to. I remember going with, who was the deputy secretary? Christopher, Warren Christopher, we were having a meeting over at OMB on the international affairs budget

and Ruth couldn't go, for some reason I went with Warren Christopher to see the OMB budget director, I can't remember who it was at that time. Some interesting experiences for a kid from Buchanan, Virginia.

Q: Had you had any chance to go overseas to –

CHAMBLISS: No I didn't, I was not in the Foreign Service. One of the things I did, this would have been early in my career, when Dean my son was small, I did talk to the people in FAS about joining the Foreign Service because my husband was a writer/photographer and he could go with me and my child was little. At that point in time, this must have been in the early 1970s, they could not comprehend a female, I mean, I talked with them and they said you want to do what? Afterwards I said I couldn't even get really upset because it was so far beyond their comprehension that I realized it just wasn't to be. Now it's interesting, I talked to State and State Department would have been happy to take me but they had some rule that you could only be a certain grade level, well I was already a couple above that and I couldn't take a financial hit just to join the great people at State Department, so no, I never went into the Foreign Service. Now a few years later FAS changed, as I said at some point in time they would have taken me married or unmarried with a baby; things had changed so much, and after that it just didn't work out for various reasons in my life so I didn't, I never was assigned overseas.

Q: Well then, Reagan comes in –

CHAMBLISS: Yes, Reagan comes in and I go back to FAS. (laughter)

Q: How did you find, I mean you'd obviously been round FAS –

CHAMBLISS: Sure I knew the people –

Q: - for a long time –

CHAMBLISS: Yeah.

Q: And did you find were there any changes under Reagan that came up at you?

CHAMBLISS: No, not really. When I went from USDA to ICCA/ State some folks were skeptical of me because I had come out of Agriculture, that took a little while to get over. Then when I came back from State /ICCA to Agriculture I was suspect because I'd been working basically at the State Department and with AID.

Q: Oh yeah.

CHAMBLISS: - so that took a little while. But you know I know the people, they know me, I am sort of am what I am so I was fairly quickly accepted, but when I walked back – It was interesting, when I mentioned about the female staff at IDCA, the first day I walked back into the – I had gotten my GS-15 at ICCA so I came back as a 15 and I was

doing the Farm Bill, Administrator Dick Smith had hired me to worry about the Farm Bill, so I did that and learned a lot about Congress. But when I walked in the FAS conference room the first time, they used to do Friday meetings, at that particular time I was the only female in the room, and I remember thinking well I'm back to the USDA world. But FAS moved on and things changed but I do remember being struck by that, I had left a world where the meetings were almost always fifty, you know, so it just didn't matter and I walked into that room and while most days there probably would have been at least one or two other women - but I happened to walk in on a day I was the only female in the room.

Q: The Carter administration had put quite a push of getting women into further up the –

CHAMBLISS: Yeah.

Q: - up the ranks –

CHAMBLISS: Right.

Q: I mean there - I would assume that Agriculture –

CHAMBLISS: Oh yes responding to that –

Q: was being kind of far behind in that.

CHAMBLISS: Well they were far behind but they did respond and one time, I guess when I went from a GS 12 to GS 13, I think actually there were a number of candidates for the 13 position and I think I moved first. Of course not only did I think I was the best, but probably because I was female I moved before some others. When I moved to a GS 14 position it didn't matter and like I said I got the GS 15 at ICCA. But I think – and you may interview people who see this differently – I think the plantation nomenclature for USDA, really applied more to the Department's treatment of its black population, and to some extent to women. But maybe less so in FAS than some other parts and less so in ERS; but I think it was harder for blacks and if you were black and a woman it was really hard.

Q: Well, yeah when you look at it just sort of on a I don't know, doing a sociological chart or something, you wouldn't, the State Department basically gets an awful lot of its people sort of on the liberal side of the spectrum –

CHAMBLISS: Of course –

Q: - because this is, these are the internationalists -

CHAMBLISS: Right these are the people who care about the international –

Q: - and Agriculture comes out of a much more traditional –

CHAMBLISS: Well it comes out of a rural farm culture and you go to any meeting still with the aggies, it's mostly white males.

Q: Yeah.

CHAMBLISS: Yeah, look at the Hill, look at where the power is and the clout I mean –

Q: Did you feel in agricultural business, were there farmers around or were the bureaucrats taking over from the farmers or what?

CHAMBLISS: It's hard to say. I was one of the few people hired who was not an agricultural economist. At one time FAS would only hire agricultural economist so myself and a couple of other people who came out of food aid part of Export Market Service were sometimes the example that is was all right to hire something other than people with some agriculture degree – but they really wanted rural, agricultural backgrounds if they could. Many of the staff came from farms and a lot of people in USDA still have farms. But now farming often is just another big business, and it's the big farms that had the power and the clout, not the small farms.

Q: Yeah.

CHAMBLISS: They are businessmen as much as farmers.

Q: The small farmers are hauled out when there's a political issue –

CHAMBLISS: Right, the Hill tries to pretend they are all these small farmers that are being protected and supported, but most of the money goes to the big farms.

Q: It's really the boys back in Chicago or New York who are –

CHAMBLISS: Well, or it's the rich rice farmers in California and the south, poor farmers don't hire a helicopters to plant the rice seeds.

Q: By the way when you were doing this did you run into it, I don't know if you call it the tobacco wars or not, I mean tobacco is becoming increasingly unpopular in the public, it's obviously an iconic, but was that affecting your - ?

CHAMBLISS: As I said, originally we included tobacco as a food aid commodity but eventually Congress passed a law to end this. I'll never forget one of the good learning experiences I had: I picked up the phone one day when I was working on a Vietnam agreement and all of a sudden I don't know who transferred it to me, they should have told me, I'm on the radio live with a North Carolina radio station raising the issue of tobacco, Vietnam, and food aid. I'm thinking this is probably not good. So I was very cautious and watched what I was saying of course, but that was a learning experience, number one find out who you are one the phone with –

Q: Yeah.

CHAMBLISS: - and tell people before – So yeah I remember that, we took tobacco off of food aid commodity list and eventually we took it off of, there's a commercial like an export/import bank type program at USDA called GSM, export credit guarantee program, and we took tobacco out of that too.

Q: I know I've talked to some economic officers who would grit their teeth and would fight in a way Thailand or elsewhere in order to get equal opportunity to sell tobacco –

CHAMBLISS: Of course, it's going to be sold out there American farmers and exporters want to sell it.

Q: - compared to the –

CHAMBLISS: Sure, to the African tobacco or –

Q: - to the other tobacco monopolies they're up against.

CHAMBLISS: Sure, of course.

Q: At the same time you know, I'm very careful not to call them merchants of death but –

CHAMBLISS: When I went to a session down in Kentucky, Kentucky women, I never realized that tobacco is basically is a small farmer crop in Kentucky, I mean incredibly small farms. Now of course it is a lucrative crop, I guess you could replace it with marijuana or something like that would be as lucrative so we still grow tobacco and sell it and people still smoke, especially young girls which is really upsetting.

Q: I notice for example, I never see anybody smoking here –

CHAMBLISS: No.

Q: - people I know, the ones that did aren't around anymore, they're dead but you go to, we used to you know drive around and say go to Front Royal just off the Shenandoah Valley –

CHAMBLISS: Right.

Q: - and all the I mean all the sort of, I hate to categorize, the sort of pick-up crowd in an agricultural area did smoke.

CHAMBLISS: Well, I don't see very much of it. I do visit my sister in Roanoke quite a bit and of course and obviously I'm with her and her friends so I don't see any of that. But I do notice if you look around you'll see young girls even in Washington smoking

which again I notice that more so, and that really does disturb me. I'm surprised you see as much of it as you do.

Q: Yeah, things may be changing but you know to me it is sort of a class indicator.

CHAMBLISS: To some extent yes, I think so too.

Q: Well, with the Foreign Agricultural Service you started in 1980 –

CHAMBLISS: Right.

Q: - was it a different service than you'd been aware of earlier on?

CHAMBLISS: Not that I was cognizant of, no I don't think so.

Q: We're picking this up in 1981 when you joined the Foreign Agricultural Service. What brought about this?

CHAMBLISS: I had worked in the Department of Agriculture for some time until I guess 1977 when I left the Department of Agriculture and went to be a budget officer at the International Cooperation and Development Agency which was a very small short-lived effort to elevate the importance of development within the decision-making budget allocation process. However it was a Democratic idea and when Ronald Reagan was elected president, the republicans were not going to continue that so I needed a job. I was able to convince the then administrator of the Foreign Agricultural Service who was Dick Smith that I would like to come back to FAS. He brought me back originally to work on the 1980 Farm Bill, farm bills are done basically every four years or five years. So I came back to FAS to work on that and just got various and sundry jobs over time.

Q: Well, let's see, did the Farm Bill, what connection did the Farm Bill have to the Foreign Agricultural Service?

CHAMBLISS: Oh, the Farm Bill does many things in addition to providing a lot of money for farmers and the domestic feeding programs. It also has a trade title which basically authorizes all of the programs that FAS runs particularly the food aid programs which is what I had worked on before and what I have worked on mostly in my career. So all of the international food aid programs, even those run by the Agency for International Development are authorized through the Farm Bill process, so it is key to FAS.

Q: Well let's talk about at that point, 1981, because I imagine things have changed somewhat, but what does food consist of, where was it going, where were we doing with it, what were you doing?

CHAMBLISS: Okay, let's see, I've got to think back. In the 1970s the food aid went to Vietnam, Cambodia and that area, that had ended of course by the 1980s and it had made

the shift to really focusing on developing countries. We were doing still a lot with Indonesia in the 1980s, a lot more focus on Africa, a lot on food assistance into Latin America countries. We were still doing Egypt, I think Egypt was still big then, at one time Egypt was very large program, I think Israel had probably phased out by then, so there were some Mid-East countries, including Jordan. It had become much more of a development oriented resource and a tool to try to promote development objectives of the U.S. Government. It has always been and at that time continued of course, to be a mechanism to respond to emergency food aid needs. The Ethiopian famine came along in the 1970s, so it was much more a development/emergency food aid mechanism focused on developing countries. I think, India of course had graduated by then, Korea had graduated, Turkey, a number of countries had moved on so there was probably a lot more emphasis on the poorer countries in Latin American including Peru, Peru was big for a while, and then again as I said the African Continent and some Mid-East countries.

Q: What type of – what was the food?

CHAMBLISS: Well the food is almost always 70% wheat or a product thereof, little bit of flour, little bit of bulgur, but it's normally a basic grain. It's wheat, rice is always important because there are a lot of rice consumers and because the U.S. rice industry is very powerful. There will be some corn, maybe sorghum, that varied, and vegetable oil because that's needed for cooking. So it's sort of like you put together a food package - grains and vegetable oils and then to a smaller extent there might be pulses, things like lentils, or peas, or beans. Some of those kinds of things but you can almost guess 70% or so of food aid was almost always wheat. In the Title II program, which was the emergency response mechanism and the direct feeding program, there were certain, developed in the 1960s and still being used today, certain blended fortifying foods particularly designed to try to reach malnourished children and women pregnant, lactating, nursing, so there were those kinds of products too.

Q: Well obviously there's a push-pull, but how much of what we were sending out consisted of surplus products and basically you had the producers trying to find a place to sell their stuff to?

CHAMBLISS: By the 1980s of course export trade, commercial export trade was booming. People had the idea that most of the international food aid commodities were surpluses owned by the government, that's not true. Beginning in the 1970s it was a budget process, Congress appropriated money, the Department of Agriculture went and bought the products off the U.S. commercial market, just like if you wanted to buy wheat and sugar to export to Canada it would have been the same buying process. Now of course what it did do, it made in effect a U.S. government resource as a demand for the agricultural products, same things the domestic feeding programs do if you think about it, the government creates that additional demand which gets built into the market. Now it's not a very big demand compared with the rest of the demand okay. But for some commodities, like I mentioned lentils, smaller traded commodity, the margin would have a real price impact it.

In the mid-1980s Congress authorized an additional food aid program under Section 416(b) of a very old Agricultural Act, the Agricultural act of 1949. Now that Section 416 authority in fact, was to dispose of surplus commodity that particularly came along in mid-1980s because by then due to the power of the domestic dairy lobby the Department of Agriculture owned a lot of nonfat dry milk, a lot of butter and a lot of cheese literally stored in caves in Kansas City. Some members of Congress got the idea, we could reinstate this old authority that had died I don't know, in the 1950s or 1960s, but had been an original authority to donate U.S. Department of Agriculture owned surpluses, which it had done in the 1940s after World War II . Anyway, Congress reinstated this authority that so then we began to do Section 416(b) programs and those I would argue in fact, those are clearly, authorities to donate surpluses, so we did.

Actually we did the first 416, I remember by then I was doing programming, the first one we did was to help people in Haiti. There was a small church in the mountains of Virginia not far from here, a Brethren church, that had an orphanage in Haiti they were taking care of and they came to us and wanted a program. A very small I can't remember what it was, but I can still remember the pastor of the church, and we said yes we can provide this and here's the legal agreement, here are all of the requirements that go with it. And then he came back and said we had a meeting last night in our church and we debated back and forth, it's Brethren so they don't believe in violence, but we decided we had to come ask you if it was all right if we hired an armed guard in Haiti to get, it was nonfat dry milk a very valuable product, if we hired an armed guard to be certain it got from the ship that unloaded in Haiti out to our orphanage and I said yes we have provisions in the law, we can authorize that. But I remember thinking you can just imagine the debate in that small church in the mountains of Virginia, we don't believe in guns, on the other hand we want this milk to get to these kids. Anyway, so we did that –

Q: That's fascinating because you know, I would have thought that you know, the Department of Agriculture you know, wham a big thing goes, not to a small church in West Virginia, or Virginia; was it Virginia or West Virginia?

CHAMBLISS: It was in Virginia in the Shenandoah Valley.

Q: I mean which is of course exactly the way you should give stuff because it's less like, I mean it is more –

CHAMBLISS: Well here clearly this was going to get to those kids, there's no way –

Q: And of course get to the kids –

CHAMBLISS: That was the first one we did.

Q: I mean you had the flexibility to do that.

CHAMBLISS: Well yes, of course, in fact the program - we could donate to any private, voluntary organization, non-governmental organization, we could also donate to

governments and we did. As I said that was the first one. It was the first one for a number of reasons. I thought there may have been some opposition particularly out of other exporters to the fact that the U.S. Government was donating surplus commodities so I particularly thought it was helpful to have the first program be one that was going to be very hard to attack, I mean you are not going to attack the Church of the Brethren giving milk to orphans in Haiti, you are just not going to do it in the international forum or anyplace else. Now after that of course we did bilateral programs and we did several with Peru, oh goodness we did a number of Latin America, by that time I guess I was in charge of the division that was doing that.

So by the mid-80s we were doing programs under the Section 416(b) authority as well as under the Public Law 480 food aid authority. And then came the 1985 Farm Bill and Congress created another food aid program. This is an interesting one, called Food for Progress. It basically originated in the Senate Agricultural Committee chaired by Senator Jesse Helms, not you would normally think of an advocate of international food aid, but Jesse Helms was for this program. He had a friendship with an ambassador Keating, he had been an ambassador to Madagascar okay? Ambassador Keating had –

Q: There was an ambassador Keating who had also been an ambassador - well maybe it's a different Keating, but to Israel and to India.

CHAMBLISS: That would have been a different Keating I think, you could probably look in there and find the name because it would have been – anyway, when he was in Madagascar, a very poor African Country, he got the idea that if the U.S. government could convince a government, in this case the government of Madagascar, to make agricultural policy changes so that they could increase their own production of food for local consumption, the US should support this changed policy. But he also realized that such a change would most likely result in lower production for some time – maybe a couple of years – and the US should commit to provide food aid commodities during this period.

Q: Fill in the gap there –

CHAMBLISS: Right, that we would guarantee two to three year's supply while they did this. That was the concept. Anyway, eventually Congress agreed with this concept and created the Food for Progress Program. Jesse Helms was a strong supporter of this idea and was adamant that it be administered by USDA not by AID. The funding was to come from the CCC, so it didn't need annual appropriations – so USDA has supported Food for Progress programs since 1985. The program was used extensively in the collapse of the former Soviet Union, we're doing such programs now with the Afghan government.

So now we have Public Law 480, we had Section 416, that's actually 416(b), 416(a) provides for domestic food donations, b for international food donations, that came along about 1983, then 1985 we got Food for Progress. So now we were up to three distinct food aid programs. And that's the way it continued for about a decade. PL 480 always being very large, slowly over time the Title I long-term concessional loan program

phasing out and the Title II direct donations for emergencies and development increasing. By the mid to late 90s the Section 416(b) program had ended but at about the same time another food aid program was created – the McGovern/Dole international school feeding program. So now there are three active food aid programs – Title II administered by AID with funding over a billion; Food for Progress and McGovern/Dole both administered by USDA at smaller funding levels.

Q: Well, first place, did you have a problem with rice you know, think of the Japanese and you know, say well the Japanese tummy is not adapted to American rice, I mean you know this is basically protectionist for the subsidized Japanese rice. But I mean essentially of the foods, we are producing certain types of foods, was there a problem of getting some of them just accepted for local consumption?

CHAMBLISS: Well, wheat and rice and corn/maize are the most important commodities in these program and they are consumed in almost all parts of the world. I'm not aware of any acceptance problems with wheat or rice. In Southern Africa the people prefer white maize and we ship yellow corn so there has been some concern expressed over this. Now, there was considerable domestic pressure from the rice industry which is a very small but very powerful industry, continues to be to this day –

Q: It's in Arkansas and California isn't it?

CHAMBLISS: Its Arkansas and some other southern states and California. People often don't realize that there are a number of members of Congress who will vote together, the California congressmen, the Arkansas, the Mississippi, and some others. So yes we were always under pressure to provide a certain amount of rice, generally because there are a number of rice consumers it wasn't a huge problem, even in Africa there are a number of rice consumers, particularly once people move out of the rural area into the urban. But yes, and of course there's rice consumed in Latin America, I think people in Guyana raised major problems because they thought that the U.S. food aid rice was totally displacing their commercial markets. I expect that probably was true, but yes the rice industry is very powerful and certainly during the 1980s and 1990s we were under considerable pressure to move "x" amount of rice. But you know again, wheat was always the big thing and sometimes US food aid was castigated for turning consumers who were not traditionally wheat eaters, probably particularly in Africa, into wheat consumers. Now, I don't know how valid that is because when people move to the city the women don't want to pound the sorghum and the millet and the maize; they want to buy the bread, so it's hard to know, but that was always a concern and probably, certainly in some cases, a valid concern.

Q: Well, how much do you say of a concern did you have, I'm not sure whether nutritionist or anthropologist or _____ - ?

CHAMBLISS: Well there were nutritionists involved. AID had an Office of Nutrition but at one time, they abolished it. It has been recreated though I'm not sure of its title. Nutrition is now coming back much more to the fore and is clearly a major part of the

Obama-Clinton effort in terms of national security. The private voluntary organizations who did most of the Title II distribution, all of them had nutritionists and the World Food Program has always been a major recipient and they put together the food aid basket and that's when they got the cereals, vegetable oil, some kind of pulses, so they were trying to address nutrition needs, so yes there were always nutritional considerations. The blended fortified foods that I mentioned, corn soy blends, wheat soy blends, were formulated with a nutritional vitamin, mineral premix component. They were specifically designed to help malnourished children.

So nutrition was a factor; we fortified commodities with vitamins and minerals. A lot of the fortification was with soy because of its nutritional impact.

I'm sure there were anthropologists involved from the AID side. At USDA, we had nutritionists in the Agricultural Research Service which helped formulate the blended, fortified foods but by the time the 1980s, 1990s that had disappeared. But more recently ARS is getting involved in improving the nutritional impact of the commodities used in the programs. Of course there's always been, this is not nutritionist or anthropologist, but there's always pressure from various and sundry commodity groups in the United States; they run into problems, they walk over to the Department of Agriculture and AID and say, look we need you to move this product. We did salmon once I remember, a good senator from, Senator Stevens from Alaska, made us move salmon to some places, but that didn't work too well. We did peanut butter to Russia –

Q: How did peanut butter go?

CHAMBLISS: Well you are going to love this. This was of course after the fall of the Soviet Union and the USG was doing a lot to help Russia. We programmed a wide array of commodities in Russia; we did baby food, you name it we did everything in the 1990s in Russia, everything authority we could find, every authority that could be created. Peanut butter, we gave to a private volunteer organization (PVO) and afterwards we learned they'd sent it to somewhere in Siberia, where I'm sure the food need was great but the people tried to make soup out of it and the word came back, "it makes lousy soup". I mean obviously the PVO had not educated people. We also sent fresh apples into Eastern Russia, the apple trade came, apple trade had enough political clout to get apples – I'm thinking we're going to ship fresh apples? So we used a very effective, competent small PVO and they actually got the apples delivered to some remote area of Siberia. They came in through the Pacific Coast and actually got them consumed with no problem that we ever heard of. So the apples seemed to work, the peanut butter did not and of course both were very expensive.

Q: Well there is such a thing in West Africa as peanut soup.

CHAMBLISS: Oh of course if you know how to do it. Where I grew up, if you ever go to Roanoke, Virginia, go to Hotel Roanoke and have their peanut soup; it's wonderful and it's a classic dish there but not for Russians. But now there is a product, if you read generally about food aid, there's something called plumpy'nut. A product developed by

the French. It's a peanut milk soy product and Doctors Without Borders have used it. They report, I mean it's like magic for children on the verge of death from starvation. This product will bring them back.

Q: What's the combination in it?

CHAMBLISS: It's peanuts, milk, an oil, probably some sugar, something like that; it was a French product first so of course the Americans couldn't buy it but now other countries are beginning to make it and the U.S. industry is trying to figure out how to because it's a miraculous product, but it's much more of a therapeutic food. So it is high cost and very well targeted.

Q: Did you get, during particularly as you moved up into the 1990s and all, did you get into the Frankenfood problem? Were you aware of that?

CHAMBLISS: The GMO?

Q: Yes, genetically modified foods.

CHAMBLISS: Genetically modified, excuse me, genetically modified foods, yes we did but not until later not in the 1980s that really didn't come along until late in the 1990s.

Q: Okay, well let's, before that what - the same with Peru, you know I think of Peru as being the home of the potato.

CHAMBLISS: Oh yes, we had the potato trade promoting their products. We tried potato flakes; they probably worked in Peru and no place else. The potato industry came, they were also effective in getting their products in and the potato is a good product, but it didn't work in very many places. We programmed some in Latin America, it worked as you would expect, best in Peru, so we did potato granules, this was all under Title II, the donation program. So the product did work some. The Peru program I remember was particularly strong in the urban area, a lot of food aid goes to the rural area because still to this day the poorest people are in the rural areas and they even are often the most malnourished. But in Peru, particularly around Lima, the PVOs and the World Food Program had a number of programs in Peru where the potato is so well known that the product was accepted.

The biggest programs of course, happened at the very end of the 1980s and the early 1990s with the collapse of the former Soviet Union. The USG provided large levels of food aid to Russia, as well as some to Poland, Bulgaria, and Romania. The Department of Agriculture found some unique authorities that would let, I'm trying to remember back, the Secretary of Agriculture have authority to transfer funds from one program to another. I'm sorry I can't remember all the details, but somehow in the early 1990s a very large transfer of funds from the Commodity Credit Corporation into the PL 480 Title I Program, or either 416 (b) was made. Now I can't remember which program but I think both authorized were used. We did programs into Russia in the early 1990s and then

again in the mid-1990s right after they had the financial collapse USDA provided additional huge programs particularly designed to create local currency in Russia which was then used to support the Russian the pension system.

Some people criticized this program greatly. GAO did a report, and while they did identify some corruption which was not unexpected since it was Russia I don't think they found major programs. But I am certain there are people who will argue that the massive food aid was very disruptive in Russia, other people will argue that it kept their pensioners alive, certainly more so than they would have been.

Q: This again, the whole idea of how the system, the Soviet's Union collapsing but even before that, what was the role of the Agricultural attaché's in your office and the State Department and AID, I mean how - ?

CHAMBLISS: Well we all worked together so it was a collaborative effort for the most part. Some times in more recent years there's been more tension. Particularly in my experience, I worked with the people in the State Economic Bureau; they were our entrée to the rest of the Department. In terms of the inter-agency communication within State Department, the Economic Bureau was supposed to be the channel for communicating and they had to deal with all of the regions in State. We often talked to State desk officers but we didn't have to deal with those trade-off decisions that took place in the State Department. If there was only so much money, the African Bureau gets this, the Latinas get that, - the Economic Bureau had to deal with those issues. We worked very closely with AID folks, both those in the Office of Food for Peace (what AID called PL 480) as well as their desk officers.

Q: You know I've served on a number of country teams, in Yugoslavia and Korea, and the Agricultural attaché was very definitely a part you know -

CHAMBLISS: Oh yes, of the country team, sure.

Q: You know because if it's an agricultural thing we would defer to him or to her.

CHAMBLISS: Right, FAS has good expertise both in its attaches and in the DC staff which supported the attaches.

Q: Yeah you know, and -

CHAMBLISS: FAS has always had a good analytical capability.

Q: - and so you know, there wasn't a sort of a jurisdictional problem.

CHAMBLISS: No, I don't think there. In Russia our attaché - at USDA we had very good attachés, we always had excellent attachés in Russia. We had them in Japan, excellent; any commercial market, Japan, Europe, Korea, first class attachés. We had first class attachés in Russia, and I think all of them spoke Russian. For lots of reasons, you

know, not necessarily just commercial assessment but also assessment of their food production. I mean if you wanted to know what the food production was going to be in Russia, you ask our attachés because they were great.

Q: Certainly prior to the collapse of the Soviet Union this was often a source of I mean, the production in the Soviet Union was not almost a state secret the world was trying to figure this out –

CHAMBLISS: Yes.

Q: - because it was a commercial thing you know, how much did they wanted and how much can we charge –

CHAMBLISS: Well particularly after the “great grain robbery” which happened in the mid-1970s. In fact there’s a book by Dan Morgan, great book about when the Soviet Union I can’t remember the name of the Russian grain dealer, but a real wheeler-dealer on the world market, came in and bought up vast amounts of U.S. wheat before anyone realized what was happening. All of a sudden we had a very tight supply situation and higher prices. The Soviets had just come into the US market and taken it by surprise. So there was lots of sensitivity, particularly after the great grain robbery in the 1970s.

Q: So everybody was watching it –

Oh of course.

Q: - very carefully.

CHAMBLISS: Of course. I wish I could was the FAS attaché during that period but I can’t. Alan Mustard, whom you know, of course would know the history of this very well.

Q: Alan Mustard was here two days ago.

CHAMBLISS: Oh really, Alan’s in town. He’s coming back to Washington for assignment I guess. Anyway, he’s one of our Russian experts and there were several others.

So we generally always had good relationships with both State and AID folks. When we did the really large food aid, particularly in Russia, I think there was perhaps some tension. But I think that was aberrant and it didn’t affect much. I don’t remember any problems; there were AID missions in Bulgaria, in Romania, in Poland, and the food aid work was done very collectively and particularly I would say the USDA-State Department relationship as far as I knew, as far as I could tell from this side of water, was always excellent and cooperative.

Q: Was there a problem in then, alright why don’t we take the collapse of the Soviet

Union and then all of a sudden the whole economic structure is shattered so you have a tremendous demand to fill in there but that goes away, I mean in other words when you're dealing with world problems they don't tend to stay world problems because a drought or something and it had to mean you had to be one, very responsive but two, what was this doing; did you have to watch the world market to make sure you weren't screwing it up?

CHAMBLISS: Yes that is a major function of FAS. One of the requirements in the food aid legislation is that such aid will not disrupt normal commercial trade so FAS watched any trade impacts carefully, both for the US and other normal commercial exporters. President George Bush and then President Clinton continued the same policy; there was no change, they wanted us to try to figure out ways to get something non-governmental in Russia, so we got a number of PVOs involved. I recall that a couple were created to work in the former Soviet Union and now have grown and are doing other development activities in many places lots but they really got their start by working in the former Soviet Union, mainly with USDA programs. I remember that the Jewish groups were particularly competent in dealing with Russia and in dealing with Ukraine. We did a lot of food aid programs in Ukraine and I finally concluded that it was because of their history of in those countries that they knew so well how to function and get things done. Ukraine got a lot of attention, I made several trips there to try to assure that the programs were working well.

Q: Well talk about Ukraine.

CHAMBLISS: Amazing. There were several food aid programs in Ukraine. It was a difficult country to work with. Because we were providing substantial food aid that created large local currency resources. The Ukraine and the US governments had to agree on the uses of these local currencies and that was where we ran into conflict. How many times did we go over to try to sort out with the Ukraine government officials how those resources would be used because of our concern that the resources would be diverted. In Ukraine that's probably when I, at least personally, worked as close as I ever did with State Department people. I traveled with them, we did the negotiations and jointly delivered the message - you will not use the currencies in ways they proposed. There had to be mutual agreement on the uses. USDA had the legal authority and State had the political clout. But it was one of those situations where we really worked well together especially with Bill Taylor. I don't know what Bill's doing now, last time I worked with him was on Afghanistan. Anyway, we were able to actually get the Ukrainians to do some productive things but it was one not easy. It was an eye-opener for me to go to Ukraine because the situation was really bad. The government and the people were poor. I remember the government office has almost no heat so I would often have to put my coat on during our meetings.

Q: Yeah.

CHAMBLISS: It was a different world.

Q: Well tell me about your experiences going over there and negotiating with the Ukrainians, the Russians and all, you say they weren't used to a woman there.

CHAMBLISS: This was when we were negotiating a butter donation under the Section (b) authority. I was in charge, there were three of us, two men and myself but I was clearly in charge and it took a while for the Russian counterpart across the table from me realize that he really had to talk to me because I was going the decision maker but he wanted to talk to the guys with me. But eventually he figured it out. But I remember at one point in time we were talking about the quantities and I forget what the tonnage level was. I'll make up a number, say 18,000 tons, and he said oh but if we could just have 3,000 tons more and of course he thought she'll have to go back to Washington to get a decision. But I knew we could donate additional the butter so I said well let's talk about that a little bit. Then after an appropriate time and interchange I said, yes I think we can do that if you'll do this. So that's when he really realized oh, well maybe the female is somebody I should talk to. (laughter)

Q: Yeah.

CHAMBLISS: Right. But I definitely got the feeling it was a very male oriented culture. In Ukraine I did not get as strong a feeling of this. In Ukraine it was fascinating, it was like, I mean everything was changing and there were a couple of, I remember there was something like a thirty something person we dealt with in the Ukrainian ministry, I would call it a development ministry but they had a different name. This gentleman was so competent and good to work with but unfortunately he died. I remember it was an accident in July. That was the only time I asked the State Department, State do you think it was really was an accident, because I wondered because he was so out there to move Ukraine to the Western model, much further and more responsive than the other people we dealt with who were much less secure in what they were doing. State said it really was an accident. There was also a lot of interest from the Hill on Ukraine. And Poland, when Poland changed I think we literally would spend doing nothing but answering phone calls from the American-Polish community from every state in the Union . That when I really began to appreciate the clout of the ethnic groups and let me tell you there are Poles in every state. (laughter)

Q: Yeah.

CHAMBLISS: The Armenians are in California and New Jersey, I learned where they are, right? (laughter)

Q: Well I remember when I was with the senior seminar at State Department I did a paper because as a consular officer on foreign consular operations in the United States.

CHAMBLISS: Oh that would have been fascinating.

Q: And I was in Chicago and I talked to the Polish consul general and he said you know my constituency is the largest Polish community outside of Warsaw.

CHAMBLISS: I remember some retired Polish general used to call, it was incredible. And then when we did a lot of work in Armenia and Georgia, that was an interesting duality to deal with. And I remember the guys calling from California you know really nice guys I loved them, they were writing, drafting, a constitution for the new Armenia. And there was a plane I remember hearing about. France has a lot Armenians too, and the plane service wasn't good into Armenia, so the California Armenians would charter a plane. They'd go to New Jersey to pick people, then they'd go to France and then go to Armenia and then they'd bring the plane back to Paris. Since there was very little fuel in Armenia, they would get enough fuel in Paris to get to Armenia and back to Paris.

Q: What was the role to change when you were doing this between the non-government workers issues, you know all sorts of non-government including doctors without frontiers, and everything else I mean, who were involved in some way in the same work you were -

CHAMBLISS: Yes there were.

Q: - just trying to help people -

CHAMBLISS: And we worked with them.

Q: - in rather difficult circumstances. How did you find dealing with them?

CHAMBLISS: Oh I loved dealing with the NGOs. The big ones of course World Vision is huge, it is everywhere, CARE, the Catholic Relief Service, Save the Children, I mean those are the big one, Mercy Corps, wonderful. In my early years, but by the 1990s when we were doing the Section 416(b) donations, those were done with a lot of private voluntary organizations. Also we did massive programming through the World Food Program which we also had a close working relationship with. So I found the PVO community excellent; I think they do amazing work and they do it on the ground in some very difficult and often dangerous places. Now the government-to-government relationships have almost totally ended except for some programs under Food for Progress which USDA is responsible for. PL 480 Title II the bulk of food aid, recently \$2 billion, is all with the PVOs and the World Food Program. And the Section 416(b) has now ended because we don't have food surpluses.

In the 1990s George McGovern and Bob Dole went into see President Clinton one day, this was when George McGovern was our ambassador to the food and agricultural agencies in Rome which includes the World Food Program. George McGovern and Bob Dole really created the domestic school feeding program. George McGovern gets to Rome thinking of how to end hunger, and he concludes that school feeding would be one way to help do this. So he and his buddy Bob Dole go see President Clinton and convince him that we need to push school feeding internationally. Bill Clinton agreed because he could access the funds of CCC; the Secretary of Agriculture was instructed to take \$300 million of CCC funds for this. So we created the McGovern-Dole School Feeding

Program, initially a pilot program with the World Food Program and PVOs. It is funded with USDA's CCC money so USDA is put in charge of it. And then eventually the Congress put it in the Farm Bill in the late 1990s, giving it permanent authority. At present the USG has three food aid programs including McGovern-Dole run by FAS, Food for Progress run by FAS, both relatively modest programs, and then the very large Title II program managed by AID.

Q: Yeah, of these various program which one gave you would you say gave you the most pleasure, you know what I mean, in other words excitement, satisfaction?

CHAMBLISS: Right, well I had a great job; I loved doing the food aid programs. It was fascinating doing the bilateral government-to-government ones. But the things that gave me the most satisfaction were the humanitarian development programs, working with the PVOs, doing the school feeding programs. It was working with George McGovern, to have a chance to work with and know George McGovern was incredible.

So I think the school feeding authority is very good and we were able to do some very creative things with the Food for Progress authority. As I said any good bureaucrat, and I considered myself a good bureaucrat, can take the authority Congress gives you and figure out to do what any given president wants. I think I was fairly good at doing that, some of it was useful and some of it probably not what I would have done. But such is not my decision; my job is to carry out the policy and that's what I did. But it was the work with the PVOs and the World Food Program that I really enjoyed.

When we were running the Section 416(b) program and it was very large. By that time we had wheat and rice in the program because some political things I'll come back to – but you know, there was a typhoon that hit Bangladesh and food was needed and we had the wheat. I could work with the World Food Program and we could quickly move it. So we could do things like that were good. Sometimes, and I now realize we probably did too much of it, there probably was a harmful impact in some cases particularly, I think I will just briefly – do we have a little more time, I would like to - ?

Q: Sure.

CHAMBLISS: Okay, let me talk about the Section 416(b) Program. As I said it was reauthorized in the 1980s and it provided dairy, and that was fine, it was a modest program, gave some milk to poor people; it was fine. But then, Dan Glickman who is really a wonderful human being, he was our secretary and the price of wheat was low and this is – Dan has talked about this himself before so I see no reason I shouldn't, because the price of wheat in Kansas and other places was low, Secretary Glickman and the White House and somebody at the White House decided well if we could just move more wheat under Food Aid we could raise the price wheat. Might have been before a Congressional election but I can't swear to that because I don't remember. We have very good lawyers as I said at the Department of Agriculture, so they - Secretary Glickman said is there a way? So the lawyers at USDA figured out that under the CCC Charter, which is a very broad flexible tool, there was a 5(f) provision. They determined that there were surplus

commodities, wheat initially, in the United States. Then if the CCC under the authority of 5(f) bought that commodity it immediately became legally, a surplus commodity which could be donated overseas. So Section 416(b) got very large because of course after we did wheat this is you know, this is the United States the agricultural sector, so then we had to include rice, we had to include corn. I forget how many products but we shipped large quantities. We called this 416(b) Special because it wasn't the original, it got to be huge.

It created – I think that's one reason food aid became so contentious in the Doha negotiations because we shipped such large quantities. AID worked with us and I'm sure a lot of AID people were very upset about this, State less so. State particularly liked it for the Mid-East; State thought it was just a peachy keen tool to use with some of our Mid-East countries. Now actually USDA tried to limit that because we were getting concerned about the disincentive impact, the market displacement aspects which we had responsibility for not doing. I remember there was some back and forth at that point but the political forces prevailed and we did a huge 416(b). Then commercial markets and the world economy really took off, the middle-class grew, the Chinese started buying lots, we don't have surpluses anymore, so that got rid of that program, I don't think it'll ever go back. But that was certainly one of the more fascinating experiences, it was a challenge, I'm not certain it was particularly morally or emotionally rewarding to me except for the fact that we could get it done. But that was a fascinating experience.

Q: But what about say Canada? Did Canada have a similar program or were they strictly commercial?

CHAMBLISS: Yes they had a food aid program. I remember the Canadians used to visit. I remember when we did the salmon some Canadians came and visited me and said Mary we're here to talk about programming salmon. The Canadian industry was pressuring them to do what we had done. And I said don't do it, don't do it, once a commodity is in the food aid program they never want to leave, don't do it and they didn't include salmon in their food aid donations.

But one interesting thing is the Europeans moved out of using commodities for their food aid programs to providing cash. It was part of some major changes they made in the 1990s in their agricultural sector support. So their food aid was provided in the form of cash not commodities. Most of the rest of the world soon followed, the Australians did, the New Zealanders did of course and Canada did fairly soon, they did it gradually. So now the United States is I believe, we'll come back to Japan and rice in a minute, the United States is really the only major donor that still provides commodities. Our Congress will provide funds for shipping the commodities mainly on US ships. The big internal debate is if you move to cash would the agricultural and shipping community walk away; they probably would. So recently we have about \$1.7 billion of Title II money coming through the agricultural appropriators who also appropriate money for the McGovern/Dole program, which is now up to \$200 million and then CCC just does what it does for Food for Progress, usually about \$300 - \$400 million in total costs.

But the interesting thing, what you are really talking about now is what is called local regional purchase, take cash, buy the commodities locally, which of course gives the local farmers a market and the rest of the world is pushing that. The Bush administration tried to get Congress to agree and Congress just wouldn't. At the same time that the agricultural community wouldn't allow it under Title II, the foreign assistance development community and the administration both the Bush and continuing with the Obama, and got \$300 million in the AID account for local regional purchase which is why I said \$2 Billion for food aid, the \$1.7million in Title II and the \$0.3 million in the AID account.

Whether or not over time there will be a shift for the U.S. Government to provide cash not commodities, I don't know. The agricultural community will object and also 75% of U.S. food aid commodities are supposed to go on U.S. ships. So in addition to the commodity pressures you have an extremely active, powerful maritime industry, both the ship owners and the longshoremen and the guys who work on the ships, powerful unions; in fact when Ronald Reagan was elected, all of us who didn't particularly like the maritime subsidy which is what this is said great, Ronald Reagan, maybe we can change this. Turned out that the only union that had endorsed Ronald Reagan was those guys who did the ships (laughter) so we quickly learned well forget that idea and no one's tackled it since. I remember saying what do you mean a union endorsed Ronald Reagan, said yup and it was that one so you leave it alone.

Q: Well the American ships, you know speaking as a consular officer, have responsibility for seamen and shipping.

CHAMBLISS: Sure, of course.

Q: The American shipping had just about dried up.

CHAMBLISS: Well, that's why they particularly cared about food aid, it has to be an American flag; I don't even know who owns the ships any more I mean who can tell.

Q: Well Europeans, particularly France, Germany and Great Britain, have heavily subsidized agricultural sectors which –

CHAMBLISS: Yes the Common Agriculture Policy in the EU.

Q: - negotiations with our, we try to break that up although we subsidize too. But I would think they would be producing large surpluses.

CHAMBLISS: Somehow they changed it, again you need an expert that understands the European agricultural sector which I don't but somehow the EU made that transition and I think changed their policies significantly. So they export their surpluses through other means, perhaps more like our commercial export credit guaranteed program. They will argue they don't subsidize as much, and that may be true, I can't make a judgment. I do remember when New Zealand went cold turkey off subsidy. So New Zealand is the only

country that doesn't subsidize at all.

But clearly and I can't remember, at one time I thought I understood how the EU did that trade-off, the aggies got something else for giving up having their surplus commodities being used as food aid. But I don't remember the trade-off, but they did it about mid to late 1990s and then of course in Doha they were all over us and who knows what will ever happen with that endeavor. But the food aid became much more contentious so I ended up going to Geneva and other places to explain the US food aid authorities. In Uruguay trade negotiations food aid was an afterthought but in the Doha discussions it has been a part of the overall negotiations..

Q: Well tell me, we stopped at, but tell me, did you get involved with the GMF, genetically modified - ?

CHAMBLISS: Genetically modified –

Q: - food, these are –

CHAMBLISS: That became contentious in the late 1990s. It hit really more the Title II programs because there soybean oil is a key component a Title II food basket and soy beans in America are GMO so therefore soy bean oil is GMO. Wheat is not a GMO commodity and as I said wheat was the major product in USG food aid programs. I think the industry is beginning to develop GMO wheat but not yet. I would expect at sometime there will be GMO wheat. Corn which can be GMO became contentious; particularly I remember the biggest flak was out of Sub-Sahara Africa. The Europeans put pressure on the Africans not to accept GMOs and the African governments needed to make their own decision. So the U.S. government and the World Food Program particularly had to deal with this because of course they were getting corn and corn products from us and other donors. Mostly this affected the World Food Program and their position was to comply with the importing country's requirements. So it's been contentious.

Zambia at one time refused to receive US corn donated to the World Food Program. This was in the last Southern Africa drought, and Zambia refused to take Title II maize. I'm not sure what AID did but they were able to get the food aid to where it was needed. But Sub-Saharan Africa has been probably the most difficult region and it has been primarily in the Title II program. But of course the U.S. government does not provide a commodity that another country will not accept so it's an educational process. For example Kenya has its own research institute and the Kenyans are going back and forth a lot about GMOs. South Africa plants GMO crops, Brazil does of course too, even though I don't know if they have acknowledged it yet or not. But you do have GMO maize in South Africa which of course supplies all of southern Africa. So yes it is contentious, one time it was very contentious, it still is but not as much so. The systems have learned to work around the issue, private voluntary organizations have learned to deal with it, the World Food Program has learned to deal with it. But you know for a while the US was accused for dumping frankenfood and that kind of stuff.

Of course it's still a huge battle, now the Europeans still won't accept it although I think Poland is looking at a GMO potato. India does Bt GMO cotton but they have recently refused to do a GMO vegetable product; Chinese I think last I looked they were working on a GMO rice so it's just all over the map and food aid has to meet the same requirements as any other food import. As I recall Zambia seemed to be the most hostile to GMO at one time, but I'm not sure why.

Q: Well, some of these African countries, really their leaders, have all you know, it's about the same time the South African president Mbeki felt there was no such thing as AIDs or something like that.

CHAMBLISS: Right and they've moved beyond that; I don't think any of the Africans except Mbeki ever felt like that.

Q: Yeah.

CHAMBLISS: He got on that kick for some reason

Q: So you get these things -

CHAMBLISS: But of course Africa has changed so much in the last 10 years, I mean the African governments, think about Ghana, Malawi doing really well, Tanzania, Mozambique, I mean there are countries that are just making amazing positive changes that American's don't pay any attention to.

Q: Well during the time you were there what were you seeing as sort of agricultural changes that were happening in the world?

CHAMBLISS: Well for one the growth of Brazil; Brazil became a huge agriculture producer. But I think the most dynamic thing, I am going to separate it into two different things. In the developed commercial world was the increasing demand out of China and India and their growing middle classes. It really does make a difference which is of course why you had the food price hike in 2008. So I think that makes a fundamental change and there is a lot of attention now as to how the world is going to produce for the presumably nine billion of us that are going to be here in 2050; it's going to be a challenge. So there's a lot more attention I think on the productivity and the marketing and the demand. I mean once people have more money they'll eat more protein, they eat more meat, dairy and other higher value foods. So I think that's a huge change in the agricultural sector.

When I first started at FAS if the agricultural exports hit I don't know, some relatively modest number, and now agricultural exports are going to be I think, no it can't be a hundred billion, anyway it's grown huge, so the export commercial trade just keeps growing. The other phenomena are the fact that there are successes in the developing world. The world is now more urban so that a huge change and the developing countries even though they struggle and some are still desperately poor many are experiencing

good positive economic growth. Now the development community is looking at how to create development for the last group, the so-called bottom billion. These are the people at the end of the road and in the worse urban slums and what's the dynamic as to how to get those people to get to have some economic growth and get that spiral upward because if you can start it, it will grow but you've got to start it – China did, India does to a large extent.

So I think the dynamics of urbanization, the dynamics of productivity and the realization of the marketing aspect, you've got to produce, then you've got to move your product, you've got to process it, and you've got to get it to somebody who can purchase it. So I think those are the dynamics that have changed and are positive if you think about it.

Q: Well what about you mentioned protein; were, I always think of protein of being beef and stuff like that but –

CHAMBLISS: Dairy, fish –

Q: - dairy, where does, did you see the United States still being a major player or were you seeing maybe its productivity diminishing or anything like that?

CHAMBLISS: No, no, I think it will continue because we do have that great research capability partly of USDA as well as the land grant colleges. Also our commercial firms like ADM and Cargill, all the have their own research plus all the fertilizer and the chemicals businesses have their research capabilities. But what will be interesting is since these companies are global – not only do you have more attention being focused on creating research for productivity, improving protein, improving vitamins there are also some efforts in growing capability of indigenous research capabilities. The Chinese research is as good as ours and the Indian and the Africans are getting there and the Latin Americans also.

In this country the Agricultural Research Service has been key to success in agriculture. Now a new office created at USDA, NIFA (National Institute of Food and Agriculture) is being modeled on the National Institute of Health, so I think you will see some more focus on basic or pure research. So I think you can continue to see the U.S. being very productive. But I think the U.S. companies are going to also invest in Brazil, in Australia and China. There will be growth in the knowledge base which the U.S. will benefit from but other countries will also benefit from too.

Q: For example, you mentioned the growth of Brazil, did you feel Brazil was at all a competitor - ?

CHAMBLISS: Oh yes.

Q: - but –

CHAMBLISS: In terms of the commercial markets it's a competitor.

Q: Commercial but for your –

CHAMBLISS: But for food aid not so much although the Brazilians – northeast Brazil probably has as much poverty as anybody for a while. It was interesting, this must have been under the current George Bush, USDA staff that manage the domestic feeding programs went to Brazil and helped them design their domestic feeding program. So Brazil has done a really good job addressing their domestic hunger nutritional needs.

Now you are beginning to see Brazil, for years I argued they should donate to the World Food Program, which I think they do modestly. But you are beginning to see them to play a more traditional donor role. I know particularly, and this does make sense, in the Portuguese speaking parts of Africa you are beginning to see the Brazilians doing some more development, all kinds of things, not food aid, but technical assistance. And the Chinese and Indians are also playing a donor role in many poor countries.

Q: How, we have our foreign aid cultural service, did any other countries have the equivalent to this?

CHAMBLISS: Well, many have agricultural attachés. I mean there are a lot of foreign agricultural attachés that FAS works with. I don't know enough about their structure to know if they have cultural services. I can't answer that question. Some of our attachés, Alan would know, Mattie would know, some of the people that served overseas. I just assumed large countries have similar structures. I'm familiar with the Canadians because I've negotiated with them a lot.

Once the Canadian decided to provide all their food aid in the form of cash it was CITA, the Canadian International Development Agency, that had the relationships. But again, we would go to international meetings, I'm thinking about the World Food Program, and just like U.S. Government's delegation with AID, State and USDA, the Canadians would have been CITA, I don't think they have any Foreign Service people there, CITA and Agriculture. So there was some comparability, I don't know enough about the structures. But all the major agricultural producers run programs that compete with FAS's marketing programs.

I think the only institutions that have agricultural analytical and statistical information are basically FAS and FAO. So I don't think any other country has attachés like we do checking the Chinese production, the Russian production, I'm not aware that others did that, although – I'm just not aware that they did.

Q: Well for a long time and maybe I'm wrong, our agricultural attachés, particularly those in the Soviet Union, were checking on how the crop, how basically the wheat and corn crop –

CHAMBLISS: Of course.

Q: - so we could figure out how much aid, how much we could sell.

CHAMBLISS: Right. They had two roles: really to figure out what world production because FAS is part of the U.S. Government and there are parts of the U.S. Government that want to know what food is available in certain countries. So clearly FAS collects the production supply and demand information that is published periodically. When USDA publishes global production and trade data through its World Board a lot of people are waiting. The information is very closely held because of its potential affect on global market. So it's not only collecting that information because of the commercial marketing opportunities to be identified, FAS also services the State Department, the National Security Council, a whole host of requirements for basic information on agriculture.

So yes for Russia, China, a number of countries in the Mid-East, one wants to know about the agricultural supply and demand situation because it can have political implications. When the food price hike hit in 2008 there were some governments that got shaky and some governments snapped on export controls, which made things worse. We couldn't convince them not to, so these actions exacerbated tensions and instability. A lot of work is done on questions of poverty, including malnutrition, lack of food, instability, how does all of that relate, and FAS has a voice and a role in providing information and analysis on these issues..

Q: Did you, how did you find recruiting into the Foreign Agricultural Service?

CHAMBLISS: It always was good because kids wanted to get into the Foreign Service and one way in is through FAS. So generally we got really good people. We never had any problems recruiting, if we could get approved from OMB to hire people but that's a different question. Now at one time we had a really good outreach effort to go to various colleges all around the country and that kind of thing helped too. But we've never had any trouble, people wanted to go overseas.

Q: Were you getting farm boys and farm girls?

CHAMBLISS: Well there was a bias, like I said for a while FAS wanted people who had agricultural economics degrees, not necessarily agronomy. But that was not always the case. I'm thinking my degrees are in economics and government. So yea there was often a tendency to like agricultural economists. Alan Mustard is an agricultural economist, and you tend to have a lot of those.

Q: How about with Congress, what were your relations with Congress?

CHAMBLISS: One of the things I learned when I moved over to the IDCA and I really appreciated was that AID particularly, State a little bit, but AID particularly has no natural constituency on the Hill. I had come out of the agriculture community so I often talked to agricultural appropriation staff. So there were good working relationships with Hill staff. There was not the same close relationship in AID or State – the formal legislative offices tended to have such working relationships, but not so much other staff.

When I went back to USD it was the same thing. I always worked very closely with both the Senate Agricultural Committee staff and the Agricultural Appropriations staff.

In the House Ag Committee to some extent same thing, particularly some of the people you develop relationships, and even the House Foreign Affairs because in the House food aid jurisdiction is shared between the Agricultural Committee and the International Relations Committee. And on the House side it's the Ag people who appropriate all the food aid money despite the shared authorization. Agriculture was a different world; we were used to dealing with the trade and with various political pressures. I always had ongoing, continuous relationships with the key staff because it's the key staff people that matter.

Q: Did you find, were there any, did you have to deal with problems of agricultural attachés and various emphases, their relations there or not, I would think this would not be a very – it's not contentious the way you might say a military or CIA representative would be.

CHAMBLISS: No I'm not aware that there were. I'm sure there were some differences, again sometimes it's a function of personalities, but the attaché and the State Department and AID people generally worked together. I always thought I always had very good working relationships with AID, with State folks.

Q: I would have thought I mean, it certainly made sense that you know in bureaucracies
—

CHAMBLISS: Yes but I didn't have a lot of patience with such turf battles. I'm sorry I don't do that crap and I don't have a lot of patience with it and people knew I didn't so if it was taking place – You know my position was we all got paid by the same people and we all work for the same government, the same president, the same whatever and I really don't have much patience with that so my guess is that if there were any conflicts maybe people didn't always tell me. But I wasn't aware of any and I always thought we had good relationships.

Q: Well except for the personality problems –

CHAMBLISS: Right because those happen and there isn't much you can do.

Q: - I wouldn't imagine there would be.

CHAMBLISS: No, it shouldn't happen but it does..

Q: Sometimes you're, I mean _____ you're almost always on the same team really going, in intelligence and defense matters sometimes –

CHAMBLISS: It may be a little different

Q: - you can be quite divergent –

CHAMBLISS: Right.

Q: - on what to do.

CHAMBLISS: But for the things we were doing, certainly for the responsibilities I had, generally there was agreement on the goals. And also USDA up until very recently has been basically bipartisan too. So Congress was bipartisan, the Aggies hang together, that's why they get so much money. So I always had good relationships with all of our under secretaries, republican or democrat, with many of the secretaries, you know, it just didn't matter.

Q: My only real contact with the agriculture Department personally was a very bad earthquake in Skopje, Yugoslavia, this is back in 1963 –

CHAMBLISS: Oh, long ago.

Q: - and Orville Freeman happened to be on a tour and so I was translating very poorly I might add, for him when he came down to take a look at it. But that's a touch of history.

CHAMBLISS: We had some wonderful secretaries at USDA and again they have all been interesting and good to work with and it didn't - again, my job was to carry out their policies, once they made their policies; that's what I did.

Q: Did you sort of have a map of the world and you know with little sort of hot spots like Ethiopia which has perpetual droughts and the I mean but particularly like Ethiopia and it has to be other countries I guess –

CHAMBLISS: Well it varies with the dynamics of the time. In the 1970s it was Southeast Asia, lots of attention there. There's always concern about some African countries but now many are doing very well, Mali and a number of countries like Ghana and Mozambique for example, but not all. You always worry about the drought in southern Africa because that comes periodically, Ethiopia you just despair, you wonder what in the world happens there and Haiti, you always worry about, and sometimes Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador. At one time those were countries that you watched and worried about. So there is some of that sort of thing, now of course Afghanistan, Iraq, less so. So it sort of depends upon the political dynamics, the weather. one of the great things about FAS is that the agency had really good people watching the weather as does AID, their early warning activities so you have an awareness of what might be problems. Certain weather patterns you watch, for example if El Nino comes you know to watch certain areas and you are probably going to have a drought at a certain time in southern Africa so you know, that sort of thing. So yes there are certain areas, certainly if you're at AID, managing Title II, you always worry about Ethiopia, you always worry about southern Africa, you always worry about Haiti.

We used to, in setting through the Title II budget, thinking of Haiti, you know we always used to try to, AID did and we did working with them, we'd always try to save a little money for what we called the hurricane season because you knew it was going to come and would probably hit the Caribbean and the Central America countries. And it was going to come late in the U.S. Government fiscal year so you had to be certain you had funds available then. There are those sorts of things that if you are responsible for the operations and the programming, you just build into your thinking because you just know from experience it is going to happen.

Q: Yeah. Really what a fascinating job –

CHAMBLISS: Oh I loved it, some days I thought I should have paid them. Well it was wonderful I would just like to say and I met some wonderful people. When I think now about the experience, it was – I remember there was a closed city in Russia when it was the Soviet Union, people couldn't leave the city, the Soviet Union collapsed, and now the closed city was open. I remember the scientists came, I remember there was a woman I can't remember her name now, and they didn't have enough food and they didn't know how to grow things. There were definitely not farmers – and we provided some food aid for that city. But you know you think about that, all of a sudden there are Russian scientists out of a closed city in the Soviet Union in my office talking about their struggle and how they will live with –

Q: And when you talk about a closed city it means it's a scientific –

CHAMBLISS: Yes, of course -

Q: - center I mean because it's closed –

CHAMBLISS: Right -

Q: - because it's –

CHAMBLISS: Right, but these were like physicists, they didn't know how to grow food, they didn't know.

Q: I was thinking (laughter) of my son who said you know he was transported back to a different era earlier and they say let's use your expertise he said, well I can show them how to turn a light on and off, but I would know why or how.

CHAMBLISS: I know, it was fascinating, when I think of how it was a wonderful experience and I loved it, it was great. I was most fortunate.

Q: Okay well I want to thank you very much

CHAMBLISS: This has been most interesting.

End of interview