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[Note: This interview was not edited by Mr. Melaven prior to his death.]

Q: Let's start out with a little thumbnail sketch of your career.

MELAVEN: I did my undergraduate work at the University of Vermont and subsequently I had a scholarship to Brown University where I got a master's degree in political science. I took the exams for what was then called the management intern program.

Q: What year was it?

MELAVEN: This was 1952.

Q: All right, we will come back to that.

MELAVEN: So I was with the Defense Department both in Washington and overseas in Germany and when I returned I worked with defense again. Then a friend called me and asked if I would be interested in the Foreign Service and interested in AID (U.S. Agency for International Development)? I was very much interested and I initially went into USAID's international training division and was there for about five years.

Q: Where were your posts?

MELAVEN: My posts overseas were in Bolivia for about five years; in Peru three years; five years in Nicaragua; and in Burkina Faso, which used to be the old Republic of Upper Volta, for about four years, I believe, and finally Rwanda for some three years. I retired at that point but worked with the United Nations as a volunteer for a couple of years in Mauritania. That was an interesting experience as well.

Q: Well, let's go back to the beginning. Where did you grow up? Tell us about your early education, particularly bringing out those things that suggest why you got into international affairs.

MELAVEN: I was born in Vermont. My parents were dairy and poultry farmers and it was sort of rough sledding in the '30s and '40s but we managed to make a basic living

but not too much more than that at the time. I think I was always interested in foreign countries. I particularly liked some of the books and the movies that dealt with foreign correspondents, and books like Halliburton's books on the Far East and others. So I was always interested in getting into the Foreign Service. I didn't know just how to do it.

Q: Did your schooling spark your interest?

MELAVEN: It did indeed. I tried to take as many courses as I could in foreign languages and also in political science and international affairs. I decided I was very interested in Roosevelt and at Brown I wrote my master's thesis on Roosevelt and the League of Nations issue. I did the research for that at the library at Hyde Park, which was an interesting experience for me. So I was very, very interested in that field. At that point I wanted to get into government and I had come to the conclusion, which may have been wrong, I couldn't even try for the foreign service exam but I would take the management intern exam, and I was successful on that.

Q: Were there any professors who had a special interest?

MELAVEN: They encouraged me to apply for government work. I think they were all telling me how difficult the Foreign Service exam would be. When I think back, I should have taken it at that time. I may have been more qualified than I thought.

Q: After you finished your college at Brown where did you go from there?

MELAVEN: I took the exams, the management intern test which had written and oral components and I went up to Dartmouth College for the orals. Then I went to Washington and worked first for the Navy Department.

Q: When you went there, you were given several options of agencies to go to, I think.

MELAVEN: That's right. It was a good program at that time. I don't know whether they still have it now. I think they have it but it has changed rather completely. Then it was really quite a competitive exam. I mean, there were written exams first and then the oral exams by panels of examiners that went around the country.

Q: But you selected the Department of Defense?

MELAVEN: I did, one, because they could come through right away and I needed to go to work.

Q: What did they offer you?

MELAVEN: Well, they wanted me to come in as a management intern where I would have exposure for about a year to four or five different fields, I mean, areas of management, such as budget and personnel management, supply management, all things in the administrative area and I finally decided that budget management was the most

interesting for me and I enjoyed it. After three years I got a chance to go overseas. I transferred to the Department of Army and went to Germany as a budget analyst.

Q: This was what year?

MELAVEN: In 1955.

Q: Where were you in Germany?

MELAVEN: I was in Karlsruhe on the Rhine there and it was the headquarters for the Army dependents' schools of Europe.

Q: What were you?

MELAVEN: I was the budget officer.

Q: Budget officer for?

MELAVEN: For the system.

Q: For the whole army system?

MELAVEN: The army system, yes. I think at that time they had about 60,000 kids or so in the schools, the dependents' schools, yes. I would have to check that. It may be even more. They had tremendous levels of troops over there then so it was quite an undertaking, an interesting undertaking.

Q: Did you get involved in German society at all?

MELAVEN: Yes, I had lots of German friends, and I had studied German in college as sort of a second language for the master's degree.

Q: And you were there three years?

MELAVEN: I was there three years, yes.

Q: And then what happened?

MELAVEN: Well, then the Navy Department wrote me, would I be interested in coming back to work in the comptroller's office for the Navy, and I said I would indeed. Part of the reason was, you may recall, in those days the civil service regulations were quite different and I was always being vulnerable to being bumped because I was not a veteran. There was always a veteran in Tokyo or someplace whose job would be abolished and he would immediately be offered mine. That was one of the reasons why I decided I wanted to go into Foreign Service because there was more stability, if you're going to remain in government employment.

Q: How did that come about?

MELAVEN: Well, a friend of mine with whom I had worked in the Navy Department was with AID and he was resigning his position in the international training division which concentrated on training people in all fields, but management in particular. He said he was leaving and asked if I would be interested. I had a number of interviews there and was selected. I stayed there for about four years. It was an interesting experience.

Q: And you were then still a civil servant.

MELAVEN: A civil servant, yes.

Q: What were the training programs you were responsible for?

MELAVEN: All types. I did some of the work myself. I think today it is contracted out. I used to do workshops on budget procedures for budget officers who came in from overseas and I did a lot of work with students from particular countries in which we had a great interest such as Indonesia and I would monitor their progress, particularly those working towards a Ph.D. to see if I could make some arrangements to get them extra help with their thesis work.

Q: For yourself?

MELAVEN: No, no, for them.

Q: These were people who were working towards their Ph.D.?

MELAVEN: Yes. I think there was a particular problem; maybe this isn't of interest but you had a lot of foreign students who were doing their dissertations and their professors would just say, "Look, we really can't spend the detailed time on editing these. They are doing very well but they've got to have some help with standard English and so on." We were able to work out a legal arrangement to provide some help.

Q: Are there any students that stand out in your mind?

MELAVEN: Yes, indeed. I did keep in touch with a number of them but I have lost track of them over the years. Some of them did become quite prominent in the administrative field in their home governments.

Q: Any views about the training program at that time?

MELAVEN: I thought it was basically quite good. I think it was useful and the foreign students certainly needed all types of training. For example, when the African countries were beginning to gain their independence, we would get teams of officials who really had no training whatsoever occupying these positions and we would try to find French-

speaking professors and arrange courses for them. I think it was helpful. There was a little bit on ethics, a little bit on management and it was good to show them that we were interested in their progress and to convey what we thought a civil servant should be doing.

Q: How long of a time did they have?

MELAVEN: A tremendous variation. I mean, there could be senior officials that might come for just a couple of weeks and we would try to get them into the Bureau of the Budget, OMB as it's now called, and into other offices. Particularly state governments were very helpful on this. Some of them had regular academic programs, and we also contracted with universities or individuals to set up special courses, particularly in the case of Zaire. I don't know whether you were involved with Africa at that time.

Q: What year was this?

MELAVEN: This was 1960 to 1964.

Q: I was involved.

Okay, then your next assignment.

MELAVEN: My next assignment was in Bolivia as the public administration adviser.

Q: How did that come about?

MELAVEN: Again I think someone called me and said, you have a lot of background in public administration and courses and so forth. Would you be interested? And I had also been giving courses in Washington so I said, sure. That would be interesting. I had a problem of which you may be aware, of having had polio as a kid and in those days there was no legislation on the books on people with disabilities and it was very hard to get medical approval. I was always turned down and then they finally to give a temporary waiver. After a year they gave me full clearance for worldwide service and I think actually I was less sick over the years than anybody else. But they had a different attitude in those days and so you felt you were really making a bit of progress for everybody. I had to appeal and demonstrate I could do this, I can do this.

Q: However, you went off to?

MELAVEN: I went off to Bolivia, yes, in 1964.

Q: Had you studied Spanish?

MELAVEN: No I hadn't at that point. They wanted me so fast they didn't have time but I did take courses and later at the end of the tour and before I came back for a second tour, I went through a formal course in Spanish, which was quite good.

Q: What was the situation in Bolivia when you arrived there?

MELAVEN: Well, I think two weeks after I arrived, we had a revolution. I remember it because I had a maid by that time and in my apartment and the electricity was gone, as you might expect, and everything else was gone and she was cooking on a local stove, which was a little gas-type apparatus and she said, "Oh well, you know, in a few hours this will be a over so don't worry about it."

Bolivia was going through lots of problems, as you know only too well the history of the country, and it had a government of the Nationalist Revolutionary Movement (MNR). They had a president who was being evicted and who was succeeded by Barrientos, quite a prominent leader for a number years until he died in a helicopter accident.

Bolivia was a very poor country. We were trying to help in public administration, with a big customs program. Revenue for the government was almost entirely from customs and we were setting up a new warehouse for the customs goods and we were trying to train government agents. We worked in conjunction with the British because they had designed the original customs systems in the 1890s and the procedures were still in effect. We cooperated with them and it actually worked out fairly well. The rest of the public administration programs were in fields such as personnel, and we also had an Institute of Public Administration, a little institute which gave courses and then we had a taxation program. We also brought an IRS team in and they worked very well.

Q: Was there a group of you working on public administration?

MELAVEN: Yes. I think there were three or four direct hires and lots of contractors, maybe 20 people on contract.

Q: That's a good sized group.

MELAVEN: It was a good size. We had a big fiscal reform project which was trying to design a new budget system for the government; and we had the taxation project which did manage to increase somewhat the revenues; and we had a tax policy group which tried to look at the rates and so forth, aside from the administration. All in all, it was an interesting program, and I think we did fairly well given the circumstances.

Q: And the impact of the program?

MELAVEN: I would say it was positive. I think, for some of those things maybe 20 years later you would know whether or not we were really successful. We tried to, for example in personnel management – an extremely difficult area in a less developed country – to convey the idea that it would be nice to set up standards for jobs rather than just giving them to a member of the party but this was hard to do.

Q: You were trying to introduce a merit system?

MELAVEN: A merit system of sorts, yes.

Q: How did you find working with the Bolivian government system?

MELAVEN: They were very pleasant and always very agreeable. I enjoyed working with them. Eventually my Spanish was reasonably good but we had members on the team who had good Spanish so I think it worked out. It was good working with the officials of the government.

Q: What kind of programs did USAID have other than administration?

MELAVEN: Actually, this was directly related to myself because after I had been there a year the director asked if I would assume overall responsibility for all the technical assistance programs, so I was an assistant director then and we had the road programs, education programs, and agriculture programs. At that time you know, the design of programs was quite different. Our program office could consider any type of project, and we were very heavily involved in infrastructure; we were involved in railroads; we were involved in airlines as well as in the mining sector, specifically Comibol, the organization that had taken over from the tin barons. I found this very stimulating. I enjoyed this and was sort of sad when the agency decided to leave infrastructure projects largely to the international agencies. I understand the decision but it wasn't quite as interesting.

Q: Do you know what the scale of the program was?

MELAVEN: I don't have the figure but it was a very sizable program because of the assistance to the mining sector and we had some mining specialists who came in. Likewise, the road program was a huge program which was very important for the development of the country. We also had a project I liked so much at that time. Together with the government, we managed to get through a feasibility study loan and that enabled us in effect to design programs and look at sectors and decide what should be done for a specific program. As a result, the government had something concrete to present either to ourselves or to one of the other international donors. This worked I think, very well although once in awhile they would come out with a feasibility study that would be totally negative on what might be a pet project of the government. Then they would say, we don't really want to pay for this now -- meaning pay for the study under the loan but we would reply well, you really don't have an alternative. You signed the loan agreements, according to which you have to pay for this.

Q: Did the Bolivians have some reservation about filing for a feasibility study?

MELAVEN: They did. But I think they saw eventually that this was a very worthwhile effort so I liked that. I also liked the community development program that we had.

Q: What were you doing on that?

MELAVEN: Well, we were trying to, you know, o come up with different programs. You have all these various standard types of agricultural programs, of technical assistance and extension programs and so on. But, when you're dealing with a country where 90% or 95% of the campesinos are farmers and they do not read or write, you need a different type of program rather than the normal technical or extension type of program.

Q: What's totally different?

MELAVEN: What was different? Well, we tried to work at the village level with a program that was tied in closely to the Peace Corps and I think this worked; it was stimulating in the places where you could have it.

Q: What were the main things you were seeing?

MELAVEN: Oh, the work ranged from wells to little irrigation projects, anything in that area to improve the standard of life of the community.

Q: Was it countrywide or?

MELAVEN: It was supposed to be but we had, as would be true for any program of that type, some real problems. We had lots of problems.

Q: What, for example?

MELAVEN: Well, one of the problems was that we had, provided this as part of a loan. I always thought it really should have been a grant but there was nothing I could do about it but that made it doubly difficult, although I tend to believe that, as a friend of mine used to say, a loan is a grant in disguise. It really isn't that much different, when you are paying 2% interest or something like that. This is really about as close to a grant as a loan could be.

Q: What do you think the impact was over time or was at that time?

MELAVEN: Well, I think it was. We went through a little series of revolutions at that time and once we had co-presidents, which shall we say, was an interesting situation. Two generals were co-presidents and eventually one overthrew the other, but I think we went through that period too. Do you remember when we had the problem of recognition of a new government? Fortunately we no longer have that problem.

Q: What was the problem?

MELAVEN: Well, the problem was that you really couldn't deal with a government until Washington had formally recognized the new regime. We kept having new governments all the time and we were not supposed to meet with them but finally we resorted to informal arrangements where we would drop in for coffee at a café and, oh, "Guess who's here?" So we did have some discussions.

Q: Did this happen several times?

MELAVEN: There were a good number of revolutions or changes of leaders in the government, yes. As I said, there was a revolution two weeks after I arrived and then there were co-presidents and then the two became one and then finally one leader was killed and later they did have an election and another leader was elected, and there was a certain degree of stability for a while.

Q: Were you doing any work on democracy which became rather more popular?

MELAVEN: We were not at that time, no. That came later.

Q: Government reforms.

MELAVEN: It was government reform, yes, in terms of establishing more standards in the area of public administration.

Q: Were the governments pretty effective?

MELAVEN: I think they tried, I think some of them tried. It was a very, very difficult time for a minister. You would go to his office and there would be a couple of hundred people waiting outside to see him and mostly that wanted some special letter or employment for their son or something of the sort. They had real problems.

Q: Were there any special crises or issues or something that you experienced or were involved in? Special events that you were personally involved in?

MELAVEN: Well, the revolutions were a memorable experience but I think you learned to accept those and you learned to stay home and tell your people to stay home until the situation improved.

Q: Was there violence?

MELAVEN: Yes. I think in the city of La Paz perhaps there was some, with 30 or so people killed or wounded, but if you stayed off the streets and minded your own business as a foreigner you probably were not in danger.

Q: They weren't attacking the Americans or foreigners, were they?

MELAVEN: No. It was a problem more of asking people to stay home. Some would want to leave. I remember one lady who kept calling me. She wanted to be evacuated from the country right then and there. We couldn't even get to the airport.

Q: Well, you were covering this whole assistance program which was very broad.

MELAVEN: Yes. It was a broad program and we had a big loan program so they were really combined in a sense. We did both but were moving more towards the loans because that was the direction of the agency at the time.

Q: Did you have any involvement with the embassy?

MELAVEN: Indeed. We had a very good career ambassador and it was a pleasure to work under him.

Q: Did you get the sense that there were political pushes from the embassy to do things or not to do things?

MELAVEN: I think the ambassador that we had during most of my career in Bolivia was knowledgeable about Latin America and its problems. There would be some pressure but not undue pressure. Fortunately, we had some of the best mission directors; Irving Tragen who was actually a State officer but had worked most of his career with AID was extremely good, extremely competent, and he had very good relations with the ambassador.

Q: Was there anything else about your experience in Bolivia?

MELAVEN: No, I don't think so. I enjoyed it; I appreciated it and admired the country. I think I learned to do some things. I think perhaps I learned more in Peru in a way.

Q: Your next assignment after Bolivia?

MELAVEN: I was sent to the Maxwell School at Syracuse. That was 1969 to 1970.

Q: How did that come through?

MELAVEN: Well, I had an academic year off to study economics and public administration. Actually, I decided while I was there I might as well get another master's degree in public administration.

Q: Did you write a thesis?

MELAVEN: That did not require a thesis. I was happy. They told me that I had enough credits to apply toward a doctorate, but I said, "I just can't envision myself, having already spent so much time on the master's thesis, writing a doctoral dissertation and having it hang over me for the next 10 years or whatever it would take if I were working at the same time."

Q: What stood out in your experience at Maxwell?

MELAVEN: This happened to be the year that there were incursion into Cambodia, and actually the university closed down at one point. U.S. troops went into Cambodia. That was in 1970 and universities across the nation closed or they closed early.

Q: Student opposition?

MELAVEN: Student opposition, yes. In Syracuse as in many places, students took over the administration building and they occupied it for, I think, a couple of months toward the end of the year.

Q: And so it closed down?

MELAVEN: We were given various alternatives. I obviously did not riot as a government employee. I wanted to be an observer of what was going on and I would usually attend some of the sessions. I was interested in how the riots were handled and it was a frightening experience in a way, but we were given an alternative; we could either complete the courses or we could write a little thesis or something. I decided I would complete the courses.

Q: There was still instruction going on?

MELAVEN: There was some, some, particularly in the graduate school, graduate programs, yes.

Q: Any part of the graduate program that you specialized in?

MELAVEN: Well, I am sure you are familiar with Jesse Burkhead, a brilliant man in the field of budgeting, and I thought Maxwell was a particularly good program. I liked that.

Q: Then that was your specialization?

MELAVEN: In a sense, at least as a hobby. I didn't work on it very much.

Q: Well, what happened then after you? That was a whole year, right?

MELAVEN: That was a year program, at the end of which I went to Peru as the public administration adviser and also served in effect as assistant mission director during an extremely peculiar period. There had been a military coup in Peru and the president, Belaúnde had been overthrown, and he had been one of the leading lights of Latin America. There was great feeling that this was a disaster for the country and it was decided that we would show our displeasure by effectively shutting down our projects one by one. In turn the Peruvians slowed down disbursements. They just weren't ready to sign additional sections of the loan that would normally come up for renewal. It made for a very difficult situation. And then there was a turnaround and it was a problem to get those projects going again. In the meantime we had sort of antagonized everyone on the Peruvian side and this was not an easy situation.

Q: What were the reasons for the turnaround?

MELAVEN: For one thing they had this disastrous earthquake with some 50,000 people killed in the Ancash and La Libertad regions and this was a tremendous disaster for the country. There was a feeling that even though it was a military government we should work closely with them. Mrs. Nixon came down to visit and our government wanted to be sure that we were involved in projects and so forth. So a lot of money of loans and grants were dedicated for the projects.

Q: You were involved in the disaster assistance?

MELAVEN: I had the responsibility for the coordination of the program.

Q: What did that involve?

MELAVEN: It involved working with the Peruvian government. We had a number of grant and loan projects. We were particularly involved with housing projects in the Callejon de Huaylas. It was a section of a valley where literally a part of a mountain broke off and started this great landslide which covered a town of some 20,000 people, just covered the whole town. And there were similar developments elsewhere. Most of the housing in the area had been destroyed. We did bring in a lot of prefab housing which really did quite well and we had a hard time making sure that it was used properly but we did I think reasonably well. We had lots of monitors and so forth for these projects.

Q: Was there a lot of the typical disaster relief business of food?

MELAVEN: Yes, food and so on.

Q: Special teams?

MELAVEN: Special teams all over the place, yes.

Q: Were you overseeing all this?

MELAVEN: Yes, working on that.

Q: What was the main problem that you had?

MELAVEN: Everything. Things that were really needed didn't arrive at the right time and there were other problems too. There was a tremendous amount of goodwill on the part of the American people and there were all these groups that in the U.S. that developed that wanted to give contribute and some of them would collect clothes but we had to pay for ships to bring these down, shiploads of things. It was very difficult and finally the American women sorted all this out -- people had given things like band uniforms. It was hard.

Q: Inappropriate.

MELAVEN: Inappropriate. It was very hard to know what to do. In talking to Red Cross personnel from time to time they have said they were very reluctant to say no to a donation because the next time a cash donation is needed, people might say, "Well, we offered you things and you couldn't even take that." And as you know, we tried to encourage people in the U.S. to give money.

We did have one example which was really rather quite rather tragic. There was a former Peace Corps volunteer who had served in Peru and was at that time a businessman in the Boston area. He organized a local committee which had galas and events all over the place and they got their two senators involved and so on. My figures may not be exactly right but they collected around \$400,000 but their expenses were \$398,000. It was sort of sad and actually, his intentions were very good. I knew him but he had never been involved in something like this and didn't realize how expensive and difficult soliciting funds can be. It can be sad for very well meaning people. I do know that we were able to use some of the big agencies such as Catholic Relief Services. We would have a special need for something and they had, I think a one day collection effort one Sunday all over the U.S. and were able to get emergency funds for us right then and there. This was extremely helpful.

Q: Did you find the government very cooperative in doing this?

MELAVEN: I think they tried very hard. It was very, very difficult and the president said he wanted his staff to be out in these remote locations rather than in Lima. He said he wanted them to suffer some of the same conditions as the general public, and I think he made an effort. We managed to get through a design proposal and secure four major loans.

Q: What were they for?

MELAVEN: In housing, infrastructure, various types of road projects that were needed.

Q: This was not just for the disaster area?

MELAVEN: Well, they were actually disaster related loans, yes.

Q: And then the rest of the country?

MELAVEN: For the rest of the country it was more a matter of trying to revive the old program which had been stalled due to political differences over a period of time.

Q: What were you trying to revive?

MELAVEN: Well, one was the famous Tarapoto road. That was a contract dispute that involved the famous firm from Texas, a firm working in Iraq now.

Q: Halliburton?

MELAVEN: Halliburton, it was one of the predecessors of Halliburton. The company was working in some of the most isolated parts of the country and it was a very difficult contract dispute which lasted for a couple of years.

Q: The dispute was over what?

MELAVEN: I think just about everything you can think of involving specifications, performance and so on. Brown and Root I guess was the firm that was the basis for Halliburton, as I understand it.

Q: What about some of the other projects that you were reviving?

MELAVEN: Well, strangely enough we did quite well in population planning. We had people who are interested in this in the government.

Q: In family planning?

MELAVEN: Family planning, yes.

Q: Were they receptive to this?

MELAVEN: Receptive, yes.

Q: Among the people too?

MELAVEN: Among the people too, yes.

Q: Did you get any reaction against this?

MELAVEN: No. I think the position of the church, which is strong in Peru, was that as long as it wasn't forced into the position of having to endorse the program, we could do just about what we wanted on the project. I think it was a matter of, you don't necessarily have to have everybody's clearance or demand it. I think sometimes that was our mistake in other countries where we did so.

Q: Was it a countrywide program?

MELAVEN: It was a countrywide program, yes.

Q: Was it mainly having supplies and things of that sort?

MELAVEN: Yes, and education really, yes.

Q: But it was tied to maternal child care?

MELAVEN: Yes, as I recall it was.

Q: Health?

MELAVEN: Yes.

Q: What were some of the other programs?

MELAVEN: Well, we did some things in public administration, but not too much. We provided support. We provided support to education, business education which seemed to work out quite well there through a contract with Stanford University; I always thought it was a good example of what could be done for a school of business administration. We didn't concentrate. Lima is a big city and we had a mansion for the school of business administration, and some Stanford professors came and monitored this program. The school was moving reasonably toward self-financing. When I was later in Nicaragua we had a project which had been ongoing for a number of years in which they built this big campus with many buildings and they had lots of maintenance problems. They just had a tremendous infrastructure; I don't know what has happened to that over time, but there were always tremendous financial problems.

Q: A fairly large school?

MELAVEN: A large school, yes. Oh, probably a couple of hundred students but I think sometimes we tend to go overboard on what we think is required in terms of infrastructure for universities.

Q: You were involved in building the university?

MELAVEN: Yes, in both locations. But in Nicaragua we provided dormitories and other facilities but in Peru we did not. We kept it low-budget and let the students do the best they could to handle their housing needs, and I think for a less developed country perhaps that made a lot more sense.

Q: Did they tend to stay in the government or own their own business or what?

MELAVEN: They went into business and into government but the school had a good reputation.

Q: How long was this academic program?

MELAVEN: As I recall I think it was two years.

Q: It was post secondary?

MELAVEN: Yes.

Q: And as far as you know, it is still?

MELAVEN: I hope so. I honestly don't know. It would be interesting to know.

Q: Were there any other major activities that you were involved in?

MELAVEN: No, obviously my concentration was on the disaster recovery program.

Q: It took a lot of your time.

MELAVEN: A lot of the time.

Q: Anything else on what your overall experience was?

MELAVEN: No. I think one thing I did learn which I was able to apply in Africa was when there was a decision by the State Department, by Washington that they wanted to show their disfavor to the government and they wanted to close down programs, I was able to argue with the ambassador and get his agreement to concentrate on one program, a program that may be as popular with the government but not to try to close down all the programs and think you're going to restart them at a later date. It doesn't work. I think I did profit from the Peru experience.

Q: Was there one program that you closed down?

MELAVEN: We closed down one program that we really were going to close anyway.

Q: Which one was that?

MELAVEN: It was a forestry program but it was close to President Sankara's heart. But we let other programs continue on a regular basis. We made our point without destroying the whole program.

Q: Do you think it actually did make a point? I mean, did it have an effect on it?

MELAVEN: It did. I went with the ambassador to a meeting with Sankara and his main point of discussion was what had happened to the forestry program?

Q: Did it have a political effect?

MELAVEN: I think as far as getting attention, yes. We went through a very difficult period there. The political leaders in Washington were unhappy because Sankara had

made some comments about the Olympics saying that such countries as Burkina Faso would not participate in the Olympics being held in Los Angeles.

Q: We're talking about Peru.

MELAVEN: In Peru, I think administratively cutting back on programs on all the regular programs and then changing the course of action and trying to restart them later just was too difficult administratively. I'm sure this goes on all the time.

Q: Do you feel it had a useful political benefit?

MELAVEN: Yes and no since the U.S. government reversed itself eventually by restarting these programs.

Q: What was at the heart of the issue?

MELAVEN: Several things were going on but the basic issue at that time was the law of the sea. Remember the controversies over that? Peru was deeply involved. The government had declared that its boundary far exceeded what the U.S. said was permissible; and the international conference on the law of the sea had not taken place yet. It is still partially a problem that has never been quite resolved.

Q: Had this had a certain effect on the Peruvian government?

MELAVEN: Yes.

Q: Any other incidents or experiences in Peru?

MELAVEN: Peru, no.

Q: How did you find working there?

MELAVEN: I enjoyed working there. Peru is a beautiful, fascinating country. I enjoyed both Bolivia and Peru. They had such interesting cultures and class structure dating back for generations. I remember visiting a family that had lived in the same house since 1650, and it was quite fascinating.

Q: Anything about the culture or the situation that stood out in your mind as being particularly interesting?

MELAVEN: There's no question. There was a very distinct division of classes and many of the leaders and previous leaders of the government had very little interest in the campesinos, very little interest.

Q: How did that affect the government?

MELAVEN: Well, I think it came down to the amount of the government's own funds they were willing to spend on projects which we always considered important for any project we were involved with. You've got to have a government contribution, whether it's grant or loan.

Q: But the government was maybe not particularly supportive of having these programs?

MELAVEN: I think so some were. I think there were people who looked at a longer range but not all, not all. No.

Q: Well, any other recollection with the experience there?

MELAVEN: In Peru? No.

Q: After Peru you went where?

MELAVEN: I got a call from Washington asking me to help out with earthquake rehabilitation. Bob Culbertson had just been assigned to Nicaragua and he knew Dave Lazar. They decided they needed a new staff in Nicaragua to oversee rehabilitation after their earthquake.

Q: This was when?

MELAVEN: This was in 1972.

Q: They had a big earthquake?

MELAVEN: A tremendous earthquake that in effect destroyed most of the city of Managua, and I was asked to go to Managua right away as the USAID assistant director. David Lazar was one with whom I had worked a great deal in Bolivia and was also a personal friend. Working for Bob Culbertson was always interesting. He was really a dynamic, thoughtful man and had lots of innovative ideas, yes. He was the director.

Q: What were we trying to do?

MELAVEN: Among other things we were trying to rebuild a city, and make it a city that might possibly survive the next earthquake in one fashion or another. As an example, I was talking to someone the other day about a decision here whereby all the military medical facilities would be placed on one campus, and I mentioned that in case of a disaster that's not really the ideal thing to do. We faced such a situation in Managua where they had centralized into one huge hospital all the medical facilities in Managua and it was completely destroyed. We provided funds and obtained the government's agreement to have three hospitals in different sections of the city in the hopes that one of the three would survive the next earthquake. This is a place that's extremely vulnerable and there are going to be other earthquakes. A lot of projects there were in housing, as you might expect, and given the tremendous poverty there we tried to do something for

those who really had no money for building a house. We tried to turn the temporary housing into a more permanent house.

Q: What were the factors in the housing program?

MELAVEN: They were prefabs.

Q: You brought them from the States?

MELAVEN: The materials, yes. To make them permanent we added a bath, a toilet and electricity. I would like to see what has happened today.

Q: What we call sites and services?

MELAVEN: Sites and services, yes. I don't know what has happened to that program now. It did not get off to too good a start and then of course there were other problems.

Q: What was the issue?

MELAVEN: The issue? Among other things one day they had a storm with eight inches of rain in a 24 hour period.

Toward the end of my tour there, the anti-Somoza forces were gaining strength and of course, eventually there was almost a civil war so working for Somoza, or with Somoza was quite a fascinating experience.

Q: What was fascinating about it?

MELAVEN: Actually, he knew quite a good deal about economic development, but he knew nothing about political development and he believed that only he could make progress in the city or in the country and only on his terms. We would have these almost endless meetings with him. I liked him personally and our ambassador would often take me along with him to meetings with the president. He controlled the whole country.

Q: And he was very much involved in the assistance program?

MELAVEN: He was very much involved in the aid program and he also had a lot of business interests, some really quite good, innovative. One of his factories involved canning or freezing fish for shipment to the U.S. and he was doing very well with these projects. They provided employment. We would go to him if there was a problem. We, or rather the government, was letting contracts all the time and if one of his firms bid on a contract, we would go to him and say, look, we know that this is a business operation and all other things being equal you should probably be allowed to bid on this, but because of the criticism you're going to receive and we're going to get, we ask that you withdraw your bid. And he did. I think in some ways he was treated unfairly. Most of the press reports indicated that every bit of our aid went into his pocket. It did not.

Q: It was not the case?

MELAVEN: It was not the case, no. Now, whether it was so in the case of other donors, I don't know but not from our funds and that's about the only thing you can say. You don't control the country; you control those funds that belong to you.

Q: Then you found it pretty well managed?

MELAVEN: I think we managed it well, and we insisted that there be auditors.

Q: What was the scale of the programs?

MELAVEN: It was immense.

Q: Were there other program areas that you found particularly interesting or challenging? Were you in all sectors?

MELAVEN: No, I think they were the standard type of programs you would have in a Latin American country. We were pretty much in all sectors there.

One thing I found very interesting and which I would give Somoza credit for involved the staff of the Central Bank which in effect was the coordinating point for the AID programs and it had roughly 30-35 staffers, all of whom had master's or PhD's in economics from the best schools in the United States. It was hard for us, the economic staff, to really keep up with them on or argue with them on many issues. And that was something Somoza was responsible for. He said he wanted to have highly qualified people to direct the economic development of the country, and the central bank played that role. It was so unusual because in most countries you didn't really have anybody to deal with and we had people who were more qualified than we were.

Q: You were involved in economic policy as opposed to just projects?

MELAVEN: Yes, to an extent. I think the president of the central bank was well qualified in policy areas, and I think he moved perhaps as fast as he could at the time.

Q: Were there any special policies on the budgetary matters?

MELAVEN: General policies, yes. We had an interest in fiscal reform and so on but there was so much being done on the disaster programs that those were emphasized much more than the regular programs at that time.

Q: Were we providing any budget support at that time?

MELAVEN: Not a great deal at that time. For one thing the sugar and cotton production prices were at a high point, and this made all the difference.

Q: Well, anything you failed to mention? I would imagine that the disaster program must have been quite a challenge.

MELAVEN: It was indeed. I think in spite of what you may have heard or would have read in testimony before congressional committees which sometimes was sort of unbelievable – along the line that every penny went into Somoza’s pocket. This was sort of hard for us to take.

Q: What do think the reasons were why people were saying that?

MELAVEN: Oh, well, it is just part of the political process there, really. I mean the bitter hatred of Somoza for probably very good reasons. The family had been in power for fifty years with Anastasio Somoza, the original founder of the dynasty and people wanted a change.

Q: And the United States wanted a change too?

MELAVEN: The U.S. wanted to see change but I think we wanted to see it through a democratic process and for the elections to be opened up. There were so many elements of the Somoza regime and he was just a dictator in many ways. On his birthday for example, government employees were expected to give a contribution and they bought him a new yacht for his birthday present. I think he really felt that this showed they loved him. There was nothing more to it than that. By our standards, we thought it was beyond the pale.

Q: Were we making any effort to encourage that there be elections?

MELAVEN: Yes, we did and there were elections of a sort.

Q: Did we provide some support for them?

MELAVEN: I think we provided some support but not through the AID program.

Q: Not through the AID program?

MELAVEN: No.

Q: Again this was not the pattern that we have now of being involved in the democratic process.

MELAVEN: No. We were not involved in democratization of the country, which is now a standard part of the program. We were involved in one program which was a police program, or public safety program, which although I understand the reasons for the agency closing it down, I also think it had some real merits when it was properly controlled. It goes back to the public safety issue again.

Q: What do mean “properly controlled”?

MELAVEN: That they knew something about the ethics of police work. That you don't use abusive methods to imprison people; you use proper methods and you have the rule of law. I think in too many cases, this was sort of ignored in the police programs. They are more interested in hardware and uniforms and it is very hard for AID to do this and to do it properly.

Q: Were we involved in any rule of law type activities?

MELAVEN: Not really, not directly. We were as I mentioned, given formal guidance by Washington on contracting procedures because of the fact that Somoza, as president, was such a prominent businessman and we had to see that our funds were not used to enrich him.

Q: Did you have your own contracting officers in country?

MELAVEN: Yes, we did.

Q: Did you have to refer it all to Washington?

MELAVEN: No, not all, some. The bigger contracts would of course go to Washington. And we had a lawyer stationed at the mission.

Q: How big was the mission?

MELAVEN: It was a fairly sizeable mission at that time. I guess they are all reduced to nothing now or just a small staff.

Q: And how about you relationship with the embassy and the ambassador?

MELAVEN: It was a very close, a very close relationship.

Q: They weren't trying to push you one way or the other?

MELAVEN: Oh, they would try, yes. I think within the embassy there was a group which was very much against the Somoza regime. I mean, he was a factor in every aspect of life there and there was a feeling in effect that any aid we provided only helped Somoza personally.

Q: Were they attempting to block your program?

MELAVEN: Usually the ambassador was on our side. There were problems, but until the situation deteriorated with the insurgents, there was not that much of a problem.

Q: Were you there during that time?

MELAVEN: It had just begun before I left.

Q: What was that about?

MELAVEN: Historically, I think there were just those who felt that the only way that the Somoza regime would end was by violent means and they were prepared to use them. They liked the taking of hostages and disrupting parties. That was going on at the time I left.

Q: Did that affect the program?

MELAVEN: Not while I was there. It hadn't come to that.

Q: So you weren't involved in any counterinsurgency type of programs?

MELAVEN: No, no. Those came in later, I am sure.

Q: Well, anything more about Nicaragua?

MELAVEN: No, I don't think so unless you have some specific questions.

Immediately after Nicaragua I spent a year at the War College. This was 1977 to 1978, which was really a very good experience for me.

Q: How did that come about?

MELAVEN: Well, I think it was Johnny Murphy who had been associated with the War College and had come down to Nicaragua for quite a long period was the one who sponsored me; I was very pleased and surprised. I didn't apply for it and he said, "Well, we have a slot there. Would you be interested?" Obviously, I was.

Q: What'd you do?

MELAVEN: I took the normal War College course. At that time the War College had 120 students in its annual class and they were divided between the air force, the army, the navy and marine corps and a civilian component which was largely State but also included some representatives from CIA, AID and other agencies. So we had a year-long program, and I enjoyed it. The program was quite fascinating. I took a lot of the military courses because I thought it was something I knew less about and this would be valuable for the future.

Q: What kind of subjects?

MELAVEN: On the famous strategic leaders in the various fields plus topics such as German air power and the structure of the Italian military. We did have the opportunity, of course, to take the annual War College trip where they go to some part of the world and I went to the Far East because I had never visited that part of the world.

Q: Where did you go?

MELAVEN: We went to the Philippines, and to Hong Kong. At that time China was not open, but we could go to Hong Kong, Korea and Japan.

Q: What did you get out of going to these places?

MELAVEN: Well, we met with officials from the defense department of those particular countries and talked about cooperation as well as about mutual problems. I remember at that time there was quite a bit of antagonism with Japan over some trade issue and this was a matter we discussed quite thoroughly in several sessions. The Philippines were going through a difficult period. Marcos had just come in as a reformer and I remember meeting with Carlos Romero who was his secretary of state, or foreign secretary, and he was an interesting personality and very elderly at the time, or so I thought. He probably was younger than I am today.

Q: Okay. Well, what do you think you got out of your experience of that sabbatical? How did it help you?

MELAVEN: We went through a lot of exercises of various types and simulations and I think it was useful.

Q: For doing what?

MELAVEN: They are a war game of sorts or recreate various types of situations. I guess I tend to believe that those the Embassy has that deal with safety issues are quite useful. I think they really do tell you something.

Q: Explain a little bit about what the simulations approach is.

MELAVEN: Well, let me explain the one for the State Department. Maybe it lasted two days and it really dealt with security. You go through an exercise. For example, we had an invading army coming into the country and we would be in different rooms with telephones connected to a central system, and we would get messages and we would see the various reaction we would have to the message. I remember some small things such as a telegram I received informing me that a team of ten special advisers was going to arrive the following Monday in the field of education and so they wanted to know what I would do. Of course, we sent back a message saying "don't come" which was the right answer. And then they said what you should have done in addition was to put in something, I think they called it a LIMTEL, remember that? The term where you indicated we know what we're doing and are busy so don't send us those telegrams. With

all these messages going back and forth and in different directions and with us playing different roles, I think we learned a lot and it was quite effective really. They made it as close to the real world as possible, yes.

Q: Well, what did you get out of the year off? Your year of sabbatical.

MELAVEN: Well, it really was a sabbatical. No, I think I did have a beneficial year. There were some very good State officers there. Maybe the civilian component is very good to have in the school because they do look at things differently and it's good when you take these problem solving sessions to have someone other than the military involved and vice versa. I think the combination was good as was the realization you could work together with other departments or people in uniform. I think this is very helpful.

Q: Were you able to present AID and its role and what it was about?

MELAVEN: To a degree, yes.

Q: You didn't you get any lectures or seminars in AID?

MELAVEN: No. I didn't.

Q: Did you write a paper?

MELAVEN: Yes, indeed.

Q: What did you write about?

MELAVEN: I wrote on China's population policies. I got some help from library and they were helpful in getting the material.

Q: What was the main point in your paper, do you remember?

MELAVEN: I can't recall. I think I was trying to show perhaps an application to the U.S. and how the issue might be handled and how I think some things don't require everyone to endorse what you are trying to do. You are only going to force them into a position where they have to.

Q: This is when China had their policy of one child?

MELAVEN: I think they had already had that.

Q: Well, what do you think you got out of that time? How did it help you?

MELAVEN: Well, I benefited from in working together with the military and other agencies to try to learn to see their point of view -- maybe not support it but at least have

a better understanding and also from providing others a little knowledge of what AID is about. And I don't think too many people do have much of a knowledge.

Q: Did you find it useful later in terms of relationships and associations?

MELAVEN: Yes. I have felt that. I remember writing papers and talking to military officers. I still go to some of the lectures at the War College and they have some very good seminars; for example, they have been doing seminars on a memorandum for the new president since there is a new president coming in, whoever it will be and what they should say. I was amazed at how liberal the military officers were in saying that they wanted to constrain the role of the U.S. in certain instances. A lot of this is State Department money. In one of these sessions recently a couple of military officers said, we are doing lots of things that the State Department or AID should be doing. And a State officer responded, "Look, gentlemen, I think you may be right but did you ever think of staffing levels? We have 4,500 people worldwide and we can't take on democratization and everything else in every country. I mean, there's got to be a complete change in force levels or something and obviously since you have six million or four million staff, you're going to have to keep up that role."

Q: They were conceding their responsibility to the military.

MELAVEN: Yes. But they were saying that some of these couldn't be handled by State unless State obtained additional staffing, which I think is very true.

Q: Well, after the War College, what did you do?

MELAVEN: After the War College I was in Washington as director of Caribbean affairs.

Q: What does that cover?

MELAVEN: That covers Jamaica, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Guyana and all the small islands of the Caribbean.

Q: How did that work?

MELAVEN: Well, we had a suite of offices and they were just intermingled. I had an individual small office. I think all of those are gone today and there is a different approach – cubicles which drive me wild but anyway, we had the mixed office, a mixed small office. Next door would be a State officer or maybe someone from State on both sides.

Q: Who was the head of the office? Was it State?

MELAVEN: No, we both had offices side by side.

Q: More integrated

MELAVEN: No. In some areas there was a sort of total integration but this was not total integration.

There was a director for Caribbean AID and there was a State office director for the Caribbean.

Q: I see.

MELAVEN: But I think we just worked together; a couple of years later when I came back to Washington a wall had been installed and they divided the two offices.

Q: Who was the assistant administrator at that time?

MELAVEN: When I was there it was Valdez.

Q: This was after Herman Klein.

MELAVEN: Oh, yes.

Q: So they had given up a real integrated arrangement by that time?

MELAVEN: Yes.

Q: What were the main issues you were dealing with?

MELAVEN: At the beginning, certainly, White House staffers were starting to talk in terms of a Caribbean initiative, which later came into being, I think under Bush One when they finally passed legislation to support an exchange of goods and services without tariffs but that was something under consideration but without much progress at that time. Eventually they got the legislation. But while I was in the office, the idea was emerging that this would help development a great deal in the Caribbean.

Q: What were the issues you were dealing with?

MELAVEN: Well, as far as the individual countries, such as Jamaica, we dealt with standard issues of education, agriculture, housing that we covered in the rest of Latin America. There was an effort, an increasing effort to try to use some of the regional institutions that we had created for the Caribbean, but none of those worked too well, and I don't think we really made too much progress.

Q: Were there any regional organizations in the Caribbean that you worked with?

MELAVEN: Oh, yes. There was a bank that had been created, as well as other regional organizations created on a functional basis. I think customs might be one of them. My

recollection on just what they were is sketchy but I remember they were not terribly effective.

Q: Any particular events occur during your time?

MELAVEN: Well, one that really made the papers I guess was Jonestown and we were more deeply involved than we might have liked to have been.

Q: What were you involved in doing?

MELAVEN: I had been down there about ten days before the events took place and I had followed the cable traffic. There had always been a little bit of traffic on this, you know. It was a delicate situation because we think of freedom of religion as terribly important as well as freedom of groups. I think with so many of the people there, they knew they had had these suicide rehearsals but they didn't really believe that this was anything that was ever going to take place. When it did, of course, Congressman Ryan was killed and the DCM (deputy chief of mission) who was there and whom I had met, was severely injured. Then we had the massive problem of what to do with all the bodies. These were all American citizens and they were not people of wealth in any way, and we saw it also as the end of the AID contingency fund. Over the years Congress had become very unhappy with the use of that fund. At this time there was an agreement for AID to use it. The army agreed to collect the bodies of which there were hundreds. This was a tremendous operation. Although the army had battlefield experience and knew what could be done and how to do it, the military expected to be paid. It was finally agreed, including by the White House, that payment would come from liquidating the contingency fund.

Q: Do you know what the magnitude was?

MELAVEN: Well, probably something on the order of \$5 million and the money went to the Defense Department.

Q: You say liquidated meaning it was the last of the money?

MELAVEN: It was the last of the money and the last of the concept. There was no longer any contingency fund after that.

Q And there was no effort to reestablish it or?

MELAVEN: No. Congress had gotten very upset over its uses for other purposes. I don't know what they were, but they had decided that they were not going to allow it to continue after 30 June and this was before 30 June. The last of the money and used for this purpose. Obviously there were discussions with the committee staffers as to how this was going to be disbursed. They obtained agreement on this. It was obviously a very difficult matter but immediate action was necessary and the decisions were made very quickly.

Q: Were you involved in that?

MELAVEN: In a sense, yes. But it really was handled at a very high level. I think there were White House meetings to which I was not invited.

Q: Were there other events in the Caribbean area?

MELAVEN: Not really. I did manage to go on a trip with Bob Lewter, the deputy administrator. He wanted to see the Caribbean countries and we went. I found that interesting as did Lewter.

Q: And how were the Caribbean countries doing in development and other things? They are all quite different, aren't they?

MELAVEN: Very different, very different places. There were great problems for the small countries some of which had 30,000 people in the whole country. Then there was the danger of their coming up with schemes of some sort or other, whereby they would sell passports or something and that's where they raised lots of money for their countries and we would try to put dampers on that.

Q: Did you have a regional office at that time?

MELAVEN: Yes, there was a regional office in Bridgetown, yes.

Q: Did they manage programs too?

MELAVEN: No, they had bilateral programs and most of the regional missions took care of the smaller countries such as Dominica, the Republic of Dominica. I will remember that to the end of my life because there was a terrible hurricane in the area and there were these two countries and there were shipments through the Dominican Republic and the Republic of Dominica and there was considerable confusion on account of the similar names.

Q: Haiti was part of this group too?

MELAVEN: Yes, but we had a bilateral program for Haiti and although there were some small regional programs for it, the regional programs out of Bridgetown really covered the smaller islands which were republics in themselves; they are tiny and sometimes their government revenue would be not much more than the cost of operating an embassy in Washington. I mean this was extremely difficult and they wanted to have embassies in London, Paris, Berlin, and the United States.

Q: What about Haiti though? What were we trying to do there? Do you remember much about that program?

MELAVEN: I am afraid I don't. I think the situation was very difficult. I think Larry Harrison was there at the time and he was trying very hard but he was very discouraged about putting much additional money there because Baby Doc Duvalier, Jr. was in power. He was a man who had never, I think he had made one trip to Miami -- that was the extent of his foreign travel. He was nothing, which is something I think we maybe we tend to overlook. I often thought the USIS (United States Information Service) programs that bring leaders or potential leaders to the U.S. might have helped educate him a little bit. It could have made a big difference, but I think we sort of give up on those if they are of the wrong political complexion. I am not that conservative either but I just feel that he had had such a limited education and at 18 he became president. He had never seen anything of the world and didn't know anything outside of Haiti.

The programs we had there were sort of minimal and I don't remember anything particularly outstanding about them.

Q: Anything else on your Caribbean years?

MELAVEN: No, not really. I found it an interesting experience.

Q: Did you visit all of the countries?

MELAVEN: I did finally with Bob Lewter because he wanted to go to, and I think Ed Cory planned to go with him but Ed couldn't. We didn't have much travel money, we never did and the bosses said, "Oh, well. You can go instead of Ed Cory" so I was very pleased to go.

Q: You visited all of them?

MELAVEN: All of them, yes, I think we did, including Guyana, the Dominican Republic and Haiti and Jamaica. Jamaica, I had visited once before; just a personal trip.

Q: You were there in this position for how long?

MELAVEN: It was about three years.

Q: And then what happened?

MELAVEN: Then I went over to the Africa Bureau.

Q: At that time we were bringing in the people from Latin America who were more experienced with some of our programs.

MELAVEN: Well, yes and I was pleased to see another part of the world.

Q: What year was this?

MELAVEN: This was 1980.

Q: And that is when you went to Upper Volta?

MELAVEN: Upper Volta which became Burkina Faso.

Q: How would you describe the situation there?

MELAVEN: Well, I don't know if there is any exact reason but usually every time I went to a new country, there was a revolution in two weeks or so.

Q: What was the revolution there?

MELAVEN: That was among the military generals. That was it. Eventually they had two coup d'états while I was there. I think they had three military leaders, the one who was most outstanding leader was Colonel Sankara who was really quite a fascinating individual. He was the one who unfortunately made the comments about the Olympics in Los Angeles, which made the White House shake and so forth.

Q: What was it he said?

MELAVEN: He said he was withdrawing Upper Volta's team from the Olympics.

Q: Why was he doing that?

MELAVEN: I can't remember his exact reasoning at that time. He was in some ways one of the most interesting characters I have run into. He was very friendly with the Peace Corps volunteers. I think when he was under restraints, so to speak, and had been told by the military establishment that he couldn't go outside a certain area of Upper Volta, he got to know a lot of Peace Corps volunteers, liked them and was very interested in them. He was a man who had some very wild ideas on the economic side. As an example, he decided that the best thing they could do to obtain money and to improve the housing situation was for the whole calendar year all rents would go to the government, period. Well, as you know, people do have mortgages of one sort or another. This sort of brought everything to a screeching halt.

Q: What was he trying to accomplish?

MELAVEN: Well, he thought it was unfair that there were people with big houses who were renting them out to foreigners among others and making lots of money. He thought the money should go to the government. Well, it did for the year but in the meantime, of course, all construction stopped, which anybody could have told him but he went ahead. Fortunately, I think that lasted only a year so that was good.

He was personally a very honest man. I had friends who were personal friends of his, Americans, who would visit his home and his mother's home. His mother was without

electricity at the beginning of his term of office and at the end of his term of office, she was still in a home without electricity even; there was no personal enrichment, which you saw in so many countries. They took advantage but he was really honest. He had the right thoughts but the schemes he came up with were all pretty wild. The one involving taking the revenues from rents was just an example.

I think our programs probably did fairly well there. Some of the projects included a forestry project which I mentioned earlier, the one we abolished that was a prize of the president. But also we had wells projects which were terribly important. Peace Corps participated in these projects.

Q: Drilling or?

MELAVEN: Drilling or digging either depending on the circumstances.

Q: And how widespread was that?

MELAVEN: Well, I would say we had some projects in just about every part of the country but I would have to recheck that.

Q: How did you carry it out, local contacts?

MELAVEN: We had contracts and we had advisors on that. We did a lot on training. We built a number of country roads, farm to market roads, that seemed to be reasonably successful.

Q: How did you finance those?

MELAVEN: That was a loan. We had something in the private sector. I think our efforts in the private sector were usually rather small and not terribly effective. This is something that is perhaps the most difficult for us to do.

Q: Micro loans and?

MELAVEN: Micro loans and so on, yes.

Q: Why are they so difficult?

MELAVEN: I think there it is always a need for more of a community development type of operation when you have masses of people who are uneducated. However, these types of programs normally just do not seem to work very well. I think we had have a hard time in the past; maybe the agency does better now, but they seemed to have a difficult time in getting people who were qualified, or particularly good in private sector types of operation, which is sometimes very basic. It's not an office with a secretary and a little empire, no, it's something quite different. I don't know what your experience was overall

for Africa. I think it was pretty hard to get it going, with Kenya a possible exception where you have more infrastructure.

Q: Okay.

MELAVEN: Family planning, again, we did pretty well on that.

Q: Was it well received?

MELAVEN: Yes. Reasonably, yes. There didn't seem to be any great problem. Again, I think perhaps the key at that stage is to avoid confrontation.

Q: Did this include health programs with it or were they separate?

MELAVEN: I am sure that there must have been some health components with it. And we did quite a bit in the area of training.

Q: Overseas training?

MELAVEN: Some overseas, mostly overseas training. Some lectures. We had considerable success in short seminars where you would invite people to attend the seminar and participate, and get good French speaking people to conduct the seminar. There was a professor from the University of Pittsburg who could do such seminars in the field of public administration but he was killed in a plane crash near London. He was a good friend of mine and I couldn't pull up his name but he had been to Ouagadougou many times and I wrote to his wife after the tragic accident. I was in Paris at the time. It was after I retired.

We had him out several times because he was really so good and he had such great rapport with the participants and he would do the program in French and bring some other people there to work with him.

Q: What was the specific subject that he was training them in?

MELAVEN: Well, various types of management techniques, diagnosis of a problem and how to approach it and the techniques you might choose and so on. I was really very, very impressed by him.

Q: And was this in budget work?

MELAVEN: It could be in budget work or could be almost anything, you know. He had that amazing ability that some teachers have to generate interest on the part of the students and get them all engaged in the workshop.

Q: This was a short term?

MELAVEN: Short term, yes.

Q: How long would he stay?

MELAVEN: Well, maybe two weeks at a maximum, and I think sometimes those short-term seminars are better.

Q: How did you find the effect of these in terms of the people you were training? These were all government people?

MELAVEN: Government people. Well, I think over the long run, I can't really tell you, but I think they were exposed to some first class administrative thinking. Moreover, as important was that those trained were often people who wouldn't ordinarily get away. I know when I was in Nicaragua we worked out an arrangement for a three day seminar on management and brought in really key people to conduct this seminar, people that we could never get otherwise because they could never be spared by their agencies, and so I am sort of a believer in these short seminars or I was at the time. In fact, when Bob Culbertson started a sort of senior seminar for AID people, we discussed how long the seminar would last and I pushed him to make it not more than ten days. That way you could get people to come and isolate it a bit from Washington, and these programs could work out very well.

Q: So what other posts did you have?

MELAVEN: The last one really is Rwanda.

Q: But I mean in Burkina Faso.

MELAVEN: In Burkina Faso

Q: Did you have anything like what is called integrated rural development?

MELAVEN: No. We had a program which we were planning to launch and we got Washington's approval for an integrated rural development program and then everything fell apart because of the disagreement with the Sankara government. I was told not to sign the documents, that I was to be "sick" or whatever was necessary but we were not to go sign a document because the decision had been made by the White House that we were to show our displeasure with the Sankara government.

Q: Because of his comments about the Olympics?

MELAVEN: That was part of it, yes.

Q: There must have been something else then?

MELAVEN: Well, they were uncomfortable with Sankara anyway and any incident like this just sort of provoked this reaction.

Q: Why were they uncomfortable with him?

MELAVEN: I think they thought he was too far to the left.

Q: What administration was this in?

MELAVEN: It would have been Ronald Reagan. I remember one incident. The ambassador was ill and he called me at the last minute to go to a reception that Sankara was giving. I went and when I arrived Sankara had a pistol in his left hand. And on his right hip he had another one, and we had to go up and shake hands with the president. So I shook his right hand, which didn't have a pistol, and I shook hands with him and moved away quite quickly. Actually, his feeling of being threatened was very real and, of course, not too long after he was assassinated.

Q: That was after your time there?

MELAVEN: I was on home leave when he was assassinated.

Q: There was a change of government then?

MELAVEN: There was a change of government. His number two man, who said he was sleeping while this all took place, took over the reins.

Q: While you were there?

MELAVEN: Yes.

Q: Did anything particular happen with your program or anything?

MELAVEN: No, I think his replacement has a somewhat more conservative stance than Sankara. Sankara was an enthusiast. He just had too many wild ideas.

Q: Any other part of the program there?

MELAVEN: No, except that I think the Burkinabe were very hard working people and all the offices and fields of the Ivory Coast are filled with them, with Burkinabe. They are very hard workers and they tried so hard. It was an interesting society from a religious standpoint. I would imagine probably the largest percentage of the population was animist, but a very large percentage was Muslim and a smaller but most important group was the Christians. They were not dogmatic. I used to clip sometimes very interesting newspaper articles that would describe where there was going to be a funeral mass, a funeral high mass for an individual named El Hajj, for example. It was sort of a contradiction in religions, but they just seemed to get along together and they did have a

Roman Catholic cardinal and there was no great religious conflict there. This was quite unlike later when I went to Mauritania which was 98 percent Muslim and to attend a Christian service, you really had to be a foreigner.

Q: Well, were there any famine relief programs at the time you were there?

MELAVEN: We had a great deal of “Food for Peace”, largely through the churches and there was a drought there which was very difficult, but we did get in a lot of food and groups such as the Catholic Relief Services, Church World Service, and others all cooperated very well to do really good relief programs. The geography of that country is so limiting. There maybe four days of rain a year, and the sequence of those days is so important to the crops, absolutely vital and so this is an area where they can have terrible problems. And then when they do have a rain, very often it would be a flood. It would be a flood, right in the desert. Incredible, incredible.

Q: Were you there at the time of the SAHEL development program?

MELAVEN: Yes, I was indeed. The headquarters was there.

Q: What did you understand about that program?

MELAVEN: They had some projects that I think were quite good. I followed with a great deal of interest the one on insects, the integrated pest management program, and I really was greatly disturbed when it was cut off. It was making progress.

Q: What was it trying to do?

MELAVEN: They were trying to introduce into all of the SAHEL countries means to control the pests, means that were less costly and could be used by people without a great deal of money.

That was really administered out of the AID mission. In many ways it was a regional program; we had no separate regional office there. It was not like in Latin American where there was a regional mission.

Q: This is SILTS?

MELAVEN: Yes.

Q: That was all African?

MELAVEN: That was all African, yes. There was a major problem with the leader of SILTS at that time, and he had to be removed; there was a replacement who I think was much better.

Q: Did you get involved in a relationship with the SILTS?

MELAVEN: Well, particularly through the pest management, yes, through that program.

Q: Was AGRIMET, the weather program in Burkina Faso then?

MELAVEN: Yes. They did have that. I just would hear vaguely about AGRIMET.

Q: Did you have any thoughts about the SAHEL program?

MELAVEN: One of the great difficulties with a regional program is the people of the area really think in terms of their individual countries and there is no getting around that. I think it is very hard for those regional organizations to get a lot of support from the local governments. They want their own projects. Rightly, or wrongly, this is the case.

Q: Do you think it is a concept that should be pursued in other situations?

MELAVEN: I think it should be pursued but I guess I have a feeling that not too much is going to come out of it as long as we have individual countries, individual states that are terribly important, terribly important to them. There was quite a difference from country to country, their reaction to problems.

Q: Could you give an example?

MELAVEN: I don't know that I could, really, not any real good example. I think maybe, in Dakar, in Senegal, where my impression is, there was a higher level of education. The story was quite different than it was in Ouagadougou, even though in Ouagadougou, I think, the people were very hard working. They tried their best to do things. And of course, I think there was a lot of experimentation on the part of leaders and they get away with it which I guess is understandable but you think of the situation in Ghana where there was a leader who was in for so long, and made an almost 180 degree turn about in promoting private enterprise.

Q: Nkrumah?

MELAVEN: After Nkrumah, in the '80s. He would come up to Ouagadougou from time to time, and he and Sankara would have big meetings all over the place and they would open up the bars which were normally closed for some reason or another.

Q: Did you get involved in any of the UNTANT projects based in the Ivory Coast?

MELAVEN: No, I didn't. I don't recall an UNTANT fund project in Ouagadougou. There may have been. I remember there were some significant ones in the Caribbean.

Q: And livestock was the biggest program, livestock procurement.

MELAVEN: Yes, right.

Q: What did you find about those programs?

MELAVEN: I can't give you an opinion. Livestock was very important in Burkina Faso because those herds were being moved from one section of the country to another, all around the year, wherever a little bit of grass would appear.

Q: Well, anything else?

MELAVEN: Burkina Faso? I found it an interesting experience, I liked the people, and I think they tried very hard to do things, but they are so dependent on the weather and climate conditions.

Q: Did you have any sense that they picked up and are developing at all?

MELAVEN: Well, I have heard that if I were to go back to Ouagadougou today I would not recognize it, so maybe some things we did helped in that way. I can't be sure of that.

Q: But at the time?

MELAVEN: Progress was extremely slow.

Q: Where did you learn French?

MELAVEN: Well, I had had French all through college and then I took the State Department French course, which is very, very good.

Q: How long did you study?

MELAVEN: I think it was about six months.

Q: Very intensive.

MELAVEN: Very intensive and I ended up with a 3/3. I enjoyed French. Both for the Burkinabe and the governments of Burkina Faso and Rwanda, the language of communication was French.

Q: Oh, I see.

MELAVEN: It is very interesting, Rwanda in particular.

Q: You went to Rwanda in what year?

MELAVEN: I went there in 1985.

Q: As the director?

MELAVEN: Yes. There was a feeling in both countries that they wanted to use their local languages, but this was a terrible problem. In Burkina Faso at that time, shall we say, there were seven million people? Three million spoke one language, three million spoke another and another million spoke a third. I would go out with ministers sometimes and they always spoke in French because they said if we choose one of the languages, we will make some people unhappy, but if we use French it is sort of a neutral language. All of the groups had some knowledge of it, and in Burkina Faso the French at that point had never really left. There were French groceries, you know, this sort of thing.

Q: What was the school system like?

MELAVEN: The school system was extremely primitive. There were some good schools but very few, very, very few.

Q: What was the French education program?

MELAVEN: Yes, the French education was more geared toward their own people, but to which they would allow some Burkinabe who had money and paid the tuition to attend.

Q: Were we you doing anything in education?

MELAVEN: We did some, but I can't recall.

Q: OK, on Rwanda?

MELAVEN: On Rwanda just following up on use of languages, Rwanda tried for a few years to use one of the local languages. They had one language, Kinyarwanda, which they wanted to use for their students and they wanted to stop introducing French in the early years of the education system but over the last couple of years that I was in Rwanda they discovered that this created new problems. What do you do with someone who wants to become a doctor or some other profession and he's got to go to another country to study and he's has Kinyarwanda as his only language?

Q: There is only one language in Rwanda?

MELAVEN: Yes. And so they began again to allow the use of French and the introduction of French early in the curriculum. I think it makes an awful lot of sense but I think every country, perhaps, goes through this as it becomes independent. I remember one time talking to a Dane and I said, "It is so wonderful that you know so many languages." Everybody in Denmark speaks English and many speak some German as well, and he said, "Look, we have to. There are four million or six million Danes in the world and the rest of the world is not going to learn Danish. We want to trade, we want to have visitors, and we have to learn other languages." I think this is what some of the countries in Africa are learning and quite rapidly.

Q: What were you doing in Rwanda? What was the situation there?

MELAVEN: Well, that is interesting. You know the more recent history of Rwanda, the terrible history.

Q: But this was before that time.

MELAVEN: At the time I was there, it is one of the most beautiful countries in the world. The only country I can say is comparable is Costa Rica and it sort of has an eternal springtime and a temperate climate with had two rainy seasons. It was an absolutely lovely place to live and yet, beneath the surface was the terrible antagonism between two groups, the Hutu and the Tutsi. But this was not evident to us.

Q: It wasn't evident when you were there?

MELAVEN: It was not really evident. I knew they had a system in government where the Tutsis represented about ten percent of the population and were to be allocated ten percent of the government positions and that was more or less what was done. I thought maybe they have hit on a solution that is fair; I did not realize the problems.

Q: Which is the dominant?

MELAVEN: Well, at the time I was there, it was the Hutus who were the settlers, those who were tied to the land, traditionally. The Tutsis were the ones with the cattle and were generally better off than the others and had many positions normally in government and the clergy.

Q: They were the minority in number?

MELAVEN: They were the minority in number, yes. They had been the dominant group and their dominance as I understand it, had been partly based on their relationship with the sponsoring power, Belgium. The Belgians were given the mandate over Rwanda after World War I and they were responsible and may have favored one side rather than the other, the smaller group of Tutsis rather than the Hutu. Then after independence, the Tutsis initially were in charge but when the Hutu took over the Tutsis thought of themselves as discriminated against even though they presumably had this ten percent allocation of government positions.

Q: Could you tell them apart?

MELAVEN: I could not, no. They were intermixed but at that time they had on their passport or their pass book, their ethnic identity as a Hutu or a Tutsi, one or the other. Sometimes people would get those changed but they would have to go to the authorities to change it. You were identified as one of these or a Twa, otherwise known as the pygmies. It is very small group, one percent of the population.

Q: There wasn't much of a Rwandan national identity or was there?

MELAVEN: No. It was interesting. I think the Hutus were in power in Rwanda when I was there. In Burundi the Tutsis were in power at that time, and they were also a minority but they had preserved their power position. When I got there we did provide some budgetary support that was supposed to be given in tranches once certain fiscal reforms or conditions were met. It was a very slow disbursement process. We had a refugee program there that was aimed at providing land to some Tutsis who had gone to Uganda and were invited to come back home. There was an agricultural research program which involved one of the universities as well as family planning and a child health program -- not too great a program there -- and food for peace.

I had real hopes for the country.

Q: And how did it rank in U.S. foreign policy interests?

MELAVEN: Not very high. Maybe they thought they could handle it from Burundi or someplace but anyway, I tend to think, it was unfortunate that there were not more engaged. There was a small embassy, a very small embassy with a political ambassador with no knowledge of the language, two in a row with no knowledge of the language, no French, and not any special qualifications that I could envision. Usually the embassy had just a couple of people on the State side and usually they were extremely junior officers. We had this whole thing going underground, you know. When this all broke apart, it was really very, very tragic. I sometimes think that at a place with such a small staff, a career ambassador would be so much better. And one having some semblance of language qualification. One of the ambassadors told me that he and his wife were invited by then President Habyarimana, for an evening at their house and the ambassador said it was the worst evening he had spent in his life. There was no one there to translate. That's pretty rough, isn't it? It was rough on him.

Q: Any more about the program, anything more on that? Was it well received? What was your relationship with the government?

MELAVEN: Well, the relationship was very good. They were always very personable and helpful on projects.

Q: Were they cooperative?

MELAVEN: Cooperative, I felt they were cooperative, yes.

Q: Did you get things implemented?

MELAVEN: Reasonably, yes. It was not that difficult a program.

Q: How long were you there?

MELAVEN: I was there almost three years; I think it was closer to two and a half or so.

Q: Did you enjoy being there?

MELAVEN: I loved the country and I liked the people and it was a beautiful place to live.

Q: Did you travel around the country very much?

MELAVEN: Yes, I did. I covered pretty much all of the country. I made a point to do that.

Q: And how did you assess the economic life of the country?

MELAVEN: Just extreme poverty, extreme poverty, even though you have this beautiful setting. We built health clinics and so forth which were very important but I am sure the life was very difficult.

Q: Were you doing anything in agriculture?

MELAVEN: Yes, we had a program in agricultural research with one of our universities, possibly the University of Arkansas.

Q: What were you researching?

MELAVEN: I can't remember the specific products.

Q: Was this a country that had coffee?

MELAVEN: Yes, it did have coffee and also a plant used in insecticides.

Q: Pyrethrum.

MELAVAN: Yes. Those were pretty much in expatriate hands, and the coffee was a good business for Rwanda.

Q: What were the people growing mainly? What were their main income sources?

MELAVEN: Well, it was really subsistence, strictly subsistence agriculture. Nothing more than that.

Q: Anything else on Rwanda?

MELAVEN: No. I enjoyed it. There were beginning to be some disturbing events there before I left.

Q: What was that?

MELAVEN: Well, they had some battles between the two groups at one point, very bloody affairs, and I remember there was a big meeting with the Papal Nuncio who tried to negotiate between the two groups a bit and was effective, but when everything broke apart a couple of years later, I don't think anyone could have imagined what was going to happen with the 600, 000 people that were killed.

Q: Right.

MELAVEN: Absolutely terrible, terrible.

Q: Well, anything more on Rwanda?

MELAVEN: No.

Q: Well, we move on from there to where?

MELAVEN: Well, I retired. I had I think over thirty five years of government service so I began thinking I was sort of working for free. So I decided to retire.

Q: What year was this?

MELAVEN: This was in 1988 and I decided I would like to do work in French and I went to Paris to the Sorbonne and took a program in French civilization and language for about two years.

Q: Wow, you were a Parisian student.

MELAVEN: I love the city, yes. It was a fine experience, I enjoyed the courses.

Q: These were regular Sorbonne courses?

MELAVEN: No, it wasn't quite a regular program. It was for foreign students but totally based on the French system. Grading was based on one final exam each semester and that is it, so everything was geared to that exam. I guess my problem was I was taking Modern French History and the essay question I had to write for three hours was: Discuss the Role of France in World War II. That was a mine field for a question in a French university.

Q: Did you write it in French?

MELAVEN: Yes.

Q: Impressive. You must be a good language student.

MELAVEN: No, not that good, but I enjoy it.

Q: You were there for two years?

MELAVEN: Yes, and then I wanted to go into the Peace Corps but I began talking to some people who had been United Nations volunteers and decided to apply to the UN. Interestingly enough, to become a UN volunteer you have to be accepted by the Peace Corps as well. It is one of those provisions whereby if you or I are assigned to become an employee of UNICEF, there has to be in effect, a clearance by I think the International Organizations Bureau of the State Department. This goes back a number of years, dating back to the McCarthy era, or something. For the UN volunteers the relevant agency is the Peace Corps and actually in the process you are sworn in both as a Peace Corps volunteer and as a UN volunteer. In my case, I went to Mauritania in a position comparable to a Peace Corps director as the director of volunteers for Mauritania. The UN director of volunteers in individual countries is also a volunteer. So that is quite a difference.

Q: Did you have a large number of volunteers?

MELAVEN: Oh, 20 or 25, something like that, and then you also recruit people to serve in other countries, anywhere in the world they might want to go, and process their applications.

Q: What were the volunteers doing?

MELAVEN: Well, they were doing all sorts of programs: health programs, and food for peace type programs, distribution of food and so forth. The program for the United Nations volunteers is quite different from the Peace Corps in that the volunteers are usually somewhat older people. They can bring their families if they want and are paid a stipend which is not great but more than any regular Peace Corps volunteer would get.

Q: How did you find Mauritania?

MELAVEN: I liked the country. I don't think I could ever take Ghana or Cote d'Ivoire with the high humidity and so forth.

Q: You didn't have that?

MELAVEN: You don't have that in Mauritania, no. It is very hot but very dry and that makes all the difference in the world. I can take that type of heat, easily, even without air conditioning.

Q: What was your experience with the program?

MELAVEN: The difficulty of working with AID and the UN in the position was that I never knew when I was going to have any money. It was extremely difficult. You would have a program approved and maybe the volunteers arriving and you don't have any

money to pay for things or you would have to delay or stop their arrival, but as you know, we were going through a period then in the UN when the U.S. had withheld its payments and the UN literally had to go to local banks in New York to borrow money to keep going for a few months. It was an extremely difficult situation. I don't know all the details about this but that's what I heard that they literally had to do.

Q: What were your volunteers working on?

MELAVEN: Well they were Tunisians and other French speaking countries; a lot from the MAGHREB region, North African countries, because they had French and Arabic, which was preferable, although the language of the UN in Mauritania is French. They were people who had had some experience in the field; some were engineers, public health officers and so on. They had some experience. I would say they were usually about thirty years old.

Q: What did you have to do, mainly?

MELAVEN: I tried to get support from the ministry to which they were assigned, to get support for them. Try to see that they perform their jobs -- like a normal supervisor. And if they had any problems in terms of support, I'd try to work it out, one way or another.

Q: Were they all over the country?

MELAVEN: Yes. They were mostly way up in the north.

Q: Did you travel around a lot?

MELAVEN: I traveled around, yes. I went to all the locations except one in Mauritania. I went with a driver and we might drive for six hours and meet one car. I mean it was that isolated, a very isolated country. In the last few years the entire populace has tended towards the population centers.

Q: Were we there working in any of the agriculture programs? Along the Senegal River?

MELAVEN: No. We didn't have any there as far as I remember.

Q: How would you rate the effectiveness of that kind of a program?

MELAVEN: I think it is a useful thing. These are not highly qualified people but some of them I think do very well.

Q: Does it have a lasting effect or is it just sort of a short term thing?

MELAVEN: Well, I think they made some programs possible. I think the food for peace and food for work projects probably could not have been run without them. It was a good way to carry out these programs.

Q: Were they involved in projects using the food supply

MELAVEN: They did use food supplies coming from U.S. sources, eventually but usually those were world food programs.

Q: Food for work kinds of programs?

MELAVEN: Food for work kinds of programs. I supervised these.

Q: Like what, roads or?

MELAVEN: It could be roads, could be any sort of minor construction work, whatever.

Q: Sometimes these kinds of programs have more impact on the individual than the individual has on the country. How do you view that?

MELAVEN: That may be. I think volunteers do get some interesting training and it's effective for them in their long range career plans.

Q: What about their impact on the country's development?

MELAVEN: Only a moderate impact.

Q: Was it the kind of program you would sponsor to try to promote development?

MELAVEN: Well, it would certainly be a less expensive alternative for us than some of the very expensive contracts we have. I tend to think the Peace Corps do very well too. I had a good experience with the Peace Corps volunteers.

Q: Peace Corps and AID get along somewhat more broadly now.

MELAVEN: Yes. I think they get along really quite well. They had a defined program, a defined role for the Peace Corps volunteers. I have found for example, cases in the agricultural research program in Rwanda where we had a couple of technicians who really didn't want to be out in the bush but the volunteers were out there and could do some work. Part of the problem was we had allowed staffers to bring their families and you couldn't really support the families out in the bush, or the savannah more to the point.

Q: Anything more on Mauritania?

MELAVEN: Not really. I enjoyed working there and I thought it was an interesting program.

Q: After Mauritania, was that your last overseas assignment?

MELAVEN: Yes.

Q: Did you do any consulting work or anything after that?

MELAVEN: No, I didn't really. I came back and had quite a few medical problems that had to be taken care of.

One of my friends knew of my great interest in local history and I have done a considerable amount of tour guiding.

Q: In Washington?

MELAVEN: In Washington, yes, in the metropolitan area.

Q: What are your thoughts about what you did over all these year? Would you call it a good experience?

MELAVEN: I think a very positive experience, yes. I'm very pleased that I worked with AID and I thought it was something valuable, I think it does provide a great opportunity to experiment, to do something different. I liked the rotation from one post to another. I think you bring experiences with you and I do think we need to have career officers. I think the idea of "in and outers", doesn't always works.

Q: What do you mean by that?

MELAVEN: In and outers? Well, I think over the last 15 years or so they tended to have somebody fly in to do a job for you and then leave. In development assistance I think you need to have someone who has had a little experience in other countries and in knowing exactly what types of problems you're going to face. I think I've mentioned the case where you make a point for political purposes to a government by closing down a whole program and then a little later you try to start it up again or whether you make the same point by limiting the closure to one program. So that's one thing I think I learned.

I learned that obviously our people are key. The selection of people is key. I remember going to one meeting with the mission directors and the chief of personnel, I can't remember who was there and the speaker said, "You all are not doing your job. You are not identifying the people who have mental problems and who do crack up and you are not doing the job that you should. So we spend 90 percent of our time on one percent of personnel who mess up." We replied, "One, we are not psychiatrists and we have to be rather careful when we suggest that someone may be getting near the breaking point and that this is very difficult to do." I do think they should have careful screening of people entering the service. I was disappointed I think at one point to see one man who did have problems and because he had problems couldn't be assigned to any of the difficult posts. Well, he went to the good posts. I think maybe that seems a little unfair if we are supposed to be qualified for all posts, right? Even though I had a disability, I was

qualified for all posts. I think that was fine. I think the person I had in mind would never have been happy or satisfied in any post that he was assigned to and could really never do a completely good job. I may be wrong.

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

MELAVEN: There are pros and cons. One thing that we all like about AID or State and they are the same in some respects is that you have a boss who is difficult or maybe too demanding or not demanding enough or not adequately qualified to supervise you you know it's not going to be forever. It's going to be three years or four years and you're going to be at another location. But if you were thinking of that as a permanent situation, for the rest of your life it would be perhaps intolerable. I am sure in other organizations things do become intolerable and people have to leave the organization.

Q: Well, what about some of the other aspects, the pros and cons?

MELAVEN: Overall, I think for a family it is a wonderful introduction to the world. To live in some of these localities which are so exotic and interesting, I think, is a wonderful way to be brought up. I think for children I have seen and known of the schools all over the world and they vary a lot. Sometimes there are schools where they have to use little handbooks put out by companies to establish a little school, but these things work out and I think the children get a wonderful experience.

Q: What about the agency's processes of getting the work done and getting things done and project development and all that kind of thing?

MELAVEN: I guess in any organization you're going to have a good share of rules and regulations, whatever organization you work in. We may have slightly more than other organizations, I'm not sure. I always felt that the big difference between working for the Defense Department and working for AID, was that I was given much more independence with AID, partly because their missions are different. Now the staffing level in a Defense Department agency is much higher, with many more people and partly because they have to be ready for any eventuality but in AID it is not quite as necessary. I think I was given reasonable flexibility.

Q: One of the characteristics of AID, it had the regional economic development office (REDSO). I guess you had one in Central America too. What was your feeling about that way of economizing?

MELAVEN: I think those were good ideas. You know, in some fields it was absolutely vital such as in the legal field. You could have a shared lawyer. This makes a lot of sense. I think this also worked very well where you had a fully trained food for peace officer in say, Nairobi who could come through and help you and take on some of the responsibility. I think those are fine. On technical assistance and in some engineering fields too this was very helpful. Maybe this was less the case in some technical assistance fields and I'm less sure about education and agriculture.

Q: Any other aspect about the AID operation comparing between Africa and Latin America, for example? How would you compare the two operations there? Were they the same or different?

MELAVEN: Well, in some aspects they were quite different. I think the level of development was so different, really. In Ouagadougou you had a little bit of a central city that looked like any European town and then just a little bit outside, no electricity, no roads and this was in the city. It's just a completely different type of life. You know, the sun goes down and people go to bed, I guess. It's a different stage of development.

Q: And how about the way the bureau was operating? Was there a difference?

MELAVEN: I don't think there was that much.

Q: Sort of cross-fertilization from what you observed in Africa.

MELAVEN: Yes. I don't think there was a great deal of difference, really.

Q: And your relationship with the State Department?

MELAVEN: Between the two bureaus?

Q: Between your work and the State Department overall. Were there problems or differences or both?

MELAVEN: Sort of both, really. They had their objectives. I think the area of economic development we tend to think in long range terms, and I think it is very hard for some State Department people to think in those terms because they have immediate problems. They have to secure the vote of that country for a particular U.S. position in the United Nations or something of that nature and they want something done right now. Consequently they tend to love the "ambassador fund" type projects and which I do think have their value.

Q: Are those in both regions?

MELAVEN: Yes.

Q: How do they work

MELAVEN: I had to be a naysayer, I guess, in some instances where they were proposed. In one instance the ambassador was pushing to get uniforms for the caddies at the golf course; this was a very serious proposal and he was most unhappy with me. I said, "Well, it may be the ambassador's fund but it is AID's money, right?"

Q: What were they mainly used for?

MELAVEN: I think they were usually used for good purposes, individual small projects.

Q: For example?

MELAVEN: Maybe helping a school out in the country. Some of these projects are extremely difficult to do without your own staff on the ground. I remember in Bolivia for example, there was a school, I think it was in Michigan, that had collected \$500 to help out a little town in Bolivia. It took us literally, I think, three days to get a man out there and part of the last day was by donkey. And then the school wanted a report on how the project was going. So the idea of having a small fund where you could do some specific project and using a local as a coordinator is good but we can't always personally administer those types of projects. It is too time consuming.

I remember one thing we found in Nicaragua when we had an ag credit system, which was evolving and doing quite well. Cornell published a book about the system which was computerized. Since most of those small loans are so expensive to administer this approach seemed to be working quite well and we could keep track of the agricultural credits. You normally can't. It's just too expensive but it could be done with the computer.

Q: Were there some other examples of that type of experience?

MELAVEN: That was just one example involving computers. I'll mention one other which occurred when I was in Burkina Faso and Ouagadougou. We had been using basically French expatriates as secretaries and administrative staff, and my American secretary said, "Look, I can train Burkinabe to be the secretaries and we will use the computers." And literally, she did. And the local staff could, for example, type a text and an American could look it over, make quick changes in a very short time and the copy was as good as what the French could do. It was just an example of something that could be done using the computer to facilitate the administrative workings of the mission.

Q: Did you have a lot of local staff in all your missions?

MELAVEN: Yes.

Q: And how were they?

MELAVEN: I think a lot of them were very, very good. In fact, in Peru for example, the local engineer was U.S. educated and became the engineer for the mission. I think more probably could be done in that area. Maybe they are doing it now. I'm 20 years behind times.

Q: Any other lessons with all this experience? How about in relationship to the host government? What would you say was the key to that? You negotiated a lot of programs.

MELAVEN: We negotiated a lot. I think you really have to build rapport over time with the people and get assurances that they understand your position and it takes a lot of contact with them which is sometimes hard to obtain.

Q: Are there some types of programs that you would say that are good to pursue and should be pursued and others that are not a particularly good idea?

MELAVEN: I have seen some private-sector programs which were good, but not too many. I think this is a very difficult field for us to work in and partly due to our own limitations in getting the right types of people. I liked the idea of cooperative programs with the Peace Corps; I think that was very good.

Q: What programs, types of programs in health, agriculture, population, whatever, would you say worked fairly and those that were not good ideas? You know, like integrated rural development, I don't know what your views about that were.

MELAVEN: The last integrated rural development program I was involved in, just didn't get off the ground. For me, that was a difficult one.

Q: What were the effective ones? The programs in population and in health and agriculture or would you back away from some of those in your experience?

MELAVEN: I would certainly do health and population programs in all countries. I think we should be doing something in those areas. And again taking into account the local sensitivities, which may be much less than we tend to think they are. And maybe a little storm isn't too bad once in awhile. We may get some good publicity out of it.

Q: What about infrastructure projects?

MELAVEN: I personally wish we could have some infrastructure projects. I always remember talking to government officials in Rwanda who would always point out the wonderful roads that Qadhafi had built for them while we are say, improving public administration or something similar. As much as I believe that this was vitally important to the country, and I don't think they could care less, but they sure cared about that road. So I think some mixture of infrastructure is good. I don't think we should be totally out of such projects. For example, we had an air sector program in Bolivia which was really very, very good; planning and replanning the airports and air travel in Bolivia. It was one of the feasibility studies, which I think are so important, and it planned the redesign of all the airports and also selected all the planes for the national airline including some Canadian planes and some U.S. planes and probably some European planes as well. I can't remember the details.

Q: And we were the key to setting up this?

MELAVEN: We were the key to putting all this together through a good feasibility study that included the idea of an EXIM Bank loan for a DC-8 jet. That was a good study, and I

think this did an awfully lot. Again, as I mentioned I like feasibility studies and to have such a project available on a grant or loan basis. So we have something that is better designed in an area and even if it comes out negative it's important to have the true picture.

Q: You were in the training field when you started. What about the types of training programs that you tried? You talked about short courses.

MELAVEN: I liked the idea of some academic programs, I mean longer-range programs, and I think we have to identify the teachers for these and make them part of our program. I think they can be very useful for a government and maybe those obtaining the training might have to make a commitment like we do. I think when I went off for training I had to sign a paper that said I would be there for another five years or something like that. I think you would expect the people to do that too. But for a ministry to have some trained economists around seemed to be great.

Q: Do you think foreign assistance is effective? Does it make a difference?

MELAVEN: I think it does. I don't think -- except in some exceptional cases -- we create miracles. But I think we sort of push people in the right direction. I wish there had been more longer-range studies. I mean, if I were to go back and see projects I was involved in 20 years ago, I think this would be very interesting for me and for the agency to just see what happened to those I was pushing so hard at a certain point. We rarely get that chance. I don't know whether they have ever done that or not. They may have done some such impact studies.

Q: Well, would you say you feel like you accomplished things? How do you size it up? Some people come up discouraged.

MELAVEN: I know, I know. I guess I am someplace in between. I think we should be doing this. I mean, we have an obligation to do this. I think because of AID and other institutions providing assistance, there is perhaps a little less conflict in the world; we certainly haven't eliminated it and we are probably not going to but we may be stopping some of it.

Q: Doing what?

MELAVEN: We may have stopped some of the conflict in the world. I think that's to our advantage.

Q: In what program areas do you think we have the most impact? Population, health, infrastructure, education?

MELAVEN: Well, in health and population I think we have had quite an impact. It's an extremely difficult area.

Q: Why difficult?

MELAVEN: Some of the prejudices they have against immunization programs in certain countries especially in West Africa where they thought it was somehow improper, really, improper to be taking an inoculation. We had a very hard time getting some of those programs started. This is certainly not true all over the world.

Q: Overall, what programs stand out in your experience as being very effective?

MELAVEN: The most effective of the programs?

Q: That you think had the greater contribution and had the most lasting effect.

MELAVEN: It's a very hard question.

Q: Well, any other area we haven't touched on?

MELAVEN: I think we have covered most everything, haven't we, in one way or another?

Q: You're the source.

End of interview