

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

DONALD A. CAMP

*Interviewed by David Reuther
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INTERVIEW

Q: Good morning. This is a Foreign Affairs Oral History Program interview with Don Camp. Today is the 10th of February, 2012 and we are at the ADST office on the FSI (Foreign Service Institute) campus. This interview is being conducted under the auspices of the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. I'm David Reuther. Don, can you give us some family background as a start? You were born in 1948?

CAMP: I was born in 1948, on the Upper West Side of New York City where my parents were working at the time. We did not live in New York very long. My father did survey market research (opinion polling) and we had a somewhat peripatetic life. My sister was born in Montgomery, Alabama. Then we moved to San Antonio, where my father was a civilian employee of the military. We ultimately moved to Washington D.C. where my father was employed by the United States Information Agency as a civil servant doing survey research for the government, measuring who listened to the Voice of America and how effective U.S. government information materials were -- that kind of thing. Though not foreign service, he was offered an overseas excursion tour. So my family moved to Bangkok in June of 1961 and I spent two years at the age of 13, 14 in Bangkok, which was really what whetted my interest in the Foreign Service and in Asia.

Q: Now, your father himself was from where?

CAMP: He was born in Ogden, Utah and grew up in Berkeley, California.

Q: Oh, goodness. And your mother's people?

CAMP: Farmers in Central Illinois. Near Bloomington-Normal. I have many cousins still out there.

Q: How did they meet?

CAMP: My mother was one member of her family who left Illinois. She joined the army in World War II and was in the Women's Auxiliary Corps as a First Lieutenant. (A few years ago she had a very moving funeral at Arlington Cemetery with a caisson and all the formalities.) After the war she moved to New York City to attend Columbia Teachers College. She met my

father in their common apartment building on the Upper West Side; they courted through the atrium of their building at 606 West 116th Street.

Q: That's a great story. So she actually saw service in World War II?

CAMP: She was in the continental U.S. She never went overseas.

Q: So USIA (United States Information Agency) brought you to Bangkok. Now, Bangkok in the early 1960's was still not very well developed. I mean we would have had a large USAID (Agency for International Development) program, but the great expansion that I saw when I was there years later was all due to the Vietnam War.

CAMP: Yes, this was pre-Vietnam build-up. There was, however, a fairly large Joint U.S. Military Assistance Group -- JUSMAG -- they were a major part of the embassy, as was the AID mission which was called the United States Operation Mission, USOM. My father was in the U.S. Information Service (USIS) office, which had a large separate compound of its own on Sathorn Road -- now the Sukhothai Hotel.

Q: Must have been pretty exotic for a young 13-year-old.

CAMP: It was very exotic, and my parents were remarkably lenient about letting me wander the big city on pedicab and bicycle. I got to know some Thai language, not as much as I would have wished, but because I learned it fairly early it stayed with me. I spent two years in Bangkok. Then I went away to boarding school in India. I didn't know until my mother told my wife years later that they were looking for a boarding school for me for tenth grade because they were worried I was getting into the drug culture of Bangkok. That was not true, but there were a lot of drugs around the International School of Bangkok at the time. So I went off to India to Woodstock School in tenth grade.

Q: What was it like attending these international schools? Who were the other students and what do you recall about the teachers?

CAMP: At the time, the International School of Bangkok was prohibited under Thai law from enrolling Thai students. But it was fairly international. They had other embassy kids. I remember Korean and Chinese students -- or Taiwanese, I guess. Fair number of missionary kids. The International School of Bangkok still has a very active alumni association. I was only there for two years. A lot of people spent virtually their whole adolescence there. Nevertheless, it was a fascinating time and an interesting time to be there. My Latin teacher was the mother of Rovic Huso, who was much later a Foreign Service friend

Q: One of the things that's interesting, I mean here you are overseas and yet there's things happening back in the United States. I wonder, given the communication technology at the time, how much you were aware of those things. For example, in the early '60s you had a lot of civil rights demonstrations. And then in October '62 you had the whole Cuban Missile Crisis, China-India War, those sorts of things. Did those come into your consciousness?

CAMP: I was a news junkie even in those days, but my news reading, because of the distance and the communications issues, was limited to the Bangkok World newspaper. And so what they reported there was what I knew of American society to a large extent. There wasn't any English language television in Bangkok at the time. So no, I was pretty isolated as far as that goes, except for Asian affairs. The civil turmoil in American society was very, very distant.

Q: Now, the boarding school in India, was that one of those that was set up by the missionaries long ago and far away?

CAMP: It was indeed. Woodstock School is in Mussoorie, a hill station in Northern India. It was established by and for the missionary community, but over the years it recruited a fair number of students from the diplomatic community, both in India and wider Asia. I think the two main schools at the time were in Baguio in the Philippines and Woodstock in India. And my parents opted to send me to Woodstock.

Q: You must have been at Woodstock then when President Kennedy was assassinated.

CAMP: Actually, we were on our way home. I was in London when President Kennedy was assassinated. We left early and came back in November 1963. So I remember vividly being in London and having British citizens come up to us while we were a meal in the hotel and say how sorry they were. It was the first we'd heard.

Q: Mm. So you came back to the States then in late '63 --

CAMP: Back to Washington. Back to Bethesda-Chevy Chase High School in suburban Maryland.

Q: Given this overseas experience that you've had and probably didn't share with a lot of the other students, how did they see you or you see them?

CAMP: You know, that's a good question. I'd just come out of this school in India where I'd been surrounded by an international crowd of students. It was 14 years after Indian independence and in the immediate wake of the China-India War of 1962. We'd had rationing – refined sugar once a week and a few ounces of meat a week. Not hardship, but nothing like the abundance I came home to in Washington. It was disconcerting.

But I was only gone for two and a half years, and my friends were still there from elementary school days. So I fit right in and re-adapted to my suburban lifestyle, and stayed there until my graduation in '66.

Q: On the basis of this previous exposure, did that impact on what you were reading and what you were interested in as you finished up high school?

CAMP: Yes. I thought I knew Asia fairly well, although I really only knew Thailand and a little bit of India. But that certainly fueled my interest in Asia, and to some extent in the Vietnam War, which of course was the huge issue of the time. But I was looking at it from the perspective of

Thailand. I was sophisticated enough at that stage to be rather skeptical of the domino theory, which was prominent at the time, that if Vietnam fell then all of Southeast Asia would fall. I had a different perspective from living two years in Thailand.

Q: Did you have any particularly favorite classes in high school?

CAMP: I was kind of a math and physics guy in high school. I'd had good courses in Bangkok, and in India as well. So I was much more focused on the sciences, rather than history or Asian civilizations or anything like that. That came later.

Q: Now, you graduated high school in 1966, and that fall, I assume September, you entered Carleton College. What drew you to that college? I see it as a sophisticated liberal arts school, not for math majors (laughs).

CAMP: Carleton did a very good job of recruiting. And in fact five people from my high school graduating class went to Carleton that year. It was either Carleton or Oberlin for me. I visited Oberlin and for some reason didn't much like the campus. I never visited Carleton before I matriculated. It was kind of an arbitrary decision at the time, but one that I certainly never regretted.

Q: Well, it's interesting for no other reason than four years earlier you were in Bangkok and India, and now you're in Northfield, Minnesota and, I can assure you, the climate is different.

CAMP: (laughs) Yes. I tend to like extremes,

Q: They recruited, but what did you find interesting about Carleton?

CAMP: Oh, I think it was -- it was a good liberal arts college, the kind I'd always assumed I would attend. They had some interests in Asia as well. At Carleton, I ultimately got my degree in math, but I took a very eclectic bunch of courses, especially including Asian civilization courses. Very influential for me was a semester abroad program in India. I went back to India at the end of my junior year in the summer of '69 and spent six months there on a research program in Pune.

Q: Now, at the time that you're in college from '66 to '70, Vietnam is cooking and campuses are responding to this. You have this Asian background. How did you perceive Vietnam from this college platform, and how was it being discussed?

CAMP: Carleton was a very activist campus, and certainly anti-war sentiment was predominant. I certainly sympathized. I wasn't a huge activist. I never got arrested at the Army Recruiting Center in St. Paul, Minnesota as some of my friends did. I was more a quiet participant in various protests. And then of course the Kent State killings occurred in the spring of my senior year and almost derailed our spring semester. Carleton was almost closed down with protests when we had to finish up our senior year and do our comprehensive exams and so forth. So somehow we got through that. It was a very unnerving experience to see what was happening.

Q: Going back to your semester abroad, how did that become available to you?

CAMP: Carleton was just developing an India studies program. It was the first year that the Associated Colleges of the Midwest had run a program. It included students from a few other colleges in the ACM consortium, including Lawrence. In preparation for the program, we studied the local language of Pune – Marathi – in the spring of our junior year. Then we left in June for six months at Deccan College in Pune. When we arrived in India, we stopped in Bombay where I called on the U.S. consulate and did a little preliminary research in their files. They were very forthcoming to a young college student. There were a couple of Carleton connections in Bombay. We went to dinner with a consulate officer named Eugene Bird, whose son went to Carleton a couple of years later – Kai was a student in high school at the time; he went on to be a Pulitzer Prize winning author. We also met a delightful woman, Nuvart Mehta (Carleton class of 1936), an Armenian-American who married an Indian and lived her life in India.

Q: (laughs) And what did this junior abroad amount to? I mean what did you do? Did you write a paper?

CAMP: Yes. I researched a paper on Indian Hindu nationalism. It was only a little over 20 years since Indian independence. And so the people who had been involved in Indian independence were still living, and some of them could be interviewed. There was a radical element in that whole period called the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, RSS, which still exists in India. They had a peripheral involvement in the killing of Mahatma Gandhi. And some of those people were still around. I talked to some of them in Pune in 1969 and wrote my paper on the RSS. And years later as I was working on India I had some perspective on Indian independence, and on living in India in 1963 and 1969.

Q: What were your living accommodations like?

CAMP: In Pune we stayed for a while in the Deccan College dorms, which were basic, but fun because you met some of the other students. And then I had a home stay with a middle class family in Pune for a couple of months. And that also gave me an exposure to middle class life of the time.

Q: As you said, you did graduate in 1970 with a math major. But I assume sort of a liberal arts minor?

CAMP: Absolutely -- by that time I had gotten into the Asian civilization courses and the like and taken a fair number of those.

Q: Any favorite teachers at the time?

CAMP: Yes. Math teachers, they were all excellent. And the thing about Carleton is that the teachers were very accessible. They were teachers. They were not researchers, they were scholars, but they saw their primary role as teaching and so they were very close to the students. But I stayed in touch with, and met later, some of the professors at Carleton and stayed in very close touch with the China people like Roy Grow who later visited me in Chengdu. And in fact

now teaching at Carleton on an occasional basis as an adjunct professor is retired FSO Bert Levin --

PEACE CORPS

Q: After Carleton, you went in to the Peace Corps. Was that a natural transition? I mean were you aching to get into the Peace Corps or how did that opportunity make itself available?

CAMP: Again, a lot of people were looking at that. I was following in the footsteps of a lot of my colleagues. Peace Corps appealed. The chance to go back overseas appealed. To be honest, I was hoping they'd send me to India, which they did. I was at that point thinking that I would basically make my career in South Asia. And the draft was also a factor, because at that time if you were lucky, Peace Corps was sometimes a draft deferral. I didn't particularly want to go into the military, I didn't feel I had the makings of a conscientious objector, so for a lot of reasons I was delighted when the Peace Corps accepted me.

Q: Was that a long and difficult process to get in the Peace Corps?

CAMP: I don't think it was. I demonstrated that I had overseas experience, I had lived in India. I think I probably went toward the top of the pile for that reason. And to my pleasure they offered me an India slot. There was a big Peace Corps program in India at the time. I guess they saw that I had some language and some experience, and so they assigned me to India.

Q: What did the Peace Corps program in India look like?

CAMP: At the time there were something like 400 Peace Corps volunteers in India. The high point had been a few years before when Lyndon Johnson had seized on the Peace Corps as a way to build relations with India. And for a while we had up to a thousand volunteers at a time in India. I think it was the biggest program in the world at the time. But Peace Corps frankly fouled it up. They didn't have the programs, there were a lot of dissatisfied volunteers who left early. So they scaled down the program. We were one of the last groups to go into India. 1970-72 was a difficult time in U.S.-India relations because during the Bangladesh War, the U.S. was perceived to be on the side of the Pakistanis. The USS Enterprise steamed into the Bay of Bengal. Peace Corps volunteers were suspected in some cases of being agents of the U.S. government. There were all sorts of Indian periodicals that purveyed that view. So it was a difficult time. And Mrs. Gandhi around that time decided that she would scale down and ultimately eliminate the Peace Corps. Peace Corps stayed on until 1975, but there weren't many big groups that came in after ours.

Q: Now, there's a period of training the Peace Corps put you through. What did that involve and where did it take place?

CAMP: Peace Corps was just getting into in-country training, so we were kind of a transition group. We trained for a couple of weeks in a migrant labor camp in Davis, California, where we saw rice paddy cultivation as it was done in California on a large scale with aerial spraying and so forth. Then they took us to the International Rice Research Institute in Los Baños in the

Philippines for a couple of weeks where we got immersed in how paddy cultivation was done in Asia. And Peace Corps was very good. The first day they sent us all into a rice paddy, a filthy rice paddy and had us play touch football, at the end of which we were all covered in crap, buffalo shit, and everything that is in a rice paddy. And we never *ever* worried after that about walking into a paddy barefoot and checking the crop and so forth. And we learned about the hybrid varieties that came out of research at Los Baños. Then we went for the final two months of training to a rice research institute in South India, where we started intensive language training and learned more about what we would be pursuing, the intensive agriculture development program of India.

Q: Now, India is an area of multiple local languages and you were saying you picked up some earlier, the area that you ultimately ended up was in the south of India.

CAMP: Right.

Q: So this would be a new language.

CAMP: Totally new cultural area. In the south, everyone speaks languages in the Dravidian family, separate from the Indo-Aryan, Sanskritic languages of the north. There are some similarities in vocabulary, but quite different in grammar. Tamil was a language spoken at the time by 40 million people. It's probably closer to 100 million now. But it's not widely known and not widely spoken outside of India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Singapore,

Q: Now, what town, what district, and how did you live as a Peace Corps volunteer, and were you there with others?

CAMP: Each volunteer was placed in a different village, spread around the rather large Thanjavur District of Tamil Nadu. I lived in the market town of Sholapuram, which is about 5,000 people in a very fertile region of the Kaveri River delta, not too far from the strait that separates South India from Sri Lanka. I had a small two-room house -- it was pleasant enough, very simple, but it had an open-air latrine in the back. I was very grateful for that because many of my colleagues who lived in more traditional houses walked 30 yards or so across the rice paddy to a latrine. I lived pretty well as these things go. It's a nice town. Very friendly.

Q: Did you have a bicycle or did you walk?

CAMP: Bicycle and walking; my prime methods of transportation were the bicycle and the public bus.

Q: How were you accepted? Or were you part of an Indian government program and you were their outreach agent ?

CAMP: I had a title, something like Agricultural Extension Agent. But the people in the village did not quite know what to do with me. They didn't know who I was, what I was doing there. Gradually I made friends and developed relationships. My goal was to make myself helpful to the farmers and to encourage them to use higher yielding varieties of rice. And to do that I found

that I needed to develop a skill that would help me with the farmers. And the skill that I developed was I could repair fairly well the backpack sprayers that were used to spray pesticides. So whenever a farmer had a problem with his backpack sprayer, he would come to me and I would gap the spark plug or clean the carburetor. I'm not very mechanical. But Peace Corps was good about teaching me a few skills that made me useful to the farmers of the area. Pesticide spraying, of course, is not a skill that you want to pursue (*laughs*). But at the time it was the epitome of hybrid rice cultivation and higher yield. Kill those insects.

Q: And did your mechanical skills give you some success?

CAMP: I think so. Whether I made a lasting impact on that village, I don't know. It made a lasting impact on me, for sure. But the new hybrid varieties of rice were coming in and I hope I accelerated their acceptance by the local farmers.

Q: Again, you weren't attached to either the Indian or the U.S. government, you were just plopped in the village?

CAMP: I was theoretically part of the local agricultural extension program. I was an agent of the local Indian authorities promoting their hybrid development programs, but I worked pretty much on my own.

Q: And let's see. And some of the friendships and whatnot that you met there would, again, introduce you to the culture and language and -- what were some of the non-agricultural issues that were of interest to people?

CAMP: The society was changing rather rapidly at the time. I'm not sure I totally absorbed it, but the social structures of the area were breaking down. The caste system was a big issue. The Brahmin community was beginning to move out. It was very much a segregated community where the Brahmins would live in one part of the village and the non-Brahmins would live in another. There was a non-Brahmin government that had taken power in Madras, now Chennai. And so the Brahmins, feeling the pressure, were moving out of agriculture and moving into the big cities with their education and doing very well. I lived in a village that was predominantly Muslim, which was kind of interesting. The landowners were Tamils who had in the early 20th century moved to Malaysia, made money, come back and bought up the lands of this area. So it was heavily Muslim; there were a couple of mosques. Most of my friends were Muslim. I heard the call to prayer every morning, but it was a pretty relaxed Tamil-style Islam. Ramadan was celebrated with great abandon and some of the larger landowners, who could afford it, would keep their wives basically tucked away; you never met them when you went to call on the landowners. But most people couldn't afford not having their women working. The women had to go to the market, the women had to work in the fields, and so forth. It was an interesting exposure at an early stage to Islam and India.

Q: And at the market were most of the people selling goods women?

CAMP: Yes. In the markets themselves. In the teashops and the little stores though it was primarily men. I think the men had the slightly better jobs, sitting inside running their shops or

cooking the roti or whatever. And the women were outside selling vegetables.

It was a different time in India. There was one post office in the village which had the only telephone. If you had to telephone out, you had to wait for a connection. Most communication with my friends was done either by mail -- they had a very excellent next-day delivery throughout the state of Tamil Nadu -- or by telegram. You could send a telegram very cheaply and someone would have it 30 miles away a couple hours later. But there was certainly no television. Communication was pretty basic except that there was a bus from Madras every morning that brought the English language newspaper, The Hindu, so I could stay in touch with the rest of the world through this very good daily paper.

Q: When did you leave the Peace Corps?

CAMP: It was after two years in the summer of '72. I had already thought about the future and took the Foreign Service exam at the consulate in Madras in the fall of '71, administered by Jon Gibney, a friend of many years' standing. But in the Peace Corps I didn't have much contact at all with the consulate in Madras. Some of my friends knew some of the people in the consulate and were invited up for meals or whatever. I just didn't know them, except for the one experience of going to take the Foreign Service exam.

Q: And why did you do that?

CAMP: (*laughs*) I was looking for, you know, what is my future going to be? And I had some exposure to the Foreign Service as a career from the Bangkok days. I also thought that I might pursue an academic career. That's why I went off to the University of Chicago to study Tamil in 1972, continuing my immersion in India. This turned out to be unrealistic; I am not an academic by nature. But the federal government was at the time giving very generous college fellowships for study of unusual languages. And so I had a very generous grant to go to study Tamil at the University of Chicago. I found myself in a PhD program for which I was totally unfitted, but two years in Chicago studying ancient Tamil literature and Indian civilization with some of the famous people in the field was a great opportunity.

Q: Wait a minute. How does one go from Peace Corps in the field to fill out the applications necessary? I mean were you filling out the applications for Chicago from India or did you come back?

CAMP: I never even thought about coming back in those two years. India was a long way away in those days. I think the only member of our group who went back headed to the US to get married (not authorized by the Peace Corps, as I recall) The farthest away I got was Nepal in the summer. I did the university paperwork from India. I left Peace Corps in July of '72 and turned up in Hyde Park, Chicago in September with my fellowship in hand. So I must have been fairly creative in using the mails in those days.

Q: So you got to do a trip to Nepal?

CAMP: I saved my living expenses stipend that the Peace Corps gave me, which was the

equivalent of about \$70 a month. I had minimal expenses in the village, so I saved my rupees and went north with one of my Peace Corps friends in the hot season. There was no agriculture at that time of the year and no particular reason to stay in the village. We took the train north via Calcutta as far as we could go to the railhead. We took the bus from there. It was a long journey. We went immediately to the Peace Corps office in Kathmandu to seek local information and advice. They were used to seeing volunteers from India; they gave us some trekking maps done by Peace Corps volunteers in Nepal who must have been a more rugged bunch than us. And so we took the plane to Pokhara in central Nepal. There was no road at the time. We flew this DC-3 with live chickens and baggage in the middle of the Royal Nepal Airlines plane. And then we walked about two weeks up the Kali Gandaki river valley. Using the guides written by Nepal Peace Corps volunteers, we found that we could walk about half as far as the local volunteers had mapped out each day. We would be exhausted and would stay the nights in little Nepali caravanserais, sometimes right above the barn. It was a fascinating experience in a very different Nepal. I've been back many times since, and marveled at the changes there.

Q: How did you come back to Chicago then from India? Peace Corps would have given you a ticket, I suppose.

CAMP: They gave each of us a ticket, which we could play with a little bit in those days. I came back via brief stops in Japan and Taiwan. My first exposure to China was a week in Taipei. I spent much of it in H.W. Cave's Bookstore, which was the Mecca for booklovers in East Asia in those days; most of the books were pirated, and dirt cheap .

Q: And how did you settle into Chicago? Were there dorms or you got off-campus housing?

CAMP: For my first year at Chicago I stayed at the International House, which is a great tradition on several campuses in the United States; it's a dormitory with a fair sprinkling of international students, as well as Americans who are interested in international affairs. I stayed there for a year and then moved off campus to a house that I shared with a old friend from college who was living in Chicago at the time.

Q: Now, this master's program was in classical Tamil literature, not politics?

CAMP: Well, the problem was that it was not really a master's program; it was a PhD program. The University of Chicago was a very academic campus that was very focused on training teachers and professors for the next generation. I quickly realized that this was not what was in my future and while I enjoyed the coursework I was not going to be a doctoral candidate or a professor for my career. I did make some good friends there, some who later worked at the state Department. Steve Blake was a good friend, he got a PhD and then entered the Foreign Service, and remains a good friend today. Walter Andersen, later the Head of INR (Bureau of Intelligence and Research) for South Asia, was a student there at the time. Bronson Percival was a student. So there were a fair number of people who were pursuing academics but had a career in the Foreign Service in their future.

Q: You did get a master's out of it though.

CAMP: I did not get a master's out of it. I would have had to stay even longer to get a degree, so when the State Department came calling and offered me a place in the entering class in June 1974, I recall sitting down with my friend Steve Blake in Regenstein Library and saying, "What do you think I should do?"

He said, "Take it. You'd be crazy not to." I agreed. So I abandoned my academic career at that point and joined the Foreign Service.

Q: Now, that was three years between the time you took the written and you joined. There was an oral exam in there somewhere.

CAMP: I failed the oral exam the first time around, and took it again when in Chicago. And that was the one where I passed and was offered a place. I'm sure I was not unique in failing the oral exam the first time around. I got in through determination.

Q: And you've had the experience, you've had the exposure to the foreign language, but your burning passion wasn't to get into the Foreign Service. It was one of the paths you --

CAMP: I think I wanted to live and study overseas, and at that point I thought I wanted to live and study overseas primarily in India. I broadened my perspectives after that. But that was my main goal in going to the Foreign Service. It wasn't a burning passion to be Senior Foreign Service Officer or an Ambassador somewhere years later. I didn't think that far ahead.

ENTERING THE FOREIGN SERVICE

Q: Now, here you are, you have had this experience. You're brought to Washington. You accept the appointment. And you're meeting all these other people in your A100 class. How did they look to you? Were they all like you?

CAMP: It was a large class for the time -- around 50 people. Even though we were only together for six or eight weeks we bonded. You're coming into this new world, and you're not sure what to expect. There were one or two people that we could immediately pick out, who had a fair amount of experience. Chuck Redman was one of those who later went on to be Ambassador to Germany and Sweden. He had come out of the military, and was experienced beyond his years. There were other very good people. Edmund Hull. I met the man who later became my brother-in-law, David Summers, for the very first time in the entering class. So it was important from that perspective as well. Molly Williamson. Some of them, Don Johnson, for instance, already had a law degree. And there were a number of people who had more real world experience than I did.

Mike Metrisko was one who like me had had Peace Corps experience before coming into the Foreign Service. Mike had been a volunteer in Iran, went back there for one of his first tours, and was one of the hostages in 1979. But, no, we were not coming from the same kind of environment or the same background. By today's standards, it was far from diverse -- four or five black officers, and not many more women. The Foreign Service was just beginning to understand that diversity was really important for the organization. It had only been a few years

before that women officers had been forced to resign when they married. So the Foreign Service was beginning to change.

Q: And not all of them were from East Coast colleges.

CAMP: Very few were.

Q: So what was A100 like? What did you guys do for that period?

CAMP: My first reaction was they're teaching us things that I'm not the slightest bit interested in. There seemed to be an inordinate amount of attention paid to things like retirement benefits. I realized early on that I was going to learn how to be a foreign service officer once I got out to post, and not before. The A100 class was good to get a sense of the State Department and the organizational structure. And it was about making connections and making friends with the people that you were coming in with. The bonding was important for me.

Q: Must have been a fairly heavy dose of consular regulations.

CAMP: Most of that came in the follow-on ConGen (Consul General) Rosslyn course for those who were heading to a consular tour. I never took that course, never had a consular tour, and I always felt a little behind the curve since visa regulations are so much an integral part of what a foreign service officer is expected to know. Now of course every entering officer is expected to have a consular tour; that was not required in 1974.

Q: You finished the A100. How does it evolve into getting an assignment?

CAMP: We were all asked to prepare a list of posts where we would like to go for that first tour. I must have been really stuck in a rut because I remember the two posts I put highest on my list were Madras and Colombo, the latter being at least in part a Tamil-speaking area. I was mildly upset that I didn't get Madras, which went to a good friend. But I was assigned to Colombo. I was assigned to five months of Sinhala language training. Sri Lankans speak English, Sinhala, and Tamil, so I would have all three national languages. After about a month I got a call from personnel saying "By the way, we've abolished that position in Colombo. You need to come in and talk to us about your next steps." And I panicked. And instead of going to see personnel, I went in to see the desk officer. The desk officer was a wonderful guy named Jim Leader who said, "This is crazy. The system is out of control, as usual. We'll find something. We'll take care of you." And he did some legerdemain that I still don't understand and found another position in Colombo to which I could be transferred. He said, "You're not going to waste your Sinhala language training and your Tamil language ability; we're going to get you to Colombo." I've always been grateful. So my assignment was changed from a political officer position to an economic/commercial officer job.

COLOMBO

Q: My research said you replaced Ed Brynn.

CAMP: Yes, I actually went to post and overlapped with him for four or five months. At post, they moved me out of the econ/commercial slot after that time and moved me to Ed's political/labor job.

Q: Ah. Now, you're a first tour officer on your way to post. How does one get to Colombo in April of 1975?

CAMP: I believe that was still the era when you could find a way to take an ocean liner across the Atlantic. I didn't have much interest in that; I was excited and just wanted to get to post. In 1974, Pan Am flew to Karachi and then you took something else, probably BOAC (British Overseas Airways Corporation) to Colombo

I was 27, a single, clueless first tour officer. I was sometimes mistaken for one of the Marine Security Guards. The DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission), a wonderful woman named Pat Byrne, took me under her wing. At one point she mildly chastised me for wearing sandals to a function at the Ambassador's residence. She said, "You're not in the Peace Corps anymore, Don," I was not really in the button down culture, no longer in the Peace Corps but still uncomfortable in a coat and tie, a trait that sticks with me still.

Q: Let's talk about the officers at the post when you arrived and who was your boss and how did you fit in.

CAMP: The ambassador was a wonderful South Asia specialist by the name of Chris Van Hollen, the father of the congressman, Chris Van Hollen, who was at that time away in boarding school in India (Kodaikanal, in his case).

And the DCM was Pat Byrne, later to be replaced by Ray Perkins. I had a succession of bosses in both the Political and the Economic Sections. Jay Hawley was Economic Counselor, and Andy Kaye was the Political Counselor. There was not the formal requirement there is now that supervisors mentor the young officers, but I was treated very well indeed. The Ambassador took me under his wing. I remember traveling with him on a couple of his trips around the country. He was a great history buff and wanted to explore the history of the American involvement in Sri Lanka. So we went and found in the city of Galle the grave of the first American consul from the 1860s. If I can jump ahead just a bit, he was actually recalled before the end of his normal term. I inquired why and it was politics in Washington. He was replaced rather suddenly by a politician from the U.S; it caused great confusion in Sri Lanka at the time -- why is Ambassador Van Hollen being replaced by this new person? Are the Americans unhappy with us? It was my first introduction to how politics play into senior appointments in the Service.

Q: Did we have a large AID mission at the time?

CAMP: We did not. We had a mixed relationship with Sri Lanka. US assistance had been cut off some years earlier because of the Hickenlooper Amendment, which has now been forgotten, but required cutoff of assistance when a country nationalizes American private assets, which Sri Lanka in a fit of socialist economics had done in the 1950s. We were just developing a minimal AID mission again as I was leaving. The political situation in Sri Lanka was of interest to those

of us who were studying it, but not of great interest to Washington. In the two and a half years I was in Sri Lanka, we had one visit by a Deputy Assistant Secretary from Washington, Spike Dubs, who was later killed in Afghanistan. That visit was a huge thing for us. We had one CODEL (congressional delegation) as I recall, a few congressmen who were passing through India, and we had the Non-Aligned Summit in 1976, which brought the likes of Fidel Castro and Muammar Gaddafi to Sri Lanka, because Sri Lanka at the time considered itself a major player in the non-aligned world. But it was not a country that was high on Washington's priority list at the time.

Q: What would be the kinds of things that you would be reporting on as the Labor Officer?

CAMP: It was primarily domestic politics. The labor movement was very influential in all of the political parties. So each party had a labor wing, and my job was to keep in touch with the labor leaders. There was a small AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations) funded assistance program at the time under the Asian American Free Labor Institute. The emerging domestic issue, it later turned out, was the beginning of the Tamil separatist movement that exploded in 1983 into 25 years of ethnic strife. This was at a very early stage in 1975. Perhaps if I'd been a better Political Officer I would have picked up on this and done some prescient reporting. I remember Tamil politicians and labor leaders telling me that the Tamil majority area in the north had to be separate from the southern Sinhala-dominated area. And I would, to be honest, be rather dismissive. I'd say, "Jaffna (the capital of the northern province) is not economically viable. It just won't work." But of course that had nothing to do with the feelings that the Tamils had about how they were being discriminated against in Sri Lanka. And that led to the passions that eventually blew up in 1983 when the ethnic crisis really erupted.

Q: Now, here you're a reporting officer using your language. How did the Tamil officials and representatives respond to your capability in the language? I mean you're much more junior than they are, I would assume. They've just come off independence within the last couple of decades.

CAMP: I'm sure my language skills were appreciated. The people I was dealing with on an official basis, especially in the government, spoke far better English than I spoke either Sinhala or Tamil. When you got to the labor movement, the leaders also tended to speak good English. Sri Lankans tended to be very proud of being a well-educated country. It was only when traveling to Jaffna or traveling to more isolated parts of the island that the language came in handy. My Sinhala probably didn't improve during those two and a half years because I was working mostly in English. But again, it was very useful to have because you could use it when needed. And speaking the language also helps you understand the culture in which you are living. I was very grateful to have it.

Q: Now, during this assignment you're talking about going with the ambassador on a couple of occasions. You did have opportunities to travel around the island and, and see some of the major urban and cultural sites?

CAMP: I did. I had no family responsibilities. I had a car, and on Saturday morning I would get

into my little Toyota Corolla and drive somewhere. And Sri Lanka is not a small country, but with a three-day weekend, for instance, you can travel most anywhere. And I did travel all over the island, particularly to the south, but also to the hill country. It's a beautiful country and after a while as I developed contacts, I could drop in on people, perhaps in the tea country up in Nuwara Eliya, or in Kandy. I climbed Adam's Peak, a spiritual/athletic experience, three times. There were any number of cultural and tourism opportunities for a young guy with a car and time on his hands.

Q: Because that in fact had been a major base during World War II, particularly for the intelligence people up in the highlands.

CAMP: That's right. Mountbatten's headquarters in the war were in Ceylon. And one of the more famous war movies, "Bridge on the River Kwai," which took place in Thailand was actually filmed in Sri Lanka, using some of the army sites of that time. There were still a few abandoned wartime airstrips where you could rev your car up to its capacity

Q: Now, one of the jobs of any embassy is to report on outstanding events. And in August of 1976 the fifth Non-Aligned Summit was held in Colombo. And in fact, Prime Minister Bandaranaike was the chairperson for that. I would assume the embassy did a lot of reporting. You said Castro came and --

CAMP: Yes. It put Colombo on the international stage for about a week. Mrs. Bandaranaike was the chairperson. Washington sent in a couple of people from the Department to be the liaison with some of the friendlier countries in the Non-Aligned Movement. My job was to work the diplomatic community -- talk to the various embassies about what was going on. There was a good network of junior officers in the diplomatic community, so I knew the Third Secretary from the Malaysian High Commission, for instance. So I would talk to her about what was going on in the Non-Aligned Summit that day. It all played into the embassy's reporting. Sri Lanka was undergoing a period of considerable austerity at the time -- rice was rationed, and imports were in very short supply. For being resource-rich, it was strikingly poor. I'm not sure the non-aligned leaders of the world were much impressed with Sri Lanka at that point.

Q: You just mentioned something about embassy work, and that is the ability not only to work with local sources and interact with the local government, but also to interact with the resident diplomatic community. Were there events and occasions for that community to get together or the English speaking embassies to get together and discuss things?

CAMP: I'm sure there was a whole network of national days but that involved our front office more than me. But I've always been grateful that the Sri Lankan Foreign Ministry did its own outreach. They invited all the foreign first and second-tour officers to a reception to meet their new foreign service officers. So I met Sri Lankan Foreign Service Officers of my own age, who I've kept in touch with over the years, as well as the second and third Secretaries of Canada, Australia, Malaysia, Singapore, Japan. It was a wonderful network that I used professionally and enjoyed personally for those two and a half years. Other countries were plugged into certain areas where I was not. Some of the missions were very small and appreciated the breadth of our coverage. The Canadians had two officers at their mission; when the ambassador was away, the

junior officer would put the flag on the official car and drive up and down the main drag.

Q: What would you say would be the main take away from this first tour?

CAMP: I extended my two years a little bit so I could report on the national election that took place in the summer of '77. And again, that was one of the few things that really attracted Washington's active interest -- what was going to happen in the election. As I recall, there was a lot of pressure from Washington to call the election -- who was going to win. And smarter people than I in the embassy said, "That's not the way we do it in the Foreign Service. You know, we're not prognosticators. We should be telling Washington what the consequences are for U.S. interests if the United National Party comes to power or the Sri Lankan Freedom Party retains its power." And that's what we did, although in the end we did offer a prediction which turned out to be wrong. That taught me that we're not a newspaper service and shouldn't pretend to be. We're analyzing with an eye to the US interest. It's a lesson I've always kept in mind.

Q: Ambassador John Reed was the non-career person who came in after Chris Van Hollen. Did he depart before the elections?

CAMP: He left office because he was a Republican appointee and had to resign when Jimmy Carter came in. He was not immediately replaced. John Reed, former Governor of Maine, was a wonderfully gracious person who accepted the US election results with total equanimity. But he later came back to serve a second tour in Sri Lanka under the Reagan administration. With Reed's departure, his deputy Ray Perkins became the chargé through Sri Lanka's 1977 election.

Q: And that was the election when Bandaranaike lost.

CAMP: She did. And J.R. Jayewardene came to power. He was known at the time as Yankee Dickie to his opponents. He was said to be pro-American. I think it was partly in response to that perception that he renamed the country the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka. It was never particularly socialist, particularly not under Jayewardene. The other lesson I learned in Sri Lanka, that served me well over the years, is that you really want to curry favor with the opposition, because one, they appreciate you more, and number two, they're going to come to power one day. And I do remember that one of my political/labor contacts was a gentleman from a constituency in Kandy named Hamid. He was very much my contact in the sense that he was a mid-level opposition politician, beneath the radar of the ambassador and the senior people. And he was a great guy. So I did things with him and went out with him on his excursions around his constituency. The election took place. His party took power. And suddenly he was named the Foreign Minister. And *wow*, I know the Foreign Minister, he's a good buddy of mine. But I was about a month from leaving. So I went to the DCM and said, "Well, I want to invite Hamid to my going away party."

He said, "You can't do that. He's not your contact anymore. He's the Foreign Minister," My point is that it really paid dividends to have good contacts with a variety of out of power politicians, Hamid being just one example.

Q: That's an excellent point. Your reward for Colombo is to come back to Washington. How did

this next assignment come up for you?

CAMP: There's a cable that went out, I presume it still does every year, that invites embassies to nominate officers to work in the Operations Center. The DCM came to me and said, "we'd like to put your name forward for this. Does that work for you?"

I said, "Sure, I'd like to see how Washington works. I've now seen how an embassy works." So I opted for an 18-month tour in the Op (Operations) Center as a Watch Officer and Editor. Should I talk about how the Operations Center works?

THE OPERATIONS CENTER

Q: Absolutely.

CAMP: It's a 24/7 office and so it was shift work. You worked from eight to four, or four to midnight, or midnight to eight. At the Junior Officer level there were two jobs, Watch Officer where you were basically manning the telephones, and editor. They were two very different jobs. I spent about six months as an editor, which involved taking the overnight cables or the daytime cables and writing up summaries of them as part of the Secretary's Morning Summary and the Secretary's Afternoon Summary. It was a very good exercise in writing concisely, figuring out what is important on a global scale, and getting a sense of what the seventh floor wants. It also involves a lot of negotiation with INR; the Intelligence and Research Office had a Watch Office that was part of the Op Center too, and they would do half of the Secretary's Morning Summary based on incoming intelligence, much more highly classified than ours, and I would do the half related to both cables that were coming in from post, as well as occasionally press reports and the like that needed highlighting. I did that for about six months and then switched to the Watch Officer position.

Anyone who calls into the Department after hours is switched at the Op Center, including a lot of crazies after midnight. But it's also the contact for all our embassies to call if there's a crisis; if there's a coup somewhere, they call the Op Center. And it's our job to alert the Undersecretary or the Undersecretary's staff people, or the Secretary. So we were doing a lot of calling in the middle of the night. I remember one of my most spectacular mistakes was calling Richard Holbrooke when he was Assistant Secretary for East Asia at three in the morning when I was supposed to be calling somewhere else. I don't know how I got Holbrooke's number, but I just picked it up and dialed him. He was as irascible as an Assistant Secretary at the age of 35 as he was later, but he did not hold a grudge when I worked with him years later.

It's a reactive office. You don't have any continuing issues like you do if you're Desk Officer, because you leave at four p.m. or midnight and turn it over to the next person. But one of the issues that came up when we were there was the massacre in Jonestown, Guyana. I was there as the reports started coming in from the embassy in Georgetown about something mysterious happening at this outpost in Upper Guyana -- there might be people killed, and by the way there was a congressman up there and so forth. And we were *just* getting the news. It was kind of scary. And the department's response, which was of course a good one bureaucratically, was to establish a task force. And suddenly everyone from the Latin American Bureau was coming in to

go into the task force area and take all the calls. So the work was transferred from the Watch Officer to this task force as things were really heating up.

Q: This is November of '78.

CAMP: Yes. And of course as it turned out there were hundreds of people killed, including the congressman, in this mass suicide. In those pre-terrorism days, it was a major event in our national life.

Q: And what was the responsibility of the task force?

CAMP: A large part of it was responding to Americans who had relatives in Jonestown, receiving reports from the scene, and conveying the news to the American public. It was a time of a lot of uncertainty. In addition to putting together the facts for the Secretary, they were prepping the Department spokesman who was briefing the press practically non-stop.

Q And basically the portfolio was handed over to the task force and the Op Center went back to its normal business.

CAMP: Correct.

Q: Now, who was in charge of the Op Center at that time?

CAMP: There were two directors while I was there, Roger Gamble, and then Bill Rope. Bill Rope I remember particularly because it was his guidance and inspiration that pushed me in the direction of working on China issues. And in fact he recruited a lot of people in that job who later went on to study Chinese and go off to work in Taiwan and the Mainland.

Q: Now, the Op Center is organizationally in the Secretary's Office. I believe the designation is S/S-O. How else is the Secretary's Office organized?

CAMP: The Director of the Op Center reports to the Executive Secretariat and the Executive Secretary of the Department. But we served not only the Secretary, but all the senior principals, the Deputy Secretary, and the various undersecretaries. So our job basically was to figure out who was to get the information that was coming in to us. This was well before the age when computer terminals were on everyone's desk. So if a sensitive cable came in, it came to us. For instance, EXDIS or NODIS cables, which is shorthand for exclusive distribution and no distribution (one State Department appellation that makes no sense). We would physically take them off the teletype machine and mark them for what offices we thought should get them. If it were a Middle East issue, it would go to the Undersecretary for Political Affairs and the NEA (Near Eastern Affairs) Bureau. And we would put it in their box or if it was urgent call them and tell them to come pick it up. But we also had the job of turning down offices who wanted copies. They're not widely distributed. So if someone would call from the Bureau of Latin American Affairs and say, "We need that cable," it fell to us as the Watch Officers to say, "Well, I'm not sure you can get that," which sometimes made for awkward conversations. It was the one time I felt I was working on behalf of the Secretary. I would turn down officers more high ranking

people than I -- “No, I’m sorry, you can’t have access to those cables.”

Q: Now, this was a time where the Operations Center would connect people up on the telephone and then stay on the line and take notes?

CAMP: Yes, we would, as they say, “patch people through.” So we were telephone operators. And I think that’s still true, as far as I know. When I was in the Front Office at the South Asia Bureau years later and needed to talk to the ambassador in Dhaka I would call the Op Center and they would patch me through. And we always asked when we were in the Op Center, “Do you want us to stay on the line or do you want this to be a private conversation?” And if they wanted us to stay on the line we would take notes, particularly if it was the Secretary’s conversation with someone. Our job was to stay on the line and write up the notes.

Q: Now, would those notes be filed?

CAMP: Yes. Filed for the record.

Q: You were in the Operations Center from July ’77 to early ’79, 18 months.

CAMP: That’s right.

Q: ’77, ’78, ’79. What else happened at that time frame?

CAMP: I do recall one secret that we had to keep before it became public knowledge,. It was the first time, I think, that a large satellite (Cosmos 954) was deteriorating in the atmosphere and about to crash. And you know, we all realize that something like 90% of the earth’s surface is water and it’s not going to fall on a city. But at the time, the concern was how do we notify a country that this is going to happen? So we were brought into the loop on this at least a week before it became public -- while it was being tracked by the military and NASA . And so there was this sense that we were custodians of the secret disaster that might be happening. And of course it fell in far northern Canada, and that was the end of it.

Q: Not only were you working with Bill Rope as the Director of S-SO in the ’79 period, but this is the Carter administration and they are working on recognizing China, which was announced December ’78, effective January 1st, ’79. Did the Op Center get in any of that?

CAMP: Warren Christopher, the Deputy Secretary, had to explain this to the Republic of China, as we called Taiwan then. And there was concern about his personal safety because there were demonstrations in Taipei. So we were the liaison with his staff in Taiwan.

Q: Actually, that was a fairly dicey time because the demonstrators broke in the window I think of the car he was in. And those would be the days when they didn’t have cell phones and they couldn’t call the Op Center.

CAMP: Exactly. One of the other things the Op Center got involved in, during those days at least, was notifying embassies when someone’s family member is sick in the United States and

the person has to come home. So that was a difficult, sensitive sort of thing, to pass on to an embassy that someone's mother or father was near death.

Q: And you would have been very interested in what would be headlines, like in December '78, Vietnam moved into Cambodia. Surely that would have hit the wires and brought the Op Center into pulling people together and pointing this out.

CAMP: Right. We were sourcing our information not only from embassy cables and embassy phone calls, but it was the beginning of the stage where we were monitoring the television networks that sometimes had the news at least as early as anyone else. It was pre-CNN, but the networks were picking up the news at least as fast as our embassies. It was a new era for all of us. We were passing on what we were seeing on the screen, as well as what we were hearing from the embassies.

BRIDGETOWN

Q: Now, after your 18 months in the Operations Center, in early '79 you move out of Washington to an assignment to Bridgetown, Barbados. Here you were, in NEA at the time when you're in Sri Lanka. You're S-SO. Now you're touching bases with another bureau. How does that come about?

CAMP: Yeah, I don't remember where else I bid for that assignment. I'm sure I bid back in the Near East Bureau and East Asia. But the Bridgetown opportunity came up and it was kind of interesting. My friends almost to a man, or woman, said, "You don't want to sign up with the Caribbean. That's not where it's happening. There's nothing happening down there, it's a dead end for your career. You'll never get promoted out of Bridgetown."

And I said, "Well, gee, I want to go to the Caribbean" I told someone jokingly that my Foreign Service Career was a search for the perfect beach. But it was more than that. I honestly was intrigued by the whole area, the cultural area. They offered me the job, and what was important to me was I was the sole Political Officer there. We were the embassy to four countries and three dependencies, but by the time I left two years later it was seven countries. They were still gaining independence from the British Empire. And I really felt like I would have free rein, reporting on all those seven countries, and that really appealed to me. And in fact, it worked out that way. It was a very eventful two years in the Caribbean. I don't regret those two years, not the least because I became engaged to my wife there, but it was an unusual out of area excursion for me.

Q: Fair enough. So when you get to this embassy, who's there and who's the ambassador, what was he like to work with?

CAMP: The ambassador for the first year or so was a career Foreign Service Officer by the name of Frank Ortiz. He had made his career in the Latin America Bureau. He was very professional. He was replaced by the young political wunderkind of the bureau, Sally Shelton, who was I think at the time the youngest Deputy Assistant Secretary, certainly in a regional bureau. She arrived in June of 1979.

I wasn't really with Frank Ortiz that long. It was a very eventful six months for me because very soon after I arrived the Grenada coup took place. The New Jewel Movement, which was seen by Washington, not unreasonably, as close to Cuba, took power. I was in Grenada at the time of the coup. I had been sent by the ambassador to accompany three representatives of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms, who were going to Grenada to inform the government of Eric Gairy that someone was smuggling arms into Grenada and that we suspected a coup. I met Eric Gairy. He was leaving Grenada at that time and we met him at Bridgetown Airport, the ambassador and myself, and briefed him on this. And he said, "Go and find out what's going on."

I and the ATF (Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms) agents got on the plane, landed in Grenada half an hour later, and the coup took place that day. I'm convinced the coup plotters knew that they were about to be exposed. And also, by the way, Prime Minister Eric Gairy had just left the island for a trip to the United States. So we were on the island as this chaos was taking place. The ATF officers were startled, shall we say, that their trip had been interrupted this way. This was either my first or second trip to Grenada. I didn't know the island particularly well. I was one month into my tour. In retrospect, I wish I had stayed and made an initial contact with the coup plotters, but the ATF people wanted to get off that island. And so we actually went to the port and talked our way onto a Holland America cruise liner that was in port. And so we left the island that evening, as the coup was successfully taking place. It was a day of great chaos in Grenada. We went back to Bridgetown. Washington, of course, at this point was frantic that this Cuban group had taken over an island in the Caribbean. Frank Ortiz wanted to establish a relationship with the New Jewel Movement, and quite rightly. But the first thing he did set our foot very wrong. He offered something like \$25,000 of assistance, which was all that an American Ambassador could offer at that time without Washington's permission. And \$25,000 was worse than peanuts to the new government in Grenada, which had of course very little interest in catering to us. And this became immediately a symbol of how America is treating the new government – offering a petty \$25,000 in assistance. And this established a relationship that unfortunately continued very rockily for the rest of my tour in Bridgetown. Someone in the department, very smartly, sent us a TDY'er (temporary duty), who was a Grenadian American in the Foreign Service, named Roland Bullen, later Ambassador to Guyana, who was actually related to one of the coup plotters. Grenada is a small society and Roland had left Grenada after high school and was of the same generation. So he knew them all. He was sort of the temporary Political Officer to Grenada in the early days. He did a great job. Nevertheless, for a lot of reasons, it was a very rocky time, partly because of Washington politics, but partly because the New Jewel Movement themselves had very little interest in establishing a relationship with us.

Q: This is absolutely fascinating, because the embassy in Barbados is also responsible for Grenada, Dominica, and the other islands. So the only time we have a presence in these other places is when somebody from Bridgetown goes and visits or is there an on-island liaison office?

CAMP: We had no sort of liaison office on any of the islands at the time. I think years later we established small missions in Grenada and Antigua. That's what made the job so fascinating, apart from the Grenada coup. When you visited the island on your circuit riding, you were the embassy. You were usually received by the Prime Minister and the opposition leader. You were

the source for everything, asked questions about visas, about commercial opportunities, about anything in our bilateral relations. You were the embassy for a day or two on Grenada, Dominica, St. Lucia, St. Vincent, Antigua. It was the same thing when the Head of the Consular Section went to one of the islands: he was expected to be the Political Officer as well as the Visa Officer. So we got out as often as we could, but it was a small embassy and a lot was happening on those islands.

Q: But I think your point was what a great opportunity to learn Foreign Service skills. Because you were it.

CAMP: Right. After the Grenada coup we were very conscious of what we would now call non-state actors. There was a similar takeover of a little tiny place called Union Island in the Grenadines, which was very close to Grenada physically just a couple months after the New Jewel coup in Grenada. And I was sent out to be the liaison to the coup plotters. The coup lasted all of 24 hours, I think, on a tiny island of maybe a thousand people. More significantly, in 1981, there was a coup attempt in the island of Dominica, which was -- like Grenada -- a real country. It was a member of the United Nations and this was an attempt to overthrow a fairly friendly government in Dominica. We had no idea what was going on there. I was told by the Ambassador, "Get to Dominica." There were no planes going in because of the coup. She wanted someone there on the ground to find out what was going on. So I flew to Martinique, which is the island next to Dominica, but not in our consular district, and went to the port and rented a fishing boat to go across to Dominica. It was the only way I knew how. And in retrospect it was kind of scary. It was not easy, particularly because I speak very minimal French, the language of Martinique. But I rented this boat, went across, and landed after dark in a little fishing village well south of the capital, Scotts Head, where I was immediately picked up by the police who assumed I was part of the coup force arriving. The whole island was in turmoil at this point, so I had to explain myself and make my way up to the capital of Dominica and find the Prime Minister at the time to say: The U.S. is behind you. What the hell is happening here?

So another coup, little noticed, but big for us in the Caribbean. In addition to that, we had a major volcanic eruption on the island of St. Vincent, an active volcano named Soufrière. This was primarily a AID operation, but of course we had all sorts of welfare and whereabouts concerns, so I also went to St. Vincent to participate in rescue efforts after the Soufrière eruption. We were a tiny embassy, trying to deal with all of this. We were always trying to catch up. By the time I left we had two Political Officers and one Economic Officer. So Washington staffed us up fairly quickly. But it was no backwater, as my Op Center colleagues had predicted.

Q: You talked about the embassy activities, but how about the embassy's connection with Washington?

CAMP: That was handled primarily by the front office. The ambassador and the DCM would have dealt frequently with the desk.. I don't think the front office of ARA, Inter-American Affairs, got involved very often. We were -- except at times of coups -- kind of below the radar. The Desk Officer dealt frequently with the ambassador, which gives you a suggestion of how the relationship was. A lot of time it was only the desk that followed what was happening down in Dominica and St. Vincent and so forth. I remember a story, though I can't attest to its validity, of

a new Bureau Assistant Secretary up in Washington receiving a senior official from one of the small islands of the Eastern Caribbean and opening the interview by saying, “Could you point to your country on this map here,” which gave you a sense of how detached the senior leadership of Washington was from our little islands, except when there was a coup or a volcanic eruption.

Q: You talked about renting a fishing boat to get from one island to the other. Did the embassy have money for that kind of stuff?

CAMP: Our goal throughout my tour was to actually have the department provide some kind of permanent transportation, like a boat for the embassy. That was always a dream. But I don’t recall that we had travel money problems. I could travel when I wanted or when I could get away. The resource crunch was not a real problem for us, same with representational funding. It was not a high-cost economy, except for the tourism sector. The boat across from Martinique to Dominica probably cost 50 to 100 dollars or something like that.

Q: Well, let me ask this. You have one embassy and a number of countries, how do you handle July Fourth?

CAMP: Sally Shelton, when she was ambassador would actually go to an island and hold a reception, not necessarily right at July Fourth but as our national day function. And it worked out pretty well. We would certainly invite senior members of all the governments to our big July Fourth bash in Bridgetown, but we didn’t really expect them to hop on a plane and come down from Antigua or St. Vincent for the occasion. Sometimes they did. But, in retrospect, it was a very cost effective and fairly efficient way to run business with a lot of small countries. And presumably we could do it even better now with our instantaneous communication capabilities. It was a regional embassy. We could probably do that in more parts of the world if we wanted to.

Q: As you were saying, that part of the world though is quite a tourist magnet for Americans. Were there any particularly outstanding consular issues that arose that you can think of?

CAMP: Not anything high profile. When tourists were caught up in a coup or volcanic eruption, they wanted out of there. But each of the islands had a fairly developed tourist infrastructure that had ways of dealing with Americans who got drunk or got sick. The medical facilities were not too bad in the islands, thanks to years of colonial infrastructure.

Q: One last question. We’re always interested in the embassy building. I’ve never been there. Was it an old building, new building? Did the air conditioning work?

CAMP: We were on the upper floors of a commercial office building in downtown Bridgetown. It was the Canadian International Bank of Commerce. We had a separate consular office down the street and AID was located across the street. As security concerns worldwide ramped up, we started looking for a space of our own. Years after I left we purchased a lot that was, as it always is, somewhat out of town rather than being right in the center of town and built an embassy that incorporated all of its units. But during my tour, we were very much a part of the local economy; we took the elevator up to our offices and didn’t have any excessive security. We did have Marine Guards, but it was limited security because we were part of a larger office building. The

security regulations were much less strict back then.

Q: Your two years on this assignment are up then probably in the summer transfer season in 1981. what would you say is the takeaway from this assignment?

CAMP: I developed much more personal confidence in dealing with senior officials, in dealing with all the aspects of an embassy, whereas in Colombo I was very much working for a Political Counselor. I was much more on my own in the Eastern Caribbean, particularly when I went traveling and was a one-person embassy. I got a much better sense of all of the elements of an embassy. I helped put together the first IMET program, for the Eastern Caribbean – International Military, Education, and Training, not for the military, but for the Barbados Coast Guard. So I did much more in Barbados. And I think it proves that a small efficient embassy is a great way to train young officers, and also to carry out foreign policy.

BEIJING

Q: Now, your next assignment is quite interesting because you're coming into your third bureau. This is unusual.

CAMP: I'd had my eye on China for a while, particularly after my interest was piqued by Bill Rope in the Operations Center. He recruited me for China. He also recruited my colleague at the time, David Summers, who was in the Op Center with me and had come into the foreign service in the same entering class as I. And at the time I did not realize that he was on the verge of marrying my sister and taking an assignment in China as well. I was also getting married at the same time to Betsy, who'd come down to visit Barbados where we'd gotten engaged. So suddenly we were separately assigned to language training with an onward assignment to Beijing, David and my sister and myself and my new wife. So we were together for four years as a large family.

Q: Now, for these hard language assignments, personnel assigns you to the Beijing job and then says you have to take language first. And that's why it becomes a four-year commitment. You don't get the language without having an ongoing assignment. Is that correct?

CAMP: That is correct. We all knew what assignment we were heading to two years hence when we began language training.

Q: Well, being a fabulous linguist, which you've already proven, in Tamil and whatnot, what was FSI Chinese like?

CAMP: I'm far from a fantastic linguist, but I found FSI Chinese in general a fascinating intellectual exercise and also a great bonding experience. My Chinese language colleagues and my A100 class are the people with whom I'm still closest. We sat around and talked about our biographies in Chinese and about our interests and got to know everything about ourselves four to six hours a day, and then went to Taiwan and lived together for the second year of language training.

Q: So your program was one year at FSI in Washington and one year in the language area, in this case Taipei. Yangmingshan? Big class?

CAMP: The State Department was beginning to ramp up our posts in China and the numbers of officers assigned to language training. A very wise decision was made to train a large number of people in Chinese, assign them to China or Taiwan or Singapore or Malaysia and hope that they would catch the China bug and come back for a future assignment. There was no requirement to take two assignments using Chinese, which is kind of surprising when you're committing the resources to give someone full-time language training for two years.

Q: How about the teachers? And the linguists and the whole academic part of it.

CAMP: The teachers were a combination of some older teachers who'd been there for a long time and a few younger ones. One was the wife of a former Taiwanese diplomat in Washington. But FSI was beginning to hire teachers who had come from China since the re-establishment of relations. It was important for us to be familiar with the latest idioms and cultural aspects of a changing mainland China, and it was these younger teachers who could help us there. One of the teachers was a fascinating woman who had been born in New York City to an American father and a Chinese mother. The mother had gone back to join the revolution and she had grown up entirely in the Mainland before coming to the United States after normalization. She was one of our best teachers and ended up marrying Jeff Buczacki, one of my fellow students.

Q: And the Chinese I assume was done both in the simplified characters that were used in the Mainland and the traditional characters?

CAMP: One gripe I had with the program was that the entire first year focused on oral Chinese, and only later got into writing. I would have liked to have started writing a little earlier. But each of us knew where we were assigned and therefore knew whether we wanted to concentrate on learning the simplified characters (for the mainland) or the traditional (for Taiwan or Hong Kong).

Q: Now, that year in Taiwan, having mainland educational materials and simplified characters presented a problem. How did FSI get around that?

CAMP: I can only assume that our school, as part of the American Institute in Taiwan, had a certain inviolability from the domestic politics of the day. Everyone knew that we were going to the Mainland and needed to learn the simplified characters, the Chinese communist phraseology of the day, the cultural revolution allusions and the like. The Taiwanese teachers were very well clued in to what we were going to need. I give a lot of credit to the linguist Neil Kubler who did have Mainland experience. I don't recall that ever being a huge issue.

Q: Could you describe the school and the facilities that you were in up there? Because the previous school had been in Taichung, if I recall.

CAMP: That's correct. The school had moved up to an area above the city of Taipei with a beautiful view -- Yangmingshan. While technically assigned to the American Institute in Taiwan

(and accordingly formally “resigned” from the State Department), we were physically isolated from the offices of AIT and from their day-to-day work dealing with the political issues of the day.

Q: Now, Taiwan’s a very small island. Did you get a chance to move around the island, either on your own or as part of the class?

CAMP: The school was good at organizing class trips on the assumption that this would help our language ability. When we first arrived in Taiwan from our year at FSI we thought “What have I been learning for a year?” I couldn’t understand anything on the street and I couldn’t make myself understood. So we really did need to get around and actually speak Chinese in a Chinese environment. And so while exploring Taipei and its surroundings served that purpose as well, it was very helpful that we were able to take some trips down to Gaoxiong and Tainan in the south, and a fascinating air trip to the Pescadores (Penghu). We also went to the East Coast and Sanming Lake, so we did a fair amount of traveling. I didn’t really want to travel too much on my own given what I saw of the freeways and the craziness of driving in Taiwan. I’m sure you get used to it if you’ve been there for a while, but we were tucked away on Yangmingshan. I kind of liked my isolation studying as a scholar in the Chinese tradition.

Q: Studying. What might a typical day have been like?

CAMP: We had a good FSI organized program with textbooks of recent reading – like newspaper articles -- from the Mainland. We watched videos of Mainland newscasts. That would have been even more sensitive than reading in Mainland script. So our teachers really tried to get us to understand newscasts, got us to do some role playing in Chinese. I really wanted to be able to read newspapers and more complicated things. So I focused on that to the extent there was any sort of flexibility. I focused on that more than speaking, -- just a function of my own preference. And it served me well because my reading got to be quite good. My writing never did become very good. Years later my Chinese teacher would say, “You know, you still write like a first grader.” But at least that was something. But the reading got to where I was happy with it.

Q: While you were in class from the ’81 to ’83 period, you’re saying you’re fairly isolated, certainly from AIT downtown, but how about other general China related events? For example, the Shanghai Communiqué of August 1982 was a big thing in the China area.

CAMP: We all knew that it was going to make a big impact on U.S.-China relations, but it was not something that we were focusing on up in Yangmingshan. We would occasionally have visitors from Washington who would apprise of developments in U.S.-China relations. And of course, Jim Lilley, the AIT Director at the time was a very nice person who tried to bring us into the AIT community. Again, I felt like I was prepping myself for two years in China, but I didn’t feel part of the policy process during those two years at all.

Q: How would you summarize the effectiveness of the FSI China course?

CAMP: Apart from a few minor issues, I thought they did a pretty good job. The one thing I noted was that we had people of all ages in our Chinese class, from first or second tour officers

up to people who I thought at the time were old, probably in their mid-forties. And you could tell the difference in language ability. It was so clear that the youngest people learned it very quickly and frankly, the people 45 and older didn't have a clue. I was right in the middle. But that was my takeaway from language training; learn a language early!

Q: Now, the assignment that brought you to language training was at the embassy in Beijing. And you arrive in the summer cycle of 1983 and you're a Political Officer following on your Caribbean success. Who's at the embassy and who's your boss and what's the environment there?

CAMP: We had as our ambassador, Arthur Hummel who was a giant in the field of China scholars. He had an amazing World War II history; he had been interned by the Japanese in Shandong, escaped, and fought with the Nationalist guerillas. When he came as ambassador, he was a link to the 1940's and World War II and an era of U.S.-China cooperation. His DCM was another larger than life figure, Chas Freeman who I hope has done his own oral history, and has stories galore. His Chinese language proficiency was legendary. He said he concentrated in language training on learning to read Chinese characters upside down so that he could be in the office with a Chinese bureaucrat and be able to read what was on the desk in front of his counterpart. And he was that good. The Political Counselor was Dick Hart followed by Daryl Johnson a year later. My immediate boss was Don Johnson, who was the head of the external side of the Political Section. My job was fairly narrowly defined. I was in charge of following China's external relations with South and Southeast Asia, which was my choice, because that was an area of the world I was particularly interested in. I also had the counter-narcotics portfolio, at a time when we were just beginning cooperation in that area with the Chinese. I also took advantage of the embassy's willingness to let everyone do some internal reporting. This was an era when travel around China was still fairly difficult. I remember a reporting trip I took to Henan province – Zhengzhou, Luoyang, and Kaifeng. I also traveled to Tibet and Xinjiang. It was a stage where you could still do what we called Marco Polo reporting, because there was so little known about some of these places that you could write a travel blog and it would be well received in Washington. We did obviously more detailed reporting than that, but it was still a fascinating time to travel around China just as it was opening up in many places.

My interviews outside Beijing had a standardized tone, because everyone knew the Chinese communist party line at any time. For instance, one of the first phrases I learned in the Mainland was, "Since the third plenum of the eleventh central committee we have adopted the policy of reform and opening." So whenever you asked a question of a Chinese official (or even, often, a man-in-the-street), the opening parlay would be, "Well, since 1978 and the third plenum of the eleventh central committee...." Also, in those days, everything was preceded by "under the chairmanship of Chairman Mao,...."

It was very telling that this was what everyone knew they were supposed to say. It was only five years after Deng Xiaoping had begun the turnaround of the Chinese economy and society. We were just beginning to see the economic and social momentum that I thought at the time could not be sustained. In fact, that momentum was not only sustained but accelerated over the next couple of decades.

Q: What kinds of things are you defining as this momentum?

CAMP: Well, primarily economic. For instance, when we first arrived in Beijing in the summer of '83, there were no cars on the streets. Bicycles and buses were the means of transportation. By the time we left two years later there were taxis and the first private car had been purchased. That first private car was highlighted on the front page of The China Daily. It was considered very newsworthy that a woman who'd made her money in chicken farming had managed to buy a small Japanese car. And that was of course just the beginning. Similarly, when we arrived everyone was still in their blue Mao suits. By the time we left, the dress of choice, particularly in the winter, was a puffy ski parka that was now being made in Chinese garment factories. When we arrived you ate a lot of cabbage when you were out of Beijing. And in the winter particularly you'd see cabbage on every balcony in Beijing because that's what people ate all winter. I remember very clearly on May Day in 1984, suddenly there were bananas on the streets of Beijing being imported from South America. That was the beginning of outside products being brought in. And suddenly things changed. So we saw that kind of change in our two years in China. Suddenly, New Year's was celebrated even more exuberantly than before. Every year you could see it. And I thought this pace of change couldn't be maintained. Of course it was. I went back years later and I kept saying the same thing. I was wrong.

Q: How about things like restaurants and other consumer areas.

CAMP: One of our main sources of recreation in China was going out to eat. But in 1983 all restaurants were government enterprises. So whereas you could still find a good hotpot or a good Sichuan restaurant, you had to be careful when you ate because restaurants all closed around 6 or 6:30. And the waiters and waitresses would come around with big buckets of soapy water and start sloshing them to wash off the floors. They were going to go home at 6:30, come what may. There was not a lot of service orientation. By the time we left two years later there was the beginning of private enterprise. People were running very small restaurants out of their home and the food quality improved dramatically.

Q: Can you give me a description of your own living arrangements?

CAMP: The embassy did not have nearly enough housing for everyone, as the mission was expanding quite rapidly. So almost all of us lived in hotel rooms for a little while. A little while in our case extended to about nine months, first in the Beijing Hotel, right on the main drag in Beijing, and then at the slightly more upscale Jianguo Hotel. People who had families moved into apartments much sooner. Once we did move into an apartment, we were in an area called Jianguomenwai, a foreigner complex of high rises. And we lived cheek by jowl with all the other diplomatic missions. It was Chinese government-assigned housing, so people lived next to random diplomats, including for instance to the Iranian Military Attaché. We lived next to the Thai DCM. It was nice to have a mix of people in these buildings. We were on the fourteenth floor of a sixteen-floor building. Our assumption was that we were all very well monitored by the Chinese Security Services. This was verified in our minds by the fact that we saw these Chinese workers in the elevators every morning going up to what was apparently a seventeenth floor. We never got up to the seventeenth floor, but we assumed that we were being overheard. And we worked on that basis all the time in China. But we had comfortable living

accommodations. The atmosphere in Beijing was polluted. We had to scrape off the dust from the Gobi Desert every morning. But you had the sense that you were watching the opening up of China and you were lucky to have what you had, and of course we were. We were living in considerable luxury compared to people in the traditional Beijing compounds – the hutongs. We got around by bicycle a lot too. It was a nice town to bicycle around, and to explore on weekends. And of course the history was incredible.

Q: What was your work environment like? What was the embassy like?

CAMP: Also expanding rapidly. For my first year, I was tucked into a small office cheek by jowl with another Political Officer. We actually had desks facing each other. It was hardly ideal, but everyone was in the same position. By the second year the embassy had bought the old Pakistan Embassy and expanded rather dramatically into a new office building with all of the security arrangements, and even a swimming pool. So we spread out quite a bit. But we were still in three different buildings, scattered around the diplomatic community. There was the Consular Section and Admin in one building. There was the ambassador's residence next door to the USIS Office in the same compound, and then there was the ambassador and Pol-Econ and Science Sections in the new compound .

Q: This is four years after normalization, but you'd had an Interest Section there since '72.

CAMP: Right. But it had only recently I think expanded to the size that it was after normalization.

Q: In fact, at this time there are two consulates in addition to the embassy, Guangzhou and Shanghai. As a Political Officer, did you get an opportunity to travel to the consulates? Or what was your relationship to the consulates and the consulates' reporting?

CAMP: My job was to follow China's foreign relations. . So I didn't travel that much on business. The people who did the internal reporting tended to go for consultations to Shanghai and Guangzhou. And of course Shanghai and Guangzhou wanted to do their own reporting. So there was the usual embassy-consulate jockeying about who's doing what. My narcotics work got me down to Guangzhou once. And in fact, the counternarcotics work was interesting because the time was ripe for increasing cooperation. So I worked fairly closely with the Chinese Customs Department. And we started the beginnings of what became a rather extensive counternarcotics effort, focused especially on Yunnan and the areas down south. We sent some Chinese customs officials to the United States for training while I was there. That was part of my job. The other part was China's foreign relations with South Asia and Southeast Asia. India and Vietnam were the big issues for us in that region. I'd go into the Foreign Ministry for meetings and not get much satisfaction – just what the official newspapers were already reporting. I'd go over to the Indian Embassy and they were much more forthcoming. And here it's worth commenting on our interchange with other diplomats in Beijing. Because the Chinese government said so little to us and because we had so little access to Chinese citizens, the diplomatic community was much more active than I have seen in our countries. We looked for opportunities to exchange the small snippets of information (or sometimes gossip) that each of us had picked up. At every level we had luncheon groups. The ambassadors had their periodic

lunches. But so did the political second secretaries. Other embassies had insights that we didn't have and they thought we had insights that we didn't have. In some cases, we did. So I got a lot of my information from the embassies. And there were some unusual elements of the foreign community. For instance, Prince Sihanouk of Cambodia lived much of the year in Beijing. He and his wife, Princess Monique used to throw elegant parties and dances during which Sihanouk would sing. It was one of the more scintillating parts of a very gray sort of Beijing social life. I don't recall I picked up much at those dances, except I always remembered I was to avoid having anything to do with the representatives of the Khmer Rouge and of North Korea who were also there.

The sexiest reporting at most embassies – and Beijing was no exception – tended to be bilateral relations. That was done by the front office – ambassador and DCM – and the political counselor. I was four levels down from the ambassador – through the DCM, Political Counselor, and the Deputy for External Relations. So I very rarely saw that, except when there was a senior visitor from Washington and I was the control officer, accompanying him to meetings.

Q: Now, I would assume this is still early in the relationship so you'd be the target of a number of high-level visitors.

CAMP: Indeed. Both the blessing and curse of being in any large embassy is that you are called upon frequently to be a control officer. Sometimes, it's part tour guide, but the positive aspect is that these visits give you access that you would not normally have. The State Department's policy planning chief Peter Rodman was quite well known in Chinese circles; he got senior appointments at the few Chinese think tanks and at the Foreign Ministry. They were trying to develop a policy planning capability at the time themselves and wanted to talk to Peter Rodman. And I went along, thank goodness not as interpreter, but as aide-de-camp and notetaker. This was the era when it was clear in the Chinese mind, as well as ours, that we had much in common because we were cooperating on Afghanistan and the Chinese assumed that we could be a help in their ongoing ideological battle with the Soviet Union. So Peter Rodman was very well received.

And then of course our really big visit was the presidential visit of Ronald Reagan in April 1984. Any presidential visit is a huge operation. I remember the Chinese being befuddled by the number of press and accompanying officials. Our job at the mid levels of the embassy was to serve as what were called site officers as well as note takers at the various meetings. I drew the meeting with the President of China at the time, Li Xiannian. That would have seemed to be an important meeting, but in fact the president was less important than the party secretary or the premier. So it was more protocol than substance. Nevertheless, I recall walking in and as note taker feeling I could grab a seat fairly close to the two principals, which I did. And then this guy tapped me on the shoulder. He said, "I'm sorry, could I have this seat please?" And in fact, it was the National Security Advisor, Bud McFarlane. So I quickly gave up my seat and moved to a place a little farther away where it was harder to hear the conversation, but more in keeping with my rank.

The other thing I remember about presidential visits is that everyone else, including the National Security Advisor, is only a sideshow. Secretary of State George Schultz was along on the trip. I saw him once walking totally alone without any minders on the steps of the Great Hall of the

People. And I realized he's just another hanger-on in this huge visit that is centered around one man: Ronald Reagan.

Of course, presidential visits are always successful by definition, and this one was as well. I don't recall anything substantive that came out of it. There were several large banquets. Reagan gave a return banquet at the Sheraton Hotel, and we were all invited to fill tables there. Again I enjoyed the opportunity to meet senior officials I would normally not see; I was seated with the Defense Minister at the Reagan dinner.

Q: Now, before a visit like that even takes place, the embassy's energized to do scene setters, reporting, or liaise with the Chinese to determine what are going to be the events, what are going to be the sites. Did you get into any of that?

CAMP: U.S.-China relations were handled more by the front office and by the Political Counselor. That was true even for the visit planning. A couple of us were site officers and had to go and scout out these places in advance. There was even, you know, pre-testing of our banquet food and speculation about what Chinese would think of our food choices, including something that we unfortunately called "panda salad" -- that kind of non-substantive stuff. And of course a lot of a presidential visit is non-substantive stuff, let's face it.

Q: Now, one of the big issues this time would have been the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. You would have been doing quite a bit of reporting on that, or at least as perceived by the Chinese.

CAMP: We were actively cooperating with the Chinese and as I learned years later, importing mules from China and things like that to help the jihadis, through intelligence channels. But I learned a lesson about the fungibility of security classifications. Every day we would get a confidential report on developments in Afghanistan and I was instructed to take off the confidential line, reproduce it, and carry it over to the Chinese Foreign Ministry and brief them on what we were doing in Afghanistan. It was a small part of that whole effort, and it wasn't particularly sensitive. For some part of our bureaucracy it was a confidential document. But we were working closely with the Chinese and I was part of that effort.

Q: You were mentioning earlier something about Tibet.

CAMP: Yes. Tibet was not part of my reporting bailiwick, but I wangled a permit for a personal trip to Tibet in September of '84 at a time when Tibet was just opening up to tourism. And it was one of those periods of opening where they were more relaxed about what was happening there. So Betsy and I wandered around Lhasa for a week with a fair amount of freedom. The authorities cracked down again a year or two later, but during the 80's Lhasa was still very much a Tibetan city, with very little Chinese influence. And the only foreign presence in Lhasa was the Nepal Consulate. The Indian consulate had closed years earlier, perhaps during the India-China war in 1962 but Nepal was allowed to maintain its historical presence. I called on the Nepali Consul General and made a stab at engaging him on political events in Tibet. He was not willing to say much of anything. I'm sure he knew he was being monitored by the authorities and didn't want to endanger his status by sharing anything with the Americans.

I remember being startled -- while wandering around Lhasa -- by the degree of autonomy enjoyed by the monasteries. There are three or four major monasteries in Lhasa. And the police and security forces just did not go in there. They weren't welcome and they didn't barge in. So you'd go into the middle of the largest -- the Jokhang -- the main Buddhist center in Lhasa. And in the sanctum sanctorum there would be pictures of the Dalai Lama all over the place. In the bazaar surrounding the Jokhang, even though that was an area where you would have security forces, you had pictures of the Dalai Lama on sale. So it was by Chinese standards a fairly relaxed time. Buddhism was beginning to flourish again. Post-Cultural Revolution and post-Deng Xiaoping opening and reform, religions, Tibetan Buddhism as well as Christianity were beginning to be allowed to flourish, as long as they presented no threat politically to the regime. And of course that is what has caused Tibetan Buddhism problems over the years in Tibet, because it is perceived to be a threat to the regime. The trip to Tibet was brief but a fascinating glimpse at a time before Sichuan settlers and other immigrants from Han areas came into Lhasa and changed the character of the city.

Q: Each tour that you've had, there's something unique about it. And in this case, you'd just come across all the paraphernalia that goes on with a presidential visit. What takeaway then would you list for what this tour did for you?

CAMP: Well, it, it was my first time posted in a world capital. The fact that you were part of a huge diplomatic community, that we were all focused on the leadership of China and China's relations with the outside world and China's dramatic change was a polar opposite to my tour in the Caribbean where what happened was of little moment to world affairs. Whereas here you were suddenly at the center of much of U.S. foreign policy, be it our foreign policy with the Soviet Union, our foreign policy toward Southeast Asia, the Soviets in Afghanistan and the like. So this was where things were happening.

Q: And how would you rate the usefulness of the language training to the assignment?

CAMP: In China it was crucial. Not that I was ever completely fluent or confident in my fluency. But you had to have it and make a stab at it to work in China. When I went to the Foreign Ministry if it was an important issue where I had to get the nuances exactly right I didn't trust myself. I'd go with the embassy interpreter or often they spoke English themselves. But you couldn't grasp Chinese society without having an understanding in the language. And you could tell that. People coming from Washington were total newcomers and very naïve in the Chinese cultural context. They didn't know how to work a banquet, they didn't know how to toast at a banquet, they didn't know how to handle a meeting. Occasionally I would actually find myself doing some interpretation at dinner, for instance, where the honored guest from Washington was attempting a conversation and there was no interpreter present. So I'd say the language was absolutely crucial, and I think the department was very wise then to invest so much in language training and to continue to do so. They've developed a China cadre that's very impressive.

WORKING SRI LANKA AND INDIA IN WASHINGTON

Q: Your next assignment was in Washington on the Sri Lanka Desk. How did you come to get

this assignment in the first place?

CAMP: Well, I knew I was coming home after Beijing and I was looking for a desk job, and it so happened that the NEA Bureau, which then encompassed all of Near East and South Asia, was looking for desk officers. And they looked back at my record and saw that my first posting had been Sri Lanka. I was glad to get back to Sri Lanka issues after eight years. When I left, Sri Lanka was at peace, but in 1983 the conflict had broken out between Tamil separatists and the government.

Q: Give us a picture of the Department at the time. Who is the Director, Deputy Director, and who was the Deputy Assistant Secretary that was responsible for South Asia?

CAMP: We had six officers in NEA/INS, the office covering India, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and the Maldives. The Director was Peter Tomsen, replaced a year later by Grant Smith. The Deputy Assistant Secretary was Bob Peck at the time. I always thought of us as an orphan in the NEA Bureau. Bob Peck did South Asia very effectively. The Assistant Secretary spent almost all of his time on issues like Israel/Palestine, Iran/Iraq, the Maghreb, any area that was in crisis. And there was always a crisis in NEA. And so I didn't really see much of the Assistant Secretary. Congress felt the same way. They would often ask for someone to come testify on India or Sri Lanka. And they would ask the Assistant Secretary, as they always did, and he would pass the buck to Bob Peck, as he always did. After a while, Congress got tired of this and mandated the creation of a separate South Asia Bureau, against the wishes of the department. That finally took place in 1991. So I'm getting a little ahead of myself. But basically, we were a self-contained unit within NEA without a lot of contact with the rest of the bureau.

Q: Now, the Sri Lanka Desk, that'd be a one-person operation?

CAMP: It was very much a one-person operation. I also had the Maldives, a tiny country in the middle of the Indian Ocean, which took very little time. I was also the backup Desk Officer for Nepal, and I was the science officer for India. So even during the insurgency, Sri Lanka desk officer was not a full time job in those days.

Q: And at the time you came on the desk in '85, what was the American policy or attitude towards Sri Lanka and its problems?

CAMP: We were still getting used to the idea of this country that had been at peace and a good friend for so long being in the midst of this nasty insurgency. We were supportive of the government. But we were not completely unstinting in our support. They were looking for all sorts of advanced weapons that were inappropriate for their counterinsurgency efforts. And we were looking at what was appropriate to sell or give to the government of Sri Lanka. The LTTE, that is to say the Tamil insurgents, were always looking for ways to disrupt the tourist trade. They were always very careful not to target foreigners in Sri Lanka. But at one point, they threatened to poison the tea exports of Sri Lanka, and that was a huge issue. We brought in the FDA (Food and Drug Administration) to find a way to inspect shipments of tea from Sri Lanka. By the same token, the LTTE was trying to cultivate us in the U.S. government. We would talk to Tamil Americans who supported the LTTE and were trying to convince us that this was an

insurgency which we should support, or at least not oppose.

Q: As we were looking to the LTTE, how did we understand it? And was that just your embassy reporting or other sources?

CAMP: This was before we had a law designating certain organizations as foreign terrorists; the LTTE was one of the first on that list when it was created. Most of our information was through embassy reporting and also through the contacts we had with the LTTE's lawyer in New York and with LTTE supporters in Boston who were trying to rev up public support for the LTTE. It was not a huge issue for the U.S. government. Sri Lanka was still very much neglected in the larger Asian geopolitical sphere. Sri Lanka was considered a subset of the larger South Asia. India had much greater interests in Sri Lanka than we. Our relations with India at the time were such that the Indians did not really want us involved in the subcontinent. There were still conspiracy theories in India to the effect that we wanted Trincomalee Bay as a US naval base. Trinco is a great natural seaport that the British had used in World War II. We never had any such intention, but there were people in India who propagated that fiction. So we were a little bit careful about how India would view our activities in Sri Lanka. So that was always something that we had to think about.

Q: Now, as a desk officer back in Washington, you mentioned FDA and tea. I suppose that you're working with any number of agencies on the Washington side as various issues come up.

CAMP: That's always true as a Desk Officer. It was a fascinating experience to be Mr. Sri Lanka in the US government. When a Sri Lankan issue came up, the Office Director didn't deal with it; he gave it to me. The Deputy Assistant Secretary didn't deal with it; he gave it to me. So it was kind of fun. And I must say the Sri Lankan Embassy at the time was *extremely* sophisticated, and did what every desk officer craves, which is to give attention to the person who's actually doing the work. The ambassador at the time was a gentleman named Ernest Corea, not a Sri Lankan Foreign Service Officer, but a political appointee -- former journalist -- who cultivated everyone in Washington, he cultivated the Hill, he cultivated The White House, and he made me one of his prime contacts at the State Department. And I always appreciated that I had a direct line to the ambassador, which was kind of heady in those days. Ernest Corea has since retired in Washington and remains a good friend. Corea dealt with me because I would take his calls and the DAS or Assistant Secretary wouldn't always have time for Sri Lanka. I always had time for Sri Lanka. As for other agencies of the US government, yes, I dealt with the Defense Department a lot. Other agencies had their priorities. When we wanted intelligence assets, it was really difficult to get the CIA or any other intelligence agency to focus on Sri Lanka. DoD was more interested, because they had interests in the larger Indian Ocean and they saw Sri Lanka as important to those efforts. So they would often have people from their Pacific Command in Hawaii travel to Sri Lanka.

DoD then and now had assets that the State Department could never match. At one point, I had a request from the government of Sri Lanka for U.S. assets to be brought to bear to help bring to Sri Lanka a ceremonial elephant that had been gifted by the government of Thailand. They wanted it in Sri Lanka, and they had no way to get it there. So they turned to us. I tried to have a can-do attitude about anything that was requested, so I talked to my boss and he wisely said,

“Call the Defense Department. They’re the only ones that have the resources to do something like this.” I don’t remember how exactly we wangled it, but I do remember that we ended up getting the Defense Department, which had a regular flight from Bangkok to Colombo, to somehow get this ceremonial elephant to Sri Lanka. It was a wonderful public relations coup! My boss dubbed it, “The Dumbo by Jumbo to Colombo.” It brought home to me that DOD can do things that State cannot, and are often willing to be used.

Q: So in '86 then you moved over to the India Desk? India is a larger issue than Sri Lanka. How many Indian desk officers were there?

CAMP: Then, and for the next 20 years, the structure was: office director and a deputy, both of whom covered everything. Then we had a Nepal desk officer, a Sri Lanka desk officer and two India desk officers. I was the senior of the two, which was a slight promotion for me. There was a new junior desk officer position recently created; that officer had the counter-terrorism and consular portfolios, among other things.

Q: Well, at this time the Indians were sort of holding the Americans at arm's length. That meant not that there wasn't that much to do, but that was all part of the relationship. But here is it Bob Peck that's in the Front Office covering South Asia? What were the kinds of Indian things that you would be doing?

CAMP: India was beginning to reach out to us as a source of the high technology they wanted. They had come to realize that we, and only we, could provide the high tech that they needed for development.

We had some history in this area. There had been a long and productive relationship between our National Aeronautics and Space Administration and the Indian Space Research Organization. We launched their first satellites; they bought their first weather satellite from us. All of this required interagency approval of the transfer of technology. That was a big part of my job, especially because there was a lot of residual suspicion that any technology we transferred to India could make its way to the Soviet Union.

The Indians were also committed at that point to building an indigenous fighter aircraft. They were buying engines from General Electric but they wanted eventually to make the engines themselves. That was a controversial tech transfer arrangement – the interagency debate swirled around how far we could go in helping them to build such engines.

Q: Now, that sounds highly technical for a guy with a liberal arts education. How did you go about educating yourself on that technology? And was this an interagency series of meetings and decisions?

CAMP: I suppose that’s what liberal arts majors are supposed to do -- be jacks of all trades. You learn what you need to for the job at hand. For munitions licensing, we depended very heavily on the State Department’s Political-Military Bureau, which is the lead on those issues, and on commercial licensing issues we depended on the Commerce Department. No decisions were made unilaterally at the State Department on tech transfer issues. It always involved interagency

discussions and often interagency contention. In our bureau of State, we saw the issue in terms of advancing Indo-US relations. Other offices, and agencies, were looking at making sure that our sensitive technology did not leak to enemy countries. Now, they didn't put India in the enemy country category, but they certainly put Soviet Union, which had a very close military relationship with India, there. So there was a lot of resistance in '85, and '86, and even much later, to transferring equipment and certainly technology that could potentially be compromised and go to the Soviet Union.

Q: In fact, isn't one of the first filters when you get into the tech transfer business, this list of countries and where they're tiered and they stand, the Soviets on one end, your NATO allies on the other and then everybody else in the world in the middle?

CAMP: That's correct. Except for sales to NATO allies, all these licenses are looked at very carefully. And even if you're in a category that is technically licensable, the issue still has to be resolved by interagency discussion. That was my frustration for much of the two years I was dealing with India.

Q: Who in the PM (Political Military) Bureau would be watching? I've forgotten.

CAMP: Well, there was a Munitions Control Office with the experts. They were often people who had spent their careers working on these issues. So we were dependent very heavily on them. The issues often had to be resolved at more senior levels in the front office of the political-military bureau. The obstacle was often at Defense and if pressure had to be brought to get Defense to change its mind, then you went to the Front Office. There was also another factor in here, and that is the National Security Council staff. It was my first experience of dealing with the White House. There was a very good woman by the name of Shirin Tahir-Kheli, who was the Director for South Asia at the NSC (National Security Council) staff. She was always helpful and she was probably the first South Asian American in a senior policy position in the U.S. government. She was treading new ground. Shirin, who remains a friend these many years later, was frankly seen by the Indians as a Pakistani-American in the White House who could only be trouble in dealing with India. She faced real problems in that respect. She used to make the point that her family was from Hyderabad in South India and yes, her family was Pakistani, but she was *American*, and that was quite true. And that was something that both the Indians and Pakistanis took a while to realize, as South Asian Americans moved into senior positions in the U.S. government. Of course now it's quite common. But back in 1986, it was unusual. She was a big help in resolving these interagency disputes, or at least helping to broker them.

Q: Earlier we were talking about your interaction as a Desk Officer with the embassy. What was the Indian Embassy like at this time?

CAMP: I dealt almost not at all with the ambassador. But the staff was excellent. They had political officers there and a specialized congressional relations officer who were very sophisticated and very good. I have a world of respect for the Indian Foreign Service, which is much, much smaller than ours, even now -- about the size of the Singapore Foreign Office. I socialized with members of that staff and have encountered them in later years. One of the Political Officers at the time, S. Jaishankar, went on to be Joint Secretary for American Affairs

and Ambassador to China, Ambassador to the US (2014) and Foreign Secretary (2015). Another, Shiv Mukerji, went on to be Ambassador to Nepal, where I met him years later. Even when our relations were a little rocky, we had very good personal relationships at the working level.

Q: Now, your Peace Corps tour had been in South India. Did that identification help you out in any of these exchanges?

CAMP: Well, it gave me some perspective, I think. And I could speak with a little bit more authority than someone who'd never lived in India or just lived in the embassy community in Delhi. One of my duties was to receive a steady succession of delegations from India, members of Parliament or journalists or whatever. One of the visitors was a bit confrontational and asked me if I spoke Hindi. I said I did not, beyond a few courtesy words.

“How can you be the India Desk Officer at the State Department and not speak Hindi? We would never have a non-English speaker in our ministry.”

And I said, “Well, do you speak Tamil, sir? Tamil teryuma?” So I proved my bona fides as an India-wallah.

So yes, my Peace Corps experience was something I could use professionally and also gave me a better sense of India.

Q: You've been on the Sri Lanka Desk, now you're on the India Desk. Were there synergies there, with Indian interest in Sri Lanka?

CAMP: As I recall, we didn't talk too much with the Indians in Washington about Sri Lanka, partly because of Indian sensibilities. That is very different now. It related to the Indians' feeling that South Asia was an area where they didn't feel that the U.S. should be actively involved. Yes, we had embassies, we had commercial relationships, we had political reporting. But it was not an area where they welcomed dealing with us on their neighbors. That has certainly changed.

Q: Now, one of the handholding responsibilities of desk officers is the American Embassy, and the whole mission. Did you have much interaction with the embassy? Was this the time of official informals?

CAMP: The contrast with today is quite dramatic. The Deputy Assistant Secretary or the Office Director might have called the embassy occasionally, but most communication was via cable. We did have official-informal cables – a daily compendium of what was happening in Washington and vice-versa from the embassy. That practice lasted up to the days of e-mail, I guess.

Q: You mentioned that the second desk officer dealt with consular issues. That would suggest that those issues were a fairly major part of the workload or what we were doing in India.

CAMP: The junior India desk officer was responsible for dealing with visa issues, among other things. Visas were a big issue at our posts; the refusal rate was much higher than it is today, and

the Indian embassy, congressmen, and private citizens sometimes wanted to adjudicate the denials in Washington. We have procedures in place for that; we tried to stay away from visas in Washington, but often we had to find out from post why a particular visa was denied, so that we could explain to the applicant's friend in the U.S.

But in the mid-80s, the big issue for the second desk officer was Sikh terrorism. The secessionist rebellion in the Punjab was in full swing. Counter-terrorism was beginning to an important area of bilateral cooperation. We worked closely with the FBI and facilitated cooperation with India on suspected terrorists who had fled to the U.S., or other support/activity. The US arrested two Indian citizens in New Jersey who were wanted in India in connection with several murders. We supported India's extradition request but the two Sikhs lingered in US jails for years.

Q: In terms of how the embassy was reporting, what did you think of the caliber of the reporting and the kinds of issues that they were catching?

CAMP: They were very good at political and economic reporting. They had good contacts at the Foreign Ministry, though limited by the protocol constraints in Delhi. The Joint Secretary would only see DCM or above, or something like that, and it worked its way down. We depended very heavily on our embassy. Among other reasons, 25 years ago, we did not have the newspapers from Madras or Delhi available in DC on a real-time basis. We really needed the embassy to understand what was going on as well as their analysis of its consequences for US interests.

Q: There's other offices in the embassy, the Defense Attaché, the Commercial Attaché, Treasury guy. They were all making their contribution to our understanding of what was going on in India?

CAMP: It was then and is now a multi-agency mission in Delhi. A lot of their reporting was in their own channels, and not what I needed as a desk officer. But if, for instance, I needed information for a munitions licensing case about how India was going to use a particular item they were seeking to buy, I could go to the DOD folks in Delhi and get a good, solid answer. The input from all the agencies was incorporated in Delhi into the mission's reporting. And in Washington, while I dealt often with the Commerce Department and the Pentagon, I had minimal contact with their folks in Delhi.

Q: In Washington, one of the backup offices is INR (Bureau of Intelligence and Research). How productive was the India watcher in the INR Bureau?

CAMP: We've always had very good people in INR. Walter Andersen was the mainstay then and for many years. He was a great resource to call upon, because he knew the history, he knew the background. He knew the politics better than any of us. INR was a major player because we had respect for Walter and the others there, including Eliza van Hollen, the wife of Chris van Hollen, my ambassador in Sri Lanka.

Q: Now, one of the desk's jobs is a lot of background work if there are high ranking delegations coming in. Were there many high-ranking Indian delegations coming in at that time?

CAMP: Our visitors going there also generated a fair amount of work. Defense Secretary Casper Weinberger's visit was a big deal because India was interested in a stronger defense relationship, and so were we. Our military over the years has led the way in developing good ties.

We had one stand-out visit from India – Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi in October 1987. It was not a full-scale state visit but it was a big step in the relationship. It prompted the bureaucracy, as high level visits always do, to come to conclusions, to resolve some interagency debates so we'd have some so-called deliverables. That was when the tech transfer interagency debates were quite contentious. That was the year we finally licensed the export of a Cray supercomputer for long-range weather forecasting; I recall that was one dividend of the Gandhi visit.

I was not involved in the senior level meetings at the White House and at State. We all trooped out to Andrews Air Force Base to greet Rajiv on the tarmac. It was an important visit partly because we didn't have many presidential visits to India. The last presidential visit to India had been Jimmy Carter's day and a half stopover in 1979. And there wouldn't be another presidential visit until Bill Clinton in March 2000. So there was a long drought there.

Q: Can you give us a feel for how these kinds of visits were put together?

CAMP: It's a huge operation. When it is a head of government visit, as this one was, there are a lot of demands from the White House. The India director on the National Security Council staff would put together a briefing book for the President full of many papers that were tasked to us weeks earlier. So we would have been working on this visit a month earlier to get the papers to the White House in time. Then we would have put together memos for the Secretary of State submitted through the Executive Secretariat. They would have tasked us background papers on all the topics that might come up -- tech transfer, space cooperation, indigenous fighter aircraft, etc. INR would submit papers on domestic politics, Rajiv's ability to get his programs approved, and so on.

Q: Would these be put into a fairly significant three-ring binder?

CAMP: Yes. It was put together by the Executive Secretariat and went directly to the Secretary and his staff. The Assistant Secretary would have gotten a copy but it rarely made its way back down to the desk officer.

And all of those papers, whoever they are tasked to, have to be cleared around the building. And in 1987, clearing around the building meant walking the papers around and getting penciled clearances, because we didn't have email and Microsoft Word. These things could get incredibly contentious. If, for instance, the Human Rights Bureau was tasked by the Executive Secretariat to write a paper on Hindu-Muslim relations on India, they'd have to clear it through me and often I disagreed with their perspective. Same thing with munitions licensing or anything else. The real reason these papers took so long is they have to be coordinated around the building, and often with the Defense Department and elsewhere. So it was an enormous undertaking.

Q: That's right. This was the period when we were doing human rights reports. How does the untouchable situation in India come out??

CAMP: India for many years has done the right thing from a legal standpoint. Untouchability is illegal, and there is active affirmative action in India. At the national level, there was little to fault. But of course, social customs die slowly, especially in rural area. So you still had horrible instances of discrimination against so-called Untouchables, Dalits, which we cited in our human rights report. We also talked about Hindu-Muslim issues. There was too often violence directed at the minority communities. It's often in India a case of a law that is not enforced, laws against religious discrimination, laws against other forms of discrimination, laws against child labor. Child labor became a big issue at some point in India as well. If you're an NGO (Non-Government Organization) and you send an investigating team you'll find instances of child labor in many industries in India. But the wonderful thing about India is that many of those NGOs are Indian themselves. The Indian social activists and journalists are the ones doing the exposes, and that's the way it should be. It's always better having domestic activists working on exposing the flaws in Indian society. India does not like being judged by outsiders, and frankly, no one does.

Q: Now, you're in NEA/INS for three years, which means you must have extended one year when you became the India Desk Officer?

CAMP: Yes, my boss wanted me to stay for two years as the India Desk Officer so I'd get into the swing of things.

INDONESIA

Q: In the summer cycle of '88, you transferred to the Indonesia Desk hopping into a whole new bureau, East Asia and the Pacific. How did that assignment come up?

CAMP: The job was an eye-opener for me. It was my first exposure to Indonesia and I was learning from the ground up. Fortunately, I worked for two people who knew Indonesia very well. The Office Director was Dick Teare, later Ambassador to Papua New Guinea. And his deputy was Barbara Harvey who had been in Indonesia on a number of tours and knew the country very, very well. I was the newbie. I knew the Department pretty well at this point. I knew how to do a briefing paper and how to get things cleared at DoD and NSC and so forth. And that certainly served me in good stead. But my first step was to learn something about Indonesia. Fortunately, the department sent me out on a three-week orientation trip, which was immensely valuable, getting to know the embassy, getting to know our consulates, seeing a little bit of the country. I went out there early in my tour. Paul Wolfowitz was the ambassador. I went up to visit our consulate in Medan, which was unfortunately later closed in the spate of budget cutting. I believe it's now been reopened as a one-person post. I visited the town and province of Aceh, the headquarters of a huge Mobil natural gas site. It was also home to the Aceh separatist movement, which was not nearly so violent then as it later became. And it was also the epicenter of the horrible tsunami of 2005.

Then I went out to Surabaya where an old friend was Consul General, Lee Coldren. He drove me around Eastern Java for a few days and then two days in Bali where we have a Consular Agent and a lot of consular business, as it turns out. So it was a good three weeks and a good

introduction to the land and politics of Indonesia.

Q: Well, Indonesia is fascinating in a number of ways. Largest Islamic country in the world, or largest population, and yet, Bali is Hindu.

CAMP: That's correct. It's a fascinating country and I certainly can't claim a great deal of expertise. Islam in Indonesia is overlaid with indigenous culture. So in Java you've got Javanese culture, which is pre-Islamic and very distinctive. Harmony and the importance of tamping down controversy is a major part of that culture. My theory is that is where Barack Obama, growing up, got some of his no-drama personality. That's a diversion. Anyway, Indonesia is a very complex society, of which I only touched the surface.

Q: In 1988 when you'd come on board, who's the Deputy Assistant Secretary, the Southeast Asia guy?

CAMP: Dave Lambertson. Gaston Sigur was the assistant secretary when I arrived, replaced later by Dick Solomon.

Q: Now, U.S.-Indonesia relations had been up and down. Where were they when you started on the desk?

CAMP: As far as we were concerned, they were fairly good. As far as Congress was concerned, and frankly, other parts of our government, there were issues, human rights issues in particular. One of my tasks was to work with AID to try and keep assistance levels up. We focused on the strategic importance of Indonesia, and the commercial importance of Indonesia to the U.S., and we were promoting those issues at a time when others were saying, "No, we've got to cut back." Interestingly enough, we had some of the same concerns about technology transfer with Indonesia as we did with India, even though they did not have the kind of Soviet relationship which troubled us in India. The big issue in those days was the sale of AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control System) aircraft. The Indonesian military was powerful, was relatively flush with cash, and wanted the latest technology. DoD raised objections about technology security. We eventually prevailed on broader national security grounds, in cooperation with the White House, which wanted to make the sale. We didn't have a lot of very senior visits. Suharto came on a private visit I think during those years, but he wasn't invited by the White House for an official visit. I think that was sort of a reflection of the less than enthusiastic relationship we had overall.

Q: Let's skip for a moment, in your job were you able to interact with the Indonesian Embassy in Washington and do you have any thoughts on their diplomatic service?

CAMP: They had a fairly large embassy here, still do, located in one of those grand late 19th century, early 20th century mansions on Massachusetts Avenue. They had a political and economic staff that was not as sophisticated as what I'd seen in the Indian Embassy. But nevertheless, they got around. They got to Capitol Hill, they knew as many embassies learn that the locus of power is not just their counterparts at the State Department, but includes Defense, Capitol Hill, NGOs, etc.

Q: One of the things the calendar does to you in this assignment is that we have a new administration coming into power in 1989, which always means transition time at the State Department. Although this is one Republican administration to another, were there any special work requirements put on the desk as a result of the transition of administrations?

CAMP: There always is. We were getting changes at the top of the Department, so there were lots of papers that we would have prepared for the new Secretary and the new Deputy Secretary. More important for us was that we got a new assistant secretary, Dick Solomon, for whom the front office put together a humongous briefing book, with the assistance of all the desks.

Q: One of the trends in Southeast Asia at the time was the growing influence of ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations). And there were a number of ASEAN events at the time that you were on the desk. And in July of '89, the Post Ministerial was held in Brunei. So the Secretary would have gone out and of course he would have met or could have met the Indonesian Head of State or Indonesian Foreign Minister at the time. So I would assume at that time and the Yogyakarta Post Ministerial in July of '90 there would have been events that you would have contributed papers to.

CAMP: Quite right. Whenever the Secretary travels, the desk gets involved in a big way. Because the ASEAN meetings were multilateral, the Secretary would have been caught between those responsibilities and the many, many meetings that were requested by the other Foreign Ministers. That kind of bilateral meeting was welcomed by the desk because they forced events and got our bureaucracy to make decisions.

For example, ATT was promoting a big telecom deal in Indonesia at the time and they needed EXIM Bank support. The prospect of a high-level meeting with the Indonesians helped get EXIM on board. And ATT was pushing us to help them. Either they or I (probably the former) came up with the idea of getting a Presidential letter to help their effort. One of the things I had learned by then was that a desk officer could get a presidential signature by talking to the NSC Director and saying, "Look, this is really important. Can you work this through your bureaucracy to get a letter from the President of the United States to the President of Indonesia?" I sent the NSC staff a draft and we got the letter, and ATT eventually got the deal.

Q: Another historical event -- 1989 is full of historical events. You got Tiananmen Square in Beijing, the Berlin Wall crumbles. Does any of that come to your attention down on the Indonesia Desk?

CAMP: There were big events around the world, and I was focused on Washington and Jakarta.. The events that affected my life were things that passed unnoticed in the rest of the world. The Sultan of Yogyakarta died in the US in October 1988. This was a huge deal. Even though Indonesia is a republic, the traditional leader of Yogyakarta is immensely important. So how did we show our respect when the sultan died in a US hospital? We escorted him back with DoD assets. We got a military plane to fly the body and the grieving relatives back. It went as far as Hawaii and then the Indonesians picked it up. But again, it took a lot of back and forth with DoD, a lot of memos between our Executive Secretary at the State Department and the Executive

Secretary of DoD to get a plane on very short notice. And I guess as a thank you from the bureau I went along on the trip to Hawaii escorting the grieving family members. So that's the kind of thing that the desk officer does, as opposed to the huge global issues, which tend to pass over like the headline of the day.

There was also a major disaster during the pilgrimage to Mecca that year. A tunnel collapsed and hundreds of pilgrims were killed. A lot of them were Indonesian. And so that was also an opportunity to express our regret and to show our appreciation for the values in Indonesia. So that was another case where I went to the NSC staff and said, "Can you get us a letter of condolence." And I suspect they were doing it for other Muslim nations as well, but we got a letter from the president to Suharto, got huge headlines throughout Indonesia at a very difficult time. That's the kind of thing that I saw as my value added on the Desk – trying to find ways to raise the U.S. profile and to put the U.S. in a positive light in Jakarta.

Q: What were the main issues that we were trying to encourage them to embrace?

CAMP: We saw the strategic value of Indonesia and wanted Indonesia to move toward a more pluralistic society that we could embrace wholeheartedly without continuing concerns about human rights. One of the big issues was East Timor, a former Portuguese territory that had been absorbed into Indonesia. There were continuing demands for freedom for East Timor. This was something on which I got as many telephone calls from the Hill and elsewhere as any other issue during those two years. There was not a whole lot we could do. The Indonesians had not reached the stage where they would even contemplate independence for East Timor. But it was an issue that we continued to press in high-level meetings.

CAPITOL HILL

Q: In the summer cycle of 1990 you get an opportunity to go up on Capitol Hill. How did that opportunity arise?

CAMP: The State Department has several programs to place foreign service officers on Capitol Hill. One, the Pearson Program, places FSOs around the country in mayors' and governors' offices, but also sends around ten officers every year to Capitol Hill. It's a great idea to give foreign service officers congressional experience. I wish I had done it earlier. The year provided a wonderful basis for the later years of my career to be able to understand how this part of the government worked. You have to be up there to understand it. I was happy to have been accepted as a legislative assistant by the office of Senator Paul Simon, who was a senior Democrat from Illinois. He was a senator who I admired and, as it turned out, had quite a bit of interest in the Foreign Service. He served on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. I was on his personal staff, which meant that I dealt a lot with constituents. I prepared legislative proposals for him. I briefed him when necessary on South and East Asian issues. I was happy to discover that one of his personal interests was language training for foreign service officers. He was interested in putting a rider on some bill to encourage more foreign language positions in the Foreign Service. We ended up having an amendment to the state authorization bill that year, which instructed the State Department to increase its language designated positions and instructed State to take language proficiency into account for promotions. The State Department on principle hates being

instructed on anything by Congress, but if it has to be on anything I think these were good initiatives.

Q: So how did he use you?

CAMP: He used me as his South and East Asia specialist. He didn't have a dedicated staff for that part of the world. If he was receiving the Ambassador of Indonesia, for instance, I would write him a short briefing paper. And if there's anything I'd learned after five years as a desk officer, it was how to write a briefing paper. So I did a lot of that. I'd sit in on his meetings with the Indian Ambassador or the Chinese Ambassador. I would prepare him notes when he had visitors from Illinois who were interested in business with China. There was a lot of that. But there was also a lot of scut work -- something you also become acquainted with as desk officer -- responding to constituents, or talking to constituents who had an issue with human rights in China or any other office call that was forwarded to me. I was a run of the mill legislative assistant. But I had a lot of fun doing it, it was a totally new environment. Even though I was not on the Foreign Relations staff, I had free rein of the Foreign Relations Committee, so I'd sit in on hearings, I'd sit behind him if there was a hearing on an ambassadorial nominee for East Asia. Once when Assistant Secretary Dick Solomon came up to testify on East Asia I was sitting behind Simon. I went up to see my old boss after the hearing and he said, mostly in jest, "Have you changed colors on me, Don? Are you a traitor up here?" Simon had given him a particularly hard time that day.

Capitol Hill was a totally different environment from the State Department, and an experience that I think every Foreign Service Officer should have.

Q: What did you get out of it in terms of your understanding of the legislative side of the house?

CAMP: Well, first of all, I came at it with some connections, with some -- as the Chinese would say -- *guanxi (relationships)*. I made friends there that I could call on later and who later turned up in senior positions in the Department and elsewhere. I learned the difference between an authorization and an appropriation bill. I learned in some ways how powerless the Foreign Relations Committee could be in trying to get things done, because the money was handled in the appropriations committee. I learned a little bit about mark up of bills and the like. A lot of the processes are very arcane. Senators and congressmen try very hard to understand these issues and they need staffs that are well informed. And they also need to travel. So I also had a different view of congressional delegations after my experience on the Hill. Congress plays such a major role on foreign policy that I think every desk officer should be more attuned to how Congress operates. As a digression, the State Department has not always done a good job in cultivating the Hill. Often, our Congressional Relations Bureau wants to dominate the relationship with the Hill. But the Hill staffers do not want to talk to the Office of Congressional Relations. They want to talk to desk officers. They want to talk to the people who know the policy issues that they're interested in. At the worst of times, desk officers are told not to talk to the Hill except through the Congressional Relations Bureau, which is a terrible way to have a dialogue with Congress.

Q: Speaking of attitudes, you were coming from a strange world to their world up there on the Hill. And did you get any interesting comments that would reflect attitude toward Foreign

Service Officers or that sort of thing, you know?

CAMP: In general they were very welcoming to me. They respected the expertise and the knowledge I brought with me. But I got the impression that they felt that dealing with the State Department was a pain. There was not a lot of respect for our Bureau of Congressional Relations. They are perceived too often as the middlemen and the obstacle rather than the solution to getting information from the Department.

CHINA DESK AND CHENGDU

Q: Coming off the Hill then you took an assignment to the China/Mongolia Desk.

CAMP: Well, I had been assigned to be Consul General in Chengdu, a job that was open in summer of 1992. So I had a gap of one year and the obvious place to put me was the China Desk, where I could do work that would prep me for my next assignment..

Q: Can you give me a description of the China Desk, its size and organization?

CAMP: It was the Office of China and Mongolian Affairs. Office Director was Bob Perito. I worked directly for the Deputy for Political Affairs, Mark Mohr. In the East Asia Bureau front office, we reported to Desaix Anderson, the senior deputy assistant secretary. I was the human rights and Tibet affairs officer. The Tibet portfolio was particularly significant for me since I knew Tibet was going to be a major area of focus when I moved to Chengdu.

Q: This was your third or fourth desk officer assignment. What were the kinds of things that you were covering and writing on?

CAMP: I had more congressional activity because Tibet and human rights in China are both very high profile issues. This was only two years after the Tiananmen massacre, and emotions were still very high. There was a lot of involvement with Capitol Hill, NGOs, and the public and press.

My congressional experience came in very handy. I knew most of the Foreign Relations Committee staff at that point. China prison labor was a big issue at the time, especially the controversy over products of Chinese prisons coming to the US. It was dealt with both as a human rights issue and as unfair competition. In the course of dealing with this issue, I learned that we pay our own prisoners a pittance; they also produce products that compete in the marketplace. No one was much interested in hearing about that.

Q: What's U.S. policy to China as seen from the desk?

CAMP: Besides the usual business of carrying on a bilateral relationship, we always felt as if we needed to fight back against efforts to completely derail our relationship with China. We were under legislatively-mandated sanctions, but there were also efforts in Congress and elsewhere to rebalance our relationship toward Taiwan and away from the mainland. We tried to take a longer term view in the State Department and say we will continue to need a productive relationship

with China, let's not go overboard.

Q: Is that illustrated by the Radio Asia issue?

CAMP: That is a good example Congress was looking for ways to bring news into China. In those pre-internet days, it was still very much a closed society. Voice of America was active but did not have a mandate to report actively on China's internal developments. The congressional proposal was to establish a Radio Free China, which would be a surrogate radio network analogous to Radio Free Europe. It would provide the Chinese public an alternative to local media and actually provide perspectives on what was happening inside China. The State Department believed that it would be better to beef up VOA, expand its Mandarin – and Tibetan – services, and increase its coverage of Chinese news. A lot of my time was spent on this effort, which was ultimately unsuccessful. VOA was never a particularly effective advocate because they really didn't want to change their focus, and become a local news purveyor. And so, VOA now coexists with Radio Free Asia. There was concern at the time that two radio services would be competing for a limited pot of funds, and I think it has played out that way, to VOA's detriment.

Q: Now, on Radio Free China and other issues, again, you're dealing with other actors in Washington, other offices.

CAMP: There were frequent interagency meetings, which took a lot of our time. But my job was very much an outreach job. I was fortunate because our jobs are so often focused on internal deliberations that we don't have time to talk to the press, the Hill, the NGOs. My job by necessity was to help convince critics of our policy that there was a way forward on U.S. policy toward China that did not involve cutting the country off from everything. So I dealt with a lot of the interest groups. One of the more interesting and effective, then and now, was the International Campaign for Tibet. Then and still (2012) it was headed by a very effective Tibetan by the name of Lodi Gyari, who cut a wide swath around Washington. He's the personal representative of the Dalai Lama in Washington; he was well-received, sometimes lionized on Capitol Hill and among journalists and think tanks. I got to know Lodi; he was a very effective lobbyist. But part of my job was trying to prevent his efforts from derailing US-China relations. As I recall, there was a bill introduced in Congress around this time that referred to Tibet as an occupied country. This was received in Beijing with dismay. The Chinese Embassy knew that it had no effect on the official relationship and was presumably telling the Foreign Ministry. Our message to China was along the lines of "Look, we have very serious human rights concerns here, you know that. We do not intend, however, to change our official relationship with China. We continue to recognize Tibet as an integral part of China. That has not changed, whatever you may hear from Capitol Hill." But when a senior party official in China reads in his official translation of the American press that the Congress has called Tibet a country, he is not going to understand the nuances of American politics, and the separation of powers. He's going to think this is reflective of US foreign policy. So we did a lot of damage control.

Q: Did you have an opportunity to interact with any of the embassy officers?

CAMP: Yes. Some of the same people I had worked with in the Foreign Ministry in Beijing in

the mid-'80s were now in fairly senior positions. The DCM was Liu Xiaoming who had been a junior officer at the Foreign Ministry in 1984-85. So it was nice to re-establish that relationship. In general, the Chinese embassy officers in Washington were a pretty sophisticated lot. They knew how to work the halls of State and of Capitol Hill. It was a difficult time for a Chinese diplomat in Washington. They were not greeted with enthusiasm on Capitol Hill, for instance. But it was important to them – and to us – for them to explain to their leadership back in Beijing how Washington worked.

Q: Now you're preparing to move to Chengdu to become the Consul General.

CAMP: That's right. I was an avid reader of the reporting from Chengdu while I was on the desk. I was also the desk's backstop/liaison for the consulate. The management backup was performed by the bureau's executive office and a lot of that was focused on preparing the consulate's new office building and the move from the temporary hotel location. I was the beneficiary of that in the first year I was in Chengdu.

Q: Actually, like most of our consulates, didn't they start out in a hotel or something like that and finally after long negotiations got their own plot of land and then built a building?

CAMP: That's exactly right. And it was longer than usual in Chengdu. But fortunately, this was mostly accomplished by the time I got to Chengdu. At that point it was mostly opening our new facilities.

Q: How did you prepare for your new assignment?

CAMP: Well, in addition to dealing with the human rights and Tibet issues from the Washington perspective, I worked on trade promotion issues. And toward the end of my year on the desk, I went over to the Peace Corps headquarters to talk to the folks working on the new Peace Corps program in China, which was to be headquartered in Sichuan, in Chengdu. Peace Corps almost always sets up in the capital, but with China so huge, they decided to focus at first just on the province of Sichuan. And, in another departure from standard practice, they had agreed with the Chinese after laborious discussions that it was not to be the American Peace Corps, it was to be the U.S.-China Friendship Volunteers.

Q: So now going out to post you would have stopped in the embassy in Beijing. What did the embassy tell you it wanted you to look at and report on and who was your handler in the embassy?

CAMP: My supervisor the DCM, Scott Hallford, was very helpful. And the Ambassador at the time was Stapleton Roy, one of our great China hands. He told me that he had a Chengdu history himself. He'd been a boy in Chengdu, as the son of a missionary family. During World War II, he would climb to the top of the city wall and watch the explosions as the Japanese shelled Chengdu. So he had a personal interest in Sichuan and came to visit a number of times while I was there.

Q: Did he have any particular emphasis on your focus?

CAMP: Yes. Tibet was something that the embassy was very interested in. It was a very sensitive issue then as it is now, both for human rights concerns and our whole bilateral relationship. So one message was to get out to Tibet often. They also wanted more reporting from the other provinces in the consular district. Chengdu's district was the province of Sichuan, the autonomous region of Tibet, the province of Yunnan and the province of Guizhou. Yunnan bordered on the Golden Triangle of Southeast Asia, and therefore was a developing major narcotics area. Sichuan was just beginning to be a major investment focus for foreign companies. The east coast had already seen a lot of development. Now attention was turning more toward the west, so trade promotion was important. And the fourth big issue was management. We had been in a hotel since the consulate opened seven years earlier. And we would finally be moving into a compound, an office building, an apartment building, and a CG's (consul general) residence. And that took a lot of my attention, particularly that first year.

Q: The new buildings, were they newly built by the State Department's Overseas Buildings Bureau?

CAMP: It was kind of parallel with the consulate in Shenyang, which had opened earlier. That is to say, the design was OBO's (Overseas Building Operation) -- it was FBO then, OBO now. But the construction was primarily done by the Chinese with some OBO supervision. I don't know how it worked out in Shenyang, but in Chengdu it was not good. It took a lot longer than we expected. And one of the problems -- the biggest problem probably -- was a design problem from the beginning from our side, which is to say it was designated as an unclassified post. And that is not realistic. That was probably done for cost-saving reasons. But it was clear when I went out there that we needed classified communications. We didn't have it, we didn't have an area that allowed for that. So that took a lot of redesign while I was there and delayed us further. But it was much more comfortable when we finally moved in, compared to working and living in the Jin Jiang Hotel in downtown Chengdu.

Q: And that's where you were when you first arrived.

CAMP: Correct.

Q: And when you first arrived, how large is the consulate?

CAMP: We had seven American officers and we had about 25 to 28 locally hired staff. So it was small. And it was clearly destined to grow. One of the problems was that the locally employed staff was, unlike almost anyone else in the world, not hired by us and they weren't employees of the U.S. government. They were contract employees and they worked for the Sichuan provincial government and they were assigned by the Sichuan provincial government. So we didn't choose them as we would like. And this problem persisted for another 10 years or so all over China before we finally were allowed to hire employees.

Q. When was your first trip to Tibet?

CAMP: I arrived in August 1992. I am pretty sure that I went up within the first few months

because that was a priority for the mission. I can't actually remember the first trip with great clarity, but it was wintertime. I had some perspective on the place from my 1984 visit. The government in Beijing allowed limited access. It was relatively open for most of the time I was there; diplomats could go but under strict numerical limits and each trip was on a case-by-case basis.

It was clear you were always under surveillance there. You couldn't set foot in anyone's house without everyone knowing that you were there. And this was brought home to me once when I was sitting with a Tibetan, who might properly be called a dissident. And in walked someone who obviously knew who I was and said, "We need to talk to you. You need to come over and talk to the Foreign Office." So we had to be very careful about who we met. And that limited our reporting greatly. Even foreigners were careful about what they said. As in 1984, I called on the Nepal Consul General, the only foreign diplomat there. He obviously knew more about Tibet than most because he was from neighboring Nepal, spoke the language, and had a consulate staff. But he also knew he was under surveillance and was never very helpful. I always checked in with him, but he never had that much to say.

Q: Now, when you come to Chengdu in '92, what is the Chinese policy toward Tibet? Or at least what is our perception?

CAMP: The atmosphere was somewhat more liberal than the past, and dramatically so by comparison with the horrors of the Cultural Revolution. High schools were teaching in Tibetan and -- my own touchstone of openness -- you could still buy pictures of the Dalai Lama in the bazaar. If you asked for a picture they'd pull one out from underneath the counter and sell it to you. If you went into the most holy of the shrines, the Jokhang Temple, right in the middle of town, in the sanctum sanctorum there was usually at least one picture of the Dalai Lama. Once I remember seeing a "Free Tibet" poster there. So clearly the police did not come into the sanctum sanctorum. That was not always true. Crackdowns seemed to run in cycles.

I tried to get to Tibet at least four times a year. One of my memorable trips was as escort for a congressional delegation arranged at very short notice. Senator Claiborne Pell, then Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, and Senator Levin were on a CODEL in China. They had had a longstanding request to visit Tibet; during their visit in Beijing, it was suddenly approved.

Senator Pell was quite elderly. The Chinese government sent along a doctor, because they knew of the health problems of going to 13,000 feet suddenly. The Americans sent along our own doctor at Senator Pell's wife's insistence. She was quite concerned.

But the senators were very excited. We had a small delegation. Everyone's advice when you arrive in Tibet, whether you're a 20-year old and fit, or older, is to take the first day off, just relax, acclimatize. You're going from practically sea level to 13,000 feet; it's actually quite dangerous. Senator Pell would have none of that. We came in from the airport, which is a lengthy drive. And he saw a famous monastery. He probably knew about it already, but he said, "Stop. I want to see that monastery."

Well, that was another climb of maybe 800 feet or so. The doctor was taken aback, and tried to

encourage him to continue into the city and relax till the following day. But Pell just started climbing the steps. It was as if he was rejuvenated, with a shot of adrenalin.

So we all followed him, in my case with a sense of foreboding. I had had mild altitude sickness on a previous trip. In fact, that night, Senator Levin and I both had horrible headaches and couldn't sleep. We commiserated with each other and the doctors helped us get through the night. Senator Pell slept like a log and was great the next morning. He was on a psychological high. It was a successful trip. The Chinese showed off the relative freedom accorded to Tibetan Buddhism and Senator Pell and Senator Levin had the trip of a lifetime.

Q: Now, one of the pressures that's building in Tibet is Chinese immigration. Han Chinese are coming into the area. It's similar to when the Qing Dynasty fell. Manchuria had been off limits to the Chinese. And when the dynasty fell, the Chinese piled into Manchuria.

CAMP: This was beginning to be an issue. It became more dramatic after I left. Han Chinese from the plains mostly had a very negative image of Tibet, not only because of the cultural image of Tibet, but because they didn't think it was a good place to do business and they thought it was too high and too cold. Not many came at the beginning, but you gradually started to see Sichuanese shops popping up in Lhasa. It was still very much a Tibetan city. Soon after that, and even more so now that the train line has come in, you have Sichuanese and other Han Chinese from all over coming up to do business, to settle, to establish themselves. And they found it very lucrative. Lhasa is much less a Tibetan city now, except for the area right around the Jokhang, the traditional bazaar. I saw a little of that. There was just the beginning of the idea that Han Chinese were destroying Tibetan culture by overwhelming the local populace.

Q: So as you progressed through this tour, what trends were you perceiving about Tibet?

CAMP: It was mostly a liberalizing trend in those years. The Chinese were eager to show it off, show off what they were accomplishing. Again, their point of reference was the Cultural Revolution, when things were disastrous and Buddhist monks were tortured. And so now there was an effort to demonstrate Tibetan Buddhists can practice their religion, monasteries are open and prospering. That was true to an extent. But any indication that those monks were involved in politics was a bridge too far for the Chinese authorities, and they would crack down.

Richard Gere was invited to Tibet in 1994, and came through Chengdu. He had a delegation, including some Rinpoches from India, an American Rinpoche and a reporter from Rolling Stone Magazine. It was quite an entourage. Richard Gere, even then, was known to be a devotee of the Dalai Lama. He wasn't quite the public activist on Tibet that he is now. I presume the Chinese authorities thought they could influence him by showing him Buddhist culture in Lhasa. The effort was unsuccessful.

Q: Could you describe some of your contacts? Who were you calling on on a regular basis?

CAMP: As I said, I tended to be fairly careful about private contacts in Tibet. I started with a few who had been cultivated by my very good Political-Economic Officer John Brennan who had studied some Tibetan. He really made an effort to travel to Lhasa, but also importantly the

Tibetan areas of western Sichuan and of western Yunnan. Neither was part of the autonomous region of Tibet, but both were part of the historical area of Tibet, and politically quite important. John was very good about searching out people with his limited Tibetan, so I followed in his footsteps. In Lhasa, I had a few local Tibetan contacts but also lots of government contacts. Those latter were not practically productive in terms of knowing what was going on but they were important because we needed to work with the government. I can't say I made much of an inroad into the Tibetan dissident community -- in any case, contact with me would have been a real problem for them. But we did talk to monks through interpreters who were native Tibetan speakers. They worked for the government, but they were often sympathetic to the Tibetan cause and would go off script on occasion. That was obviously very useful for reporting purposes.

Q: Did you get around to the other provinces in your consular district and did you get a chance to get around at the district level?

CAMP: Yes. In the mid-1990s, the officialdom of Sichuan province was fairly conservative. We were the first foreign consulate in Chengdu and in Sichuan Province. They weren't quite sure how to deal with us and they were taking orders from Beijing and learning how you deal with the foreigners. So the provincial government, while not unwelcoming, was not very helpful. It was hard to get onto university campuses. I had two excellent Public Affairs Officers, both good Chinese speakers, but doing programs on campuses was really, really tough. My son went to kindergarten at Sichuan University, so I had access to that campus regularly. We continually pushed the envelope and tried to improve our access. I went to Chongqing frequently. At that time, it was part of Sichuan Province, although later hived off as an autonomous city. And I went to some major cities along the Yangtze which were major commercial areas. One of my tasks was commercial promotion and so we were trying to encourage American investment and trade from the United States. We were just beginning to get high tech in there. Intel came in while I was there. Boeing and McDonnell Douglas were trying to sell aircraft. Sichuan Airlines was a new entity, so I called on them and tried to discourage them from buying Airbus and buy Boeing instead. McDonnell Douglas had a manufacturing operation in collaboration with Chengdu Aircraft Corporation, making parts of the fuselage for its commercial aircraft. Proctor and Gamble started a factory as well for shampoo sold on the local market. Sichuan was such a huge and populous province that American corporations were already seeing it as a huge potential market.

Yunnan Province was particularly important because it bordered Burma and Laos, so we covered a lot of narcotics issues down there. They had the beginning of an AIDS problem there. China was still very much in denial about AIDS with Beijing saying that it was a foreigners' disease, unknown in China. Meanwhile, along the Burmese border, the government had established AIDS hospitals and living quarters for those with AIDS. A lot of it was related to narcotics, shared needles, and the spread of AIDS from Southeast Asia. So I did some reporting on that. The Yunnan provincial leadership was actually pretty good, pretty welcoming. As a border province, I guess they saw that a foreign presence like ours could be more an asset than a burden, as I think they saw us in Sichuan.

Guizhou, the fourth province in the consular district, was quite poor; at that point, it was more interesting from a cultural and anthropological point of view, but I didn't have a lot of business

there. I think I just made two trips there in three years.

Q: Are the distances involved there large? Did you drive?

CAMP: In the mid-'90s we could drive virtually nowhere, partly because of the roads but more because of the government restriction on foreign diplomats. Air and train were the main methods of transportation. To give you a sense of the distance, Chengdu to Kunming in Yunnan was a 24-hour train ride. It was a *beautiful* train ride. It took you through mountains and valleys and fantastic scenery. It was obviously much easier to fly. There was nothing of the network of major roads or bullet trains between cities that there is now. As I was leaving in 1995 they had just opened the Chengdu-Chongqing Expressway, which made a huge difference. But it didn't affect much of my life there. I almost always traveled by train and occasionally -- if we could get permission -- by office car within 50-100 miles of Chengdu.

Q: If you're basically the only diplomatic mission there, when July 4th comes up how do you celebrate it under these conditions?

CAMP: Well, July 4th was a great occasion all three years. The first was the most memorable because we'd just moved into our new consulate, and so we had the 4th on the consulate grounds. And of course everyone wanted to see this new American outpost in Chengdu. We had a small but growing American community and we had a large Chinese contact list that was delighted to come to the consulate and particularly for that occasion. So it was quite a raucous party and people were admiring our green lawns, which had to be the only green lawns in Sichuan Province at the time. We'd put a lot of effort into making it look like a little bit of America with Chinese characteristics. So the party was a great success. And in fact, I think because we also combined it with a consulate opening, we had high level representation both from our embassy -- the DCM -- and the Governor of Sichuan Province who was quite a senior personage. For the second year, we had the Peace Corps, so that was even better in some ways. We had 30 or so young Americans who were delighted to have a bit of Americana for a day after their time in the villages or the towns of Sichuan.

Q: One of the things that comes up toward the end of your tour is Harry Wu.

CAMP: That was fascinating. He came through Chengdu on one of his sub rosa trips on which he was gathering data on prison labor. I never expected to see him. I didn't know he was in Sichuan Province, although it's not surprising since Sichuan has some of the more developed prison labor camps or did at the time. Harry Wu walked into the consulate one day -- I don't even know how he got into the consulate -- and was ushered into my office. And I was amazed that he was here, because the Chinese wanted to arrest him. They had no interest in his digging up dirt on the prison camps. So while he was expansively telling me what he was doing, I was pointing to the ceiling and trying to pantomime -- "No, write it down. Don't talk to me." But he was fearless. He wanted to tell me what he was doing, he wanted to explain, he wanted me to report back to Washington. And I suspect it was to some extent self-preservation, that he wanted it to be known by the Americans that he was there. I always thought the consulate was pretty well surveilled, but he did not get arrested on that trip. He got out of Sichuan and finished his research. I was never quite sure why he was not picked up after that meeting, because I can't

imagine he escaped the attention of the local authorities.

Q: Doesn't he have U.S. travel documentation?

CAMP: I don't think that would have protected him from arrest when you're doing things that the Chinese government considers criminal. And I'm sure they would have found some criminal charges to apply to him.

Q: You said that there was no Taiwan issue in Chengdu. What does that mean?

CAMP: Well, I'd served at the embassy in Beijing before and I of course went up there frequently. And whenever there's a crisis in our relations relating to Taiwan -- often over arms sales -- you hear a lot about it from the Foreign Ministry. But not just the Foreign Ministry. If you go to the Commerce Ministry they have an obligatory statement they feel they need to make before they start doing business with you. In Sichuan, they didn't seem to really care much about that. It simply wasn't on their agenda.

I would go for long periods without anyone mentioning Taiwan to me except in passing. In fact, as often as not, it was a positive reference, as in "maybe we can do business with Taiwan." That's what they were interested in. They felt no obligation, they were under no duress from the party or the Foreign Ministry to raise Taiwan with us. In fact, they didn't raise many bilateral issues or bilateral political issues. They wanted to get things done.

Q: Well, that it didn't get raised in your area is interesting because your last year coincides with President Lee Teng-hui visiting the US, which prompted a major, major spat.

CAMP: Of course. And you know, maybe my memory is failing me a bit, but I don't remember that even then Taiwan was raised with me. They were far from Beijing -- "the emperor is a thousand miles away," as the Chinese say. And my boss was a thousand miles away, which is a nice thing about consulates like Chengdu..

I suspect the decisions that were made in Beijing that affected our life were affected by bilateral problems like Taiwan. For instance, the Peace Corps occasionally would have problems bringing in supplies or bringing in new volunteers or whatever, which may well have been orchestrated by Beijing. But as far as my official contacts, minimal.

Q: You're saying the supervision by the embassy was pretty modest?

CAMP: It was. The embassy had many other priorities and we were fairly low on the list. Once I asked the DCM whether I was doing OK, since I hadn't heard from him in a long time. He said, "Don, I'm just so glad I have a consulate that I don't have to worry about."

I also didn't have a good way to communicate with the embassy either. The only secure communications we had was an antiquated STU-3 (Secure Telecommunications Unit) phone. I had to unlock my safe, get out the key and put it into the telephone to talk to the DCM or whoever was calling me from Beijing. We were considered an unclassified post at the time

though we did have a means of sending classified cables.

Q: Could Chengdu report straight back to the department or did all your reporting go through the embassy?

CAMP: For most of the time I was there it was a practical problem. We would type our cables in what passed for a classified area in the attic and then send them to Beijing by courier. After a while we did some policy cables that were specifically from Chengdu, addressed to the Department and presumably went there without editing by Beijing. It was more a practical issue than any policy of centralizing reporting at the embassy.

Q: What outside events affected your life in Chengdu?

CAMP: I will digress and point out that while I had a peaceful three years, my successor Kees Keur's tour was rudely interrupted by the US accidental bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade in 1999. That prompted riots in Chengdu and a breach of the consulate's wall by the rioters and the burning of the CG's Residence. I hope Kees will do his oral history; it was a scary time in Chengdu.

Q: Did you ever get involved in the Chinese commercial space launch facility in Sichuan?

CAMP: Yes. Very much. The major Chinese commercial satellite launch site was in Panzhihua, south of Chengdu. At that time, we were licensing American components for Chinese satellites. But we were very careful about tech transfer concerns, and therefore certain components were carefully protected and were under our control until they were launched. At one point, I was invited to Panzhihua to observe a launch, which was a total success. A few months later, there was another launch and I sent my Pol-Econ Officer, John Brennan, to observe. The launch vehicle exploded spectacularly shortly after launch. The debris of the satellite was spread over dozens of square miles. The tech transfer people immediately said, "We've got to recover those pieces." And so John actually led a team to go scouring the countryside for pieces of the satellite that had exploded, and I think turned up a few. I imagine a few escaped as well. But that was quite an adventure for John.

Q: One of the shadows over Chengdu I would suspect is World War II because that was where the Americans were. Did you get some old GI's coming back?

CAMP: Yes. We had a couple of things related to World War II. When I first arrived, Chongqing had a famous museum devoted to one of the Kuomintang's spy missions against the communists, which detailed alleged KMT and American atrocities against the Red Army during the war. I never visited that museum. But the Chongqing municipality, to which I give a lot of credit, decided that they wanted to celebrate the American support for the war effort against the Japanese so they built a museum to U.S.-Chinese cooperation in World War II and it was dedicated to General Joe Stilwell. General Stilwell's daughter came out for the inauguration. They had interesting artifacts that they'd found related to General Stilwell, to the 14th Air Force, and to Flying Tigers leader Claire Chennault. I donated an army jacket from my father-in-law who'd flown The Hump in those days.

Similarly, there was a monument in Kunming to the aviators who'd flown the Hump. I paid my respects there.

And 1995 marked the 50th anniversary of World War II. The Pentagon decided they wanted to celebrate this by sending around the world their latest cargo plane. I think it was the C-5. Enormous thing. They flew it from Beijing to Yunnan and then over the Hump to India. I got to fly from Beijing to Kunming. With Chinese government help, they'd found surviving Chinese pilots from that era and brought them along on the flight. They took them up to the cockpit and showed them what a modern aircraft was like. And these guys were wonderful. They said, "Yeah, we flew this high, but we didn't have pressurization". And the young American Air Force pilots were just so touched by these old guys and vice versa. It was a really wonderful experience and a very successful Pentagon-organized commemoration of US-China cooperation during the war.

Q: Did that attract any American tourism?

CAMP: That was certainly part of the Chinese government's interest in it. I tried my best to publicize the Stilwell Museum. But World War II veterans were fairly long in the tooth by that time and not a lot of them were traveling to China. So I don't think it was a big tourist draw of the kind the Chinese had hoped for.

Q: What would you say was the most interesting thing about the Chengdu assignment?

CAMP: It's hard to find just one. From a professional point of view, I'd been in the Foreign Service 18 years and it was my first opportunity to be in complete charge. The Foreign Service trains us as political or economic or consular or admin officers, but then at some point throws us into management positions. I survived and grew and thrived.

But one of the most satisfying things for me personally, even though I was not directly responsible for it, was the arrival of Peace Corps. I'd been in the Peace Corps in India many years before and it had been a formative experience for me. So it was very exciting to be involved in the creation of a big new program and with China One, as the first group of Peace Corps volunteers was called. It was a management challenge. We had to integrate into the consulate staff a Peace Corps Director, Admin Officer, a nurse, and some locally hired staff. In line with standing Peace Corps policy, they were not really part of the consulate. But the Peace Corps Director Bill Speidel ended up living in one of our consulate apartments, and becoming a good friend. The volunteers would come to the consulate for Thanksgiving or other occasions; it was really a wonderful addition to the American community in Chengdu, which was primarily businessmen and missionary teachers. The volunteers brought a new life to the area, and in fact, several of them later became very good writers. One of them, Peter Hessler, who was in Chongqing at the time, is now a New Yorker staff writer who has written extensively about China. I can't take much credit at all for the success of Peace Corps there, but it was certainly one of the more exciting parts of my tour there.

There were missteps too. There always are. When China One was due to be sworn in, we had

Senator Pressler in town for a CODEL. So we invited him to make a speech at the Peace Corps inauguration. It would have been fine, except that Senator Pressler, who I don't think knew much about the Peace Corps or its tradition of being non-political and apart from the State Department, said very memorably to the volunteers with the government of Sichuan listening in the audience and on the podium, "We'll look forward to your reports from the villages." And, "Thank you very much for furthering American foreign policy." It was one of the more awkward moments of my Foreign Service career. But Peace Corps thrived and has prospered and has since expanded to other provinces.

PAKISTAN/AFGHANISTAN/BANGLADESH DESK

Q: Now, out of that assignment you come back to Washington. How did you get the assignment in the South Asia Bureau on the Pakistan-Bangladesh-Afghanistan Desk?

CAMP: Well, the State Department made me a China hand, and I'm very happy for that, but I'd come into the Foreign Service intending to make a career around South Asia. And so I was eager to go back and use some of what I'd learned in a management position in the South Asia Bureau. The job there as the Deputy Director of the Pakistan-Afghanistan-Bangladesh Desk was a new part of the region for me. But I wanted to reestablish South Asian credentials.

Q: Let's look at the organization of the South Asia Bureau and then the Desk. Who is the Assistant Secretary and who is the Deputy Assistant Secretary that would have been responsible for your area?

CAMP: The Assistant Secretary was Robin Raphel and the only Deputy Assistant Secretary was Gib Lanpher. Robin was an area specialist who'd served in Islamabad and Delhi. Gib was new to the region, but an old friend. He'd been my CDO (Career Development Officer) when I came into the Foreign Service, and had assigned me to Chinese language. SA was a very small bureau, recently established, just getting its feet wet. It had two Regional Offices: India/Nepal/Sri Lanka/Bhutan/Maldives, and Pakistan/Afghanistan/Bangladesh. They had six officers each. The bureau had a Regional Affairs Office that was about the same size. So it was a tiny bureau and frankly not very influential in the building. It was a new upstart that had just been pulled out of NEA a few years earlier by congressional mandate.

Q: Now, when you're Deputy Director did you have a desk portfolio or were you exclusively a manager?

CAMP: The Director at the time was Lee Coldren. Lee was an expert in the region. He asked me to be the backup for all of the Desk Officers. We had two people for Pakistan, one for Afghanistan, one for Bangladesh. So I had to know all the countries, but I was supervising the Desk Officers and managing the office. Let me say a little bit about our priorities at the time. Afghanistan at this point was in a fair amount of turmoil. We were coming to the end game of the Soviet invasion. We had the special envoy to the Afghan mujahedeen Peter Tomsen. Our Afghan Desk Officers were not normal desk officers; we didn't have a mission in Kabul and the officers had to work with both SA and with Tomsen's independent office. They worked closely with our consulate in Peshawar, which had been our main window on Afghanistan after our

embassy had closed.

Pakistan was still in the policy deep freeze dating to our sanctioning them under the Pressler Amendment when we could no longer certify that they were not building a nuclear weapon. We had to cut off assistance and our valuable relationship with the military establishment. So we had a very limited relationship with them.

And Bangladesh never got the attention it deserved. It's one of the largest country in the world. But in South Asia, we had India, we had Pakistan, we had Afghanistan, so we had other priorities. Bangladesh was a country that was developing quietly on its own and we had a good relationship with them, centered around our assistance program.

Q: Tell us a little more about the Pakistan deep freeze.

CAMP: We'd had a very close relationship with the Pakistani military, which for years had been what was called the iron frame of Pakistan. We had an active IMET (International Military Education and Training) program, we had an active sales program. That all ended after 1989. So we had no contact with the Pakistani military for 12 years and we're paying for that now, I think.

Q: No contact means the other guy's stereotypes really begin to take a hold on his mind.

CAMP: Yes. And the US had benefited for years from a positive image in Pakistan. Their senior military had all had at least some professional training in the US. Pervez Musharraf, the Chief of Army Staff who became President, went to our Command and General Staff College earlier. But he also went to China for training. And in the decade of the '90s officers went to China rather than the United States. There was still a British program, so some would go to Sandhurst. But Pakistan was not getting any of the training we'd provided through IMET.

Q: You would have worked with the embassies here in Washington. How did the Pakistan Embassy look to you? Did they understand what their problem was?

CAMP: Pakistan has always had pretty good missions here, very professional. Often a political ambassador, but very savvy. In that era, we had a woman by the name of Maliha Lodhi, who was a former journalist, very well plugged in in Islamabad and very effective at cultivating official Washington, including the State Department. She did as good a job as she could, but she was facing a relationship that was really dead in the water because of the Pressler Amendment. One of the interesting problems created by the Pressler Amendment, which Maliha Lodhi and we helped resolve in the mid-'90s, was the sale of F-16s to Pakistan. Pakistan had been paying on a regular basis for F-16s, which were being built down in Fort Worth, and when the Pressler Amendment hit we told them, "Sorry, you're not going to get these planes, at least during the duration of the Pressler Amendment."

And they said, "But we've already paid (hundreds of millions of dollars). Can we have our money back?"

"No, I'm sorry, that was paid to Lockheed -- we have no way of getting that back for you."

So Pakistan was stuck. No planes, no money. During the sanctions period, they kept paying Lockheed regularly in the expectation that they would eventually get those planes. And then we also hit them with storage fees, because they were being stored at the aviation boneyard in the Arizona desert. So Pakistan felt really put upon. They really, really wanted those F-16s. But by the mid-'90s they came to realize that they were not going to get those planes, so they wanted their money. And we had no way to provide that money. We didn't have assistance programs that we could have used because of the Pressler Amendment. So we had to develop a very sort of creative way, that was not totally satisfactory from the point of view of Pakistan. As I recall, we used one of the few forms of assistance that was available to us, which was PL-480 money, and we provided wheat and other items and waived the payment. And therefore, they eventually got much of their money back from their payments from their F-16s. It was not a satisfactory situation, but we were doing our best. Ambassador Lodhi was doing her best to find a way to work this through Congress to get money back to the rather straitened Pakistani Treasury.

Q: And how would you characterize the Bangladesh Embassy?

CAMP: Bangladesh did not have as strong an embassy as the Pakistanis. I don't think they had as well developed a diplomatic corps. We didn't have many big bilateral issues. The issues that loomed large then included an AFL-CIO challenge to Bangladeshi labor laws. Bangladesh was just beginning its garment industry which was a big employer. But they had exclusive economic zones in which labor rights were severely restricted. So the AFL-CIO brought a case against them to cut off their GSP (Generalized System of Preferences) privileges. And Bangladesh had to make the case that they were providing full labor rights to workers in the export control zones. The other thing that we worked on with moderate success (and it wasn't in our ability to fix it) was the shaky India-Bangladesh relationship. At the time, India was in desperate need of energy. We were interested in helping Bangladesh develop. And Bangladesh had enormous reserves of natural gas. So we asked the U.S. Geological Service to do a survey of Bangladesh's natural gas reserves with the goal of demonstrating to the Bangladesh government that they could take care of their own needs and also sell to India, which they were hesitant to do. The survey showed, just as we hoped, that the reserves were enough to satisfy Bangladesh's needs for many years as well as provide a surplus for India. But because of political problems, the long term deals were not made and the gases just sit in the ground in Bangladesh. We were also unsuccessful at getting the Bangladeshis to allow cargo transit rights from Chittagong Port up to the far north-eastern provinces of India. There was too much distrust at that point between Dhaka and Delhi. I'm not sure why we were carrying Delhi's water on these two issues (energy and transit rights) except that on both Bangladesh stood to benefit economically. Unfortunately, Dhaka's destructive politics of personality between the two political leaders Sheikh Hasina and Khaleda Zia, meant that the government was not going to do the right thing.

Q: The Pakistanis had elections in 1996 and Benazir Bhutto lost that election.

CAMP: Pakistan has had a long tradition of alternating between military rule and civilian rule. There was a period of about eight years in the 1990s when Pakistan had a modicum of civilian rule and could not make a go of it for a variety of reasons, including poor performance by the two political leaders. Benazir was the most prominent politician. Despite her popularity abroad,

she was not a very popular or successful Prime Minister. She had a major problem with her husband, Asif Zardari, who was famously known as Mr. Ten Percent because of the corruption in that period. He was later President of Pakistan as a legacy of Benazir's assassination. So it was not a very positive era for Pakistani democracy. Nawaz Sharif, of the Pakistan Muslim League, elected in 1996 also made a botch of it, in particular by trying to consolidate all state power in his own hands. He was so hated by the Pakistani elite that even some of the most dedicated of democrats were calling for the military to step in. And he was overthrown by General Pervez Musharraf in 1998.

Q: In the same time frame, the Taliban is expanding its influence in Afghanistan assisted by the Pakistani ISI (Inter-Services Intelligence). Did that slowly come to your attention at the Desk?

CAMP: It certainly did. In the period 1995 to '98, the Taliban was on a roll, expanding from its Pashtun base in the south to Herat and Kabul and then they marched north and basically occupied most of the country, except for the area that the Northern Alliance had always controlled. My boss, Robin Raphel, has since been attacked unfairly for being too willing to deal with the Taliban. In the late 1990s, the Taliban were becoming the de facto government of Afghanistan. We never recognized them. Only three countries did -- Pakistan, UAE (United Arab Emirates), and Saudi Arabia. But we made the decision that if they were going to be in charge we needed to at least talk to them. I was sent out on one such trip in 1997, I believe, starting in Peshawar. I picked up the Consul General in Peshawar, Brad Hanson. He was the Afghan expert. I was the policy guy/novice from Washington. We went to Kandahar, and Kabul, and Mazar-i-Sharif and Sheberghan in the north. It was quite an interesting trip.

The purpose of the visit was to reiterate our message to the Taliban: "Give up Osama bin Laden, his presence in Afghanistan is unacceptable. He is under your protection. That is our major issue with you." And implicitly, "We can do business with you, Taliban, but you've got to give up bin Laden to us." In the retrospect, I think this was the right message. But of course we never succeeded. The message was subsequently sharpened by people more senior than I to "Give up bin Laden; whatever bin Laden does while he is your guest in Afghanistan you will be held responsible for." It was very pointed and unfortunately, very prescient.

So Brad and I ventured to Kandahar, which was the spiritual heart of the Taliban. The most senior meeting we had was with the Central Bank Chief there. They were very polite in response to my message and they used the same language they used with everyone else: "The Pashtuns have a tradition of hospitality; he will not do anything to harm you, but he is a guest in our land. We could not ask him to leave." It was totally unsatisfactory, but that was the message.

We went up to Kabul where I delivered the same message at the Taliban Foreign Ministry. And then I went over to our embassy, which had been empty for years, but which was still guarded by a minimal Afghan staff that had stuck with us. Brad Hanson from Peshawar brought along their salary to disburse. It was very difficult to pay by any other means than direct cash transfer, so he would come up periodically. It was very emotional to meet these people who had stayed on through all the tough years as our embassy's locally-employed staff. After our embassy reopened, after 9/11, one of the employees was named Foreign Service National of the year and flown to Washington to receive recognition.

After Kabul, we flew north on a plane operated by the resident UN mission, which was the only means of transportation within Afghanistan in those days. They had a few fixed-wing planes and flew on a scheduled basis between their operations in the major cities of Afghanistan. We flew from Kabul to Mazar-i-Sharif over the magnificent Hindu Kush and then rented a car to drive through northern Afghanistan to Sheberghan, which was the redoubt of one of the warlords, Dostum, who's an Afghan of Uzbek ethnicity. That visit was to check in on one of the few remaining non-Taliban leaders in Afghanistan. He was very much the tough warlord. He'd been a communist during the times of the Soviet invasion. He changed his stripes as quickly as anyone, but he was the leader of the Uzbek community. He had a weird palace up in Sheberghan that someone compared to a red velvet brothel. The interior decoration left something to be desired. But we were received warmly and stayed in his guesthouse and had an audience and a feast with General Dostum. He told us of his intention of keeping the Taliban out of his area of NW Afghanistan but at that point he couldn't provide any help or leverage in getting the Taliban to give up Bin Laden.

The Taliban, I'll say for the historical record, at least back in the '90s had no interest in picking a fight with us. They were domestically oriented, they were terrible on human rights, they were terrible toward women, but they just wanted to take care of Afghanistan and forget about the rest of the world. Their sin -- and it was a major one -- was harboring bin Laden and not realizing or not accepting what he was up to.

Q: One of the neighbors nearby is Iran. How is the Desk looking at Iranian influence over Afghanistan, Pakistan?

CAMP: I tend to think that we also go through cycles in U.S. foreign policy on how do we deal with Iran. They've been in the deep freeze since 1979, obviously. But we accepted at the time, as we were dealing with the Taliban, that Iran had a legitimate interest in the future of Afghanistan. And we tended to talk to them through other channels, primarily the Swiss, about Afghanistan. There was an attempt to create a structure to deal with Afghanistan at the time. It was called the "Six Plus Two," which was the six border countries of Afghanistan, plus the United States and Russia. And so we sat down with Iran in that Six Plus Two forum. And in fact, the Iranians, for sectarian reasons because the Taliban were strong Sunnis, had very little incentive to work with the Taliban in the first place. So we were in the same place on the Taliban in those days. Things changed later. But in those days it was the enemy of my enemy is my friend.

Q: Now, getting back to Pakistan, one of the things that was evolving was the rise of fundamentalism. Pakistan had basically been a fairly secular educated and structured society. Did you see that during your period?

CAMP: Yes, although to a more limited extent than has occurred since. President Zia-ul-Haq had introduced Islam in a major way into the army. Where the army had previously been proudly secular, it now was becoming more fundamentalist. The officer ranks still in those days came from the westernized elite of Pakistan and was not particularly fundamentalist. That has changed as the society changed. The Islamist parties in Pakistan in those days could turn out a demonstration at a moment's notice and bring people out on the streets. But they never got more

than 10% of the vote in elections. In the mid-'90s, we were aware that fundamentalism was a growing issue, but it had not become the problem that it did subsequently. What one did see, and it was rather discouraging as an American diplomat, was a change from the days when America enjoyed a very positive image in Pakistan. Famously, the trucks would have F-16s and other symbols of U.S.-Pakistan friendship painted on them. But our cutting off of aid during the '65 Indo-Pakistani war and later our denial of the F-16s created the sense that America, as a Pakistani would say, is a fair-weather friend. That distrust has grown over the years.

Q: Were we concerned at all by the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence Agency and its activities?

CAMP: The CIA had had a longstanding relationship with ISI dating back to the Jihad against the Soviets. In the mid-90s, there was still some unwillingness -- even in the face of the intelligence -- to believe the worst about the ISI. Certainly everything they were doing in Kashmir at the time was a serious problem, and we were quick to jump on it when we could find out about it. Our main concern with ISI was their activities in Kashmir and their attempt to stir up trouble there.

Q: Now, you just mentioned one of the great issues in South Asia is Kashmir. You're watching from the Pakistan side of it. How does the U.S. look at Kashmir and the Pakistani and Indian claims?

CAMP: We are really careful about how we approach the Kashmir question, and we've had basically the same policy for years. The mantra is that Kashmir is an issue that needs to be resolved between India and Pakistan, taking into account the interests of the people of Kashmir.

Q: We don't do borders.

CAMP: We don't do borders (*laughs*). But we have periodically over the years, starting way back in the '50s, attempted to help in a hopefully productive, and sometimes ham-fisted way, to get India and Pakistan to resolve this because it's the source of so much of the problem of South Asia. The fact that India and Pakistan have this border dispute is so poisonous that it has held back Pakistani development over the years, it's kept India and Pakistan from developing a productive trade relationship, and a productive bilateral relationship of all kinds. India would prefer that we butt out, although they've been nicer about it in recent years. Pakistan has always thought it was in their interest to enlist our support to help with bigger India to try to find a settlement that they -- that would redound to their benefit. But we've pretty much had the same policy status quo since 1947.

Q: Now, there was some point in which the conflict went from national armies facing off to private terrorists being encouraged to do nasty things back and forth. Where was that process in the time that you were on the desk to '98?

CAMP: At that point the ISI was quite active in training irregulars, in encouraging intrusions across the line of control, and causing problems on the Indian side of the Line of Control. We would often tell the Pakistanis that this was unacceptable and dangerous and deleterious to their

interests as well regional security interests. But they were having none of it. This was part of their national plan. We always thought that it risked a serious crisis with India. Toward the end of my stint on the Pakistan Desk, this became even more of a crisis because both India and Pakistan tested nuclear weapons in May of 1998. We're going to get to that, a whole different story. But at that point it became a potential nuclear conflict

Q: As you say, let's get into that a little bit later. But in the summer of '97, the South Asia Bureau turns over in the Front Office. Robin Raphel leaves, Rick Inderfurth comes in. Did the management style or policy emphasis change with that?

CAMP: Assistant Secretaries of the South Asia Bureau always try quite properly to avoid being seen as a partisan of any country other than the United States. Unfortunately, countries make their own decisions as to what they think the perceived biases of these people are. And Robin Raphel quite unfairly, despite having served in Delhi as Political Counselor, was perceived by the Indians as something of a partisan to Pakistan. The perception dated to a statement that she once made about the status of Kashmir that was blown up out of proportion. But Rick Inderfurth came in with a clean slate, without that kind of perception. He came in without a lot of South Asian experience. He was a political appointee and a good one. But he had to learn South Asia on the job.

Q: One thing I want to explore, you were saying earlier that you didn't think South Asia as a bureau had a lot of clout in the department. What does that mean?

CAMP: I would put it in terms of resources, first and foremost. We were shortchanged in people, we were shortchanged in funding. There were crises in the Middle East, there were crises in Africa. We didn't get the help we needed. There were two full-time India desk officers. I'd come from East Asia where the China desk was 15 people or so. So resources were out of whack and it took us a long time. 9/11 made a big difference. But before then we were very limited in assistance funding, management funding, personnel, et cetera.

Q: The next major event while you're on the Pakistani Desk is that on May 11, 1998 India conducts a nuclear test. At the same time, you have this Kashmir tension. So that must have really riled the waters.

CAMP: It was a great shock. And before we get to the geo-strategic and regional implications, it's worth saying that we were caught flat-footed about India's intentions. And we shouldn't have been. The Congress Party had lost an election a few months earlier to the BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party). And part of the BJP's manifesto had been pursuing India's nuclear weapon program. But, because India had not tested a nuclear device since 1974, our intelligence agencies and the rest of us didn't take it as seriously as we should have. On May 11, 1998, I was sitting in the morning staff meeting chaired by Assistant Secretary Inderfurth. At about 8:45, the Staff Assistant came in and said, "Sorry to interrupt, but CNN is reporting that India has just exploded a nuclear device."

Rick Inderfurth said, "Get our Ambassador in Delhi on the phone." That was Dick Celeste. And he had just come from a meeting at the Foreign Ministry where this had been explained to him,

that India had taken this step and the rationale behind it. The CIA was caught flat-footed, the embassy was caught flat-footed. The Indians had been very good at keeping the secret. They carried out tests on May 11th and more on May 13th. The consequences for India-U.S. relations were immediate. US law requires a cutoff of all U.S. assistance when a nation undertakes a nuclear test. The other thing that the American foreign policy machinery immediately put into force was an effort to prevent yet another horse coming out of the barn, and that is Pakistan, which everybody knew had nuclear capability but had never demonstrated it. Strobe Talbott was the Deputy Secretary of State at the time and had taken special responsibility for the South Asia portion of the world and it was decided that he would immediately travel to Islamabad to try to convince the Pakistanis not to respond. The first problem was to get an invitation from Pakistan for this trip. They did not particularly want to see Strobe Talbott because they knew exactly what he was going to say to them and knew that he would put on whatever American pressure could be brought to bear. Strobe was a man of action. We did not have the full go-ahead from Islamabad, but we assumed it would be forthcoming. So Strobe, accompanied by Inderfurth, Bruce Riedel from the NSC and myself from the Pakistan Desk, set out for Tampa, where General Tony Zinni, who was then the Commander of CENTCOM, had arranged a plane to get us out to Pakistan as fast as the U.S. military could. When we reached Tampa, we realized we couldn't get any further without an invitation from the government of Pakistan.

Rick got on the phone to our ambassador in Islamabad and to the Foreign Ministry, but to no avail. Finally, Zinni called the Chief of Army Staff, Jehangir Karamat and said, "We need to come. Make this possible, make this happen." I think it was the military connection that did it. Karamat gave his OK and so therefore did Nawaz Sharif, who was the Prime Minister at the time. We took off in Tony Zinni's personal plane which was as I recall, a rather aging 707 military variant, but it had a very important capability. It could be refueled in flight. So we flew nonstop from Tampa to Islamabad with two in-flight refuelings, which were amazing to behold. The military's capabilities are tremendous. We landed in Islamabad with a schedule of high-level appointments to try and convince the Pakistanis to hold off testing a nuclear weapon. This was a long shot from the beginning. Strobe Talbott has written of this visit ("Engaging India") and I can't add much to that. The Foreign Ministry was dismissive, Karamat was politely dismissive, and Prime Minister Sharif was conflicted and probably worried more about his army (which controlled the nuclear stockpile) than the Americans. The Pakistanis made pretty clear to us that they were not the slightest bit interested in making a deal. They didn't say they were going to test but we were not surprised when they did so on May 26th. So Pakistan was now also the target of our sanctions. Their aid had already been cutoff, but we had other tools as well. We had something called the "Entity List" which was a list of companies who were effectively denied access to any exports on the Commerce Department's export control list. We had innumerable committee meetings in subsequent weeks to establish companies in India and Pakistan that had sufficient connection to the defense establishment that we needed to place them on this list. The goal was punitive as much as a lever to encourage them to reverse their nuclear weapons program.

Looking at the nuclear tests in retrospect, Pakistan was inevitably going to respond once India tested. And in a sense, India made a mistake with those tests in May 1998. Because for the first time, they created an equality that hadn't existed between the countries. India had always had an overwhelming superiority in conventional munitions. That played itself out in the 1965 and 1971

wars. When it became a nuclear standoff, frankly you've got mutually assured destruction. And you had an equality between India and Pakistan and I think it affected the way those two countries have looked at each other and interacted ever since. They're more cautious, because Pakistan now has the means, if they should ever, heaven forbid, exercise it, to destroy the major cities of India. So pre-1998, they were the weaker power. Now in many ways they're militarily equal.

Q: Now in 1998 you take a job on the India desk. How did that come about?

CAMP: I was enjoying my work in the bureau and I was eager to get back on the India side of things. I was very comfortable in the bureau. I liked Rick Inderfurth and the leadership. It was a lateral move, but I was pleased with it. But very soon afterward, I learned that I was going to be assigned to fill a vacancy at the National Security Council Staff as Director for South Asia. I had been recommended by Mike Malinowski, my boss on the Pakistan Desk. So suddenly the shortened India assignment became preparation for my move to the NSC.

Q: And your time on the India Desk was dominated by the nuclear thing. I mean what else was there of interest in U.S. policy towards India in those days?

CAMP: After May 1998, we were imposing sanctions. We were sanctioning multilaterally. We were sanctioning in cooperation with Beijing, which was always glad to gang up on the Indians, and the Indians particularly hated that. India had always smarted at not being part of the Security Council and the nuclear weapons powers. Now they'd made this effort to join the club by force and were being rebuffed. So it was a difficult period in U.S.-India relations.

But at a more senior level, one important effort was begun to try to ameliorate relations. The Clinton administration made the wise move to begin a senior level dialogue with India and Pakistan. The lead on our side was Strobe Talbott, and by this time I was on the India Desk so I was focused mainly on the India side of this dialogue. His Indian counterpart was Jaswant Singh, a very well known and foresighted Indian politician. It was those discussions over the next couple of years that really helped to restore the relationship.

And in fact, simultaneously, the Indians and the Pakistanis were beginning to make some progress in their relationship, which was very welcome to us, even though it came in the wake of this disastrous testing. In February 1999 the Indian Prime Minister made a very important symbolic visit to Pakistan, to a place called the Minar-e-Pakistan, which was a monument to Pakistan's independence and separation from India; he was making an effort to convince a skeptical Pakistani public that India accepted Pakistan as a sovereign state. This was seen as a kind of Nixon goes to China moment because the PM came from the BJP, the party that had always been Hindu nationalist and was thought to be more anti-Pakistan. The trip of the Indian Prime Minister to the Minar-e-Pakistan was an important symbolic moment to say maybe we're not good friends or partners, but you're a sovereign nation and we're a sovereign nation. It was welcomed by all, welcomed around the world. But unbeknownst to the Indians at the time and to us, the Pakistani military just a few months before had embarked on a surprisingly and somewhat puzzlingly aggressive movement of irregular guerillas, and perhaps some soldiers, across the Line of Control during the dead of winter to occupy some commanding peaks in the area of

Kashmir controlled by India in Kargil. When the Indian Prime Minister went to Lahore in February 1999 he had no idea this had happened. When spring came and the snows melted, suddenly the Indians discovered that there were Pakistanis on the ridges above them. This began a serious downturn in India-Pakistan relations, the Kargil Crisis. India was determined to dislodge these Pakistanis, despite the fact that they were on high ground. The Indian soldiers were fighting their way up the slopes to try and take back the ground. And Pakistan was for a while taking the position that the intruders were not of their doing.

NSC DIRECTOR FOR SOUTH ASIA

It's about this time that I moved over in March/April 1999, to the NSC staff as the Director for South Asia under Senior Director Bruce Riedel. India wasn't asking for our help on Kargil; India never wanted to ask for our help. But it was clear that this crisis could use some help from us. The Strobe Talbott dialogue was crucial at this point. Strobe had developed a relationship with both India and Pakistan at senior levels.

As the spring progressed, it was clear that India was sacrificing a lot of blood in its attempt to retake these peaks, that it was not going to give up, and that the Pakistani insurgents/military were not going to give up easily. There was more and more concern that these two nuclear nations were in an armed standoff, the first time perhaps that two nuclear nations had been firing weapons at each other. President Clinton saw this as a catastrophe in the making. He did not mince words. In the past we'd always tried to be even-handed between India and Pakistan, where Kashmir was concerned. In this case it was clear that the Pakistanis were the aggressors, that they had moved people across the line of control, that they'd started this. So the President made a very clear statement that Pakistan should withdraw its forces and return to the line of control. Pakistan ignored it. But the Pakistani military and civilians were increasingly concerned how this was going to end up, and presumably concerned they were getting into a war with India they really didn't want. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif called the President in early July to say, "I need your help, Mr. President." This is all in the public records and has been written about by Bruce Riedel and others. I was listening on that call when the President said, "Look, I want to help on this but you've got to understand, you've got to make the tough decisions. Is it going to help to come to Washington? What can you accomplish?" And at that point, presumably going through the president's mind, as well as mine, was is he coming to Washington for political asylum? Is he in desperate straits in Pakistan. Nawaz said, "I've got to come -- I've got to talk to you directly, sir. I need to talk to you."

So the President said, "OK. When do you want to come?"

"I will come tomorrow."

And the President said, "Well, July 4th is our national day and it's very busy but if that's when you want to come, I'll be here."

And so Sharif got on a plane and was in Washington 20 hours later, for the famous July 4th Blair House Summit, in which Sharif and Clinton sat together for three or four hours in the midst of the President's other July 4th responsibilities. Strobe Talbott and Bruce Riedel were the main

counterparts in this. At one point, Nawaz said to the President, “I need to talk to you privately. Could we just clear the room?”

And Clinton, to his credit, said, “Bruce Riedel has to be in the room.” So Bruce Riedel kept notes and later wrote about it. The President drove a very hard bargain and he said, “Look, you have to withdraw.”

Nawaz said, “I need something in return. What can I get in return? Will you come to Pakistan?”

And the President, who had wanted to go to South Asia for a long time, committed that he would make a trip to South Asia. And that’s what the final communiqué said: Pakistan will withdraw its forces and President Clinton will visit South Asia, including Pakistan. And that was basically the end of the crisis. Pakistan did as it announced it would. Sharif clearly had the authority of the military to do this.

To me, this was really crucial in the history of U.S.-India relations because India had traditionally assumed that American involvement in the affairs of the subcontinent would invariably redound to India’s detriment. Here was an instance where President Clinton had basically said, “There’s a crisis here. Pakistan is the originator of the crisis, Pakistan needs to fix it.” And he accomplished it. He undoubtedly saved the lives of many, many Indian soldiers who would have been killed trying to reclaim these high peaks. It ended the war, and ended the crisis. Now remember, this is a just a year away from our sanctions and the bitterness of the May 1998 crisis. But things are looking up on the U.S.-India side.

The President was personally involved in this and in the commitment to travel to South Asia. Jumping forward a bit, you know, when it came time to do the itinerary, the Secret Service was dead set against him traveling to Pakistan. They said, “It’s too dangerous, sir. You can go to India, you can go to Bangladesh, we don’t want you going to Pakistan.”

And President Clinton overruled the Secret Service because he was committed to the trip.

And so my next few months were devoted to being the policy lead on the trip and planning all the President could accomplish.

Q: Looking at the Pakistani actors for a moment. Musharraf seizes power in a coup in October 1999. Sharif, who had come to Washington, is in jail. How did that look to us?

CAMP: Well, that’s an excellent question and an excellent segue. I believe that Nawaz Sharif is alive today because President Clinton, having met and established a relationship with Nawaz and then seen the military takeover, was not going to see his counterpart, the man who made the deal with him, sentenced to death or otherwise persecuted. So he used his conversations with Pervez Musharraf to make clear that Nawaz needed to be treated fairly, needed to be treated as a former head of government, and not executed. Ultimately, he was exiled to Saudi Arabia.

Q: And then the presidential visit to South Asia is in March 2000. There’s a lot of paperwork that goes into that, lot of discussion about deliverables. What’s the role of the Director for South

Asia on the NSC staff?

CAMP: Well, I was the only person doing South Asia fulltime on the NSC staff. Bruce Riedel was responsible for all of the Middle East. And while he was actively involved in the South Asia trip, responsibility for organizing the government fell to me. My biggest task was to coordinate the government agencies, State Department and Defense in particular, to come up with the appropriate deliverables for the trip.

We were coming out of a period of turmoil and negativity in the relationship. The trip was to turn this from negative to positive very quickly. India wanted all the nuclear sanctions lifted before March 2000 which wasn't going to happen. But could we do some things to ameliorate that? Could we focus on agriculture? Could we focus on education? Could we focus on traditional areas of U.S.-India cooperation? Defense sales and the like? And so it was a major administrative challenge. Not that I was in charge of the logistics of the trip at all. They had many, many people who did that. I was doing the policy and the deliverables side of things, which meant a lot of interagency meetings at which I would try to wrangle the different agencies to get things done and to commit some money to this (federal agencies were always short of money). I reported to Bruce Riedel and to National Security Advisor Sandy Berger who was actively interested in the trip.

Q: That gives us an opportunity to talk about the relationship between the NSC and the other agencies. I assume the India desk, the Pakistan desk, and State Department have their actors and have their inputs. Are you telling them what to do? Or how does this search for deliverables and the search for policy balance bureaucratically work?

CAMP: Well, the job of Director for South Asia has two major parts. I was in part going back to the days of being a Desk Officer, doing all the scut work and writing all the correspondence and everything else. But I was also the senior policy guy on South Asia. So I was both a desk officer and a would-be Assistant Secretary or Deputy Assistant Secretary at that point. I had to depend on my personal relationships, which fortunately were very good. Rick Inderfurth was a wonderful partner. I couldn't tell the State Department what to do. I wanted their ideas, I wanted their funding. Same thing from Agriculture, same thing from Defense. My job was to get everyone around the table and try to lead the discussion toward what could be accomplished.

Q: And so you're the conductor, if you will, of that search for options.

CAMP: Right.

Q: What does the NSC staff look like on the foreign policy side?

CAMP: It was a pretty tight organization. Coming from a State Department bureaucracy where you're many levels from the top, it's much flatter. We had an office devoted to the Near East and South Asia, which had Bruce Riedel as the Senior Director and three directors: one for the Middle East, one for North Africa, and one for South Asia. Bruce reported directly to the Deputy National Security Advisor and the National Security Advisor. So we were often called to Sandy Berger's office or Deputy Jim Steinberg's. I'd pick up the phone and it would be Sandy Berger

with a question about India or something. You do not get that at State. On the NSC staff, you can call anyone up, anyone can call you. It's a small organization. It's very refreshing that way and I think you get more done. The State Department has to be big. NSC benefitted from being small.

Q: Now, are these positions, at least on the foreign policy side, mostly seconded Foreign Service Officers?

CAMP: NSC has very little money of its own. So yes, they depend heavily on seconded labor. When I was there it was about one-third State, one-third Defense, and one-third CIA with a smattering of academics. And I think that average has probably stayed roughly the same over the years. State Department has a self-imposed limit on how many people they will lend to the NSC at any given time. So we can't dominate the NSC. But it's heavily State Department up to the Senior Director level and the Executive Secretary, who often comes from State. In the Near East/South Asia office during my period, Bruce was seconded from CIA and one of my colleagues was from Defense.

Q: Now, the trip in March happens after Musharraf takes power. Does the President during that trip make the pitch on Nawaz Sharif?

CAMP: The President was making the "pitch" on Nawaz Sharif from the very start. The President would always make the case that the Prime Minister needed to be treated fairly and that we had a dim view of military coups in the first place.

Q: Now, at this stage in your career I'm assuming the NSC doesn't work much with the embassies.

CAMP: Not routinely, no. That is mostly a prerogative of the State Department. On the other hand, as we were planning the trip, I dealt more frequently with both the local embassies and our embassies in the field.

I would usually pick up the phone and call the Assistant Secretary or the Office Director and say, "Can you query the embassy about this?" Or "Set them straight about this." I thought that was the proper channel. Not everyone does that, but maybe that's why I had a pretty good relationship with the bureau, because I saw that as their role and my role as something different. Mainly I went through the bureau.

Q: While you were on the India Desk and the NSC, did you have an opportunity to interact with the Indian Embassy and what is your reflection on the quality of Indian diplomats?

CAMP: I didn't have the kind of close relationships I remembered from my days on the desk in the mid-80s. I'm not quite sure why. Partly because I was busier and didn't have time to deal with the embassy. But again, to a large extent, the embassy relationship is with the State Department. I went to the Indian Embassy and others for social occasions and the like and at that point knew the various Washington ambassadors pretty well, because they always needed something from the White House. But as always, they're good, and they're very competent. Ambassador Naresh Chandra is still a friend. We went on the President's trip together and that

builds a bond that you don't lose over time. Same thing with Dick Celeste, who was our ambassador in Delhi.

Q: How's that administratively? Is the Indian ambassador in the American plane going to India?

CAMP: He was not on Air Force One to India. But we gave transportation to a few of the senior people on the internal India flights -- Delhi to Agra to Hyderabad to Bombay. And Naresh Chandra was one of those. So as I recall, he was on the plane. He was very much part of the trip.

Q: This March trip was very diplomatically important. Was it a large American presidential delegation do you recall?

CAMP: It was a very large delegation. Clinton was the first American President to visit India since Jimmy Carter, who came for a day at the end of 1978. So these were not common in India. It suggests the distance in the relationship over the years. There were hundreds of journalists as I recall. There was also a congressional delegation with us on the plane. The President did not take a commercial delegation nor did he take an Indian-American delegation though the latter came on their own and were very well represented on the ground in Delhi and Bombay. Besides Air Force One, there was a follow-on jumbo jet carrying many of the journalists and other staff.

But there were actually three trips. There was India, there was Bangladesh, and there was Pakistan. Just on the logistics, the India trip was the big one. We arrived March 20th in two large jumbo jets. And the next morning was Holi, a major Indian holiday. I'm partly responsible for that scheduling snafu, but no one ever figured that out. So the solution (worked out weeks in advance) was to go off immediately to Bangladesh for a one-day trip to Bangladesh. And that trip was made in a small plane. We didn't take a large delegation. It was a day trip and Bangladesh couldn't have supported it anyway. And at the last minute there was a security scare. There were intelligence reports suggesting that someone was targeting the president. This sent the Secret Service into a flurry. The embassy in Dhaka had planned a trip to a village, with the president talking to villagers. So at the last minute with 48 hours to go the embassy had to move all the villagers into a proto village in the embassy compound, and they did so. So our visit was much more constrained.

The highlight of the Bangladesh trip was the meeting with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. We visited the opposition leader and we had the village visit inside the embassy, which demonstrated how we were helping economic development and women's empowerment. The Bangladesh visit was problematic from the start because Hasina wanted to use it and the President to highlight her fight with her political opponent Khaleda Zia. She wanted to take the President to the museum where her father had been killed during the War of Liberation; the walls were left bloody to show the carnage. Our excuse was that the President didn't have a lot of time. He wanted to sit down with Sheikh Hasina for half an hour and talk politics and talk business. But she wanted to talk at the meeting about the killing of her father. So it was not what I would call a totally successful meeting, but the President was a good sport and listened to all this and made his points.

That night, we came back to Delhi and started the major part of the visit the following day. And

it was four more days in India -- Delhi for official meetings and a speech to parliament, Agra for an environmental program at the Taj Mahal, Hyderabad, highlighting info tech and the like, and Bombay highlighting the business relationship. For me, the high point was the speech to the Indian parliament, the Lok Sabha. We were not quite sure how some of the traditionally less friendly parliamentarians would treat our president but in fact he got an enormous ovation entering the chamber and even more enthusiasm during his speech, which mixed praise for Indian history, democracy and diversity with frank regret at the consequences of India's 1998 nuclear tests. Clinton was a master communicator and he won the parliament that day.

Then the visit to India was over and it was time for Pakistan. This was the most difficult part of the trip. It had already been decided that the President would not for security reasons stay overnight in Pakistan. In fact, it turned out to be a five-hour trip. Almost all of the journalists and staff went directly from Bombay to Dubai to meet the party after Pakistan. It was only a small group that went to Islamabad. The President flew in a small plane, a C-20, I think. There were two of those and then the rest of us rode in this big C-5, which we laughingly called "The Target," because there were these two small planes and this enormous plane that looked like Air Force One landing in Islamabad. But we landed without incident. The President and the group was whisked off to the Presidential Palace. We had negotiated with the Pakistanis and had insisted on an opportunity to address the Pakistani people directly. He gave a speech broadcast throughout the country about the importance of democracy and the importance of freedom -- this in a country which had just had a military coup months earlier. He also sat down with President Musharraf for a couple of hours. It was a very brief visit and everyone knew that it was a very brief visit and that this was not equality with India. I'm not sure if the Pakistanis really were happy with that visit, but it was important that it occurred.

One vignette. The Pakistani official lunch was long-delayed because the Musharraf meeting went over time. When we all sat down, the food had been sitting on the table for a while. I advised the Americans at my table to avoid the macaroni salad to avoid intestinal trouble. I could see the main table from where I was sitting, and my heart sank when I saw the President talking animatedly with Musharraf and shoveling everything into his mouth, including the macaroni salad. I stayed behind in Islamabad but I later heard that the President had been very ill on the next stop on his itinerary, where his important talks in Geneva with Syrian President Hafez al-Assad had been interrupted frequently by trips to the bathroom. I can't tell you for sure that it was the macaroni salad, but I certainly believe so.

Q: What was the transition like to the next administration when Bush came to office in January 2001?

CAMP: From my perspective, the transition went pretty well. After eight years, Sandy Berger and Jim Steinberg knew their stuff very well and they, as far as I could tell, made a conscious decision to professionally pass on what they knew and their relationships to the incoming crowd. Condi Rice and Steve Hadley were very effective in trying to make a seamless transition. They kept almost all of the staff for the time being. Very few people cleaned out their desks on January 20. Even Richard Clark, the senior director for counter-terrorism, stayed on well into the next administration. So there was an attempt on both sides to make it as seamless as possible. I do remember that there was some nastiness that was alleged in the broader White House. I think

the Vice President's staff was alleged to have pulled W's off typewriters at the preparation for President Bush. But I didn't see any of that at the NSC staff. It was very, very professional.

Q: How did the new people conduct themselves? What were the atmospherics?

CAMP: Condi Rice knew the NSC. She'd worked there before. She was quite professional. She knew what she wanted to do, including some modest reorganization. One of the first things she did was to create an Asia directorate. This was the main thing that affected me. India was going to be moved in with East Asia. Condi Rice came in with this concept of the great powers of Asia with which we needed to work. She'd written a widely-remarked article in *Foreign Affairs* before the election. I admired her for very good advance planning. She also brought in good people. I only stayed three or four months in the new administration, because that's when my two years was up and I went back to the department. But in contrast to other transitions I saw subsequently, this one was quite smooth. And again, credit to a National Security Advisor who knew what she wanted and her Deputy Steve Hadley, who was a good manager.

Q: Did you get to see, interact with the new President/Vice President?

CAMP: The new Vice President, not at all. The new President had some India business early on and so yes, I remember standing around the Oval Office during his first weeks in office waiting to make phone calls to the prime ministers of India and Pakistan, but hearing him talk about his new office and how much he enjoyed it and how he was going to change the décor away from the -- he didn't say wimpy but that was the implication -- Clinton Oval Office. I had a little bit of work with him.

The election had been viewed in India and Pakistan very differently. The Indians were delighted by President Clinton and I think very much wanted to see a President Gore who they thought would carry on Clinton's policies toward India. The Pakistanis were ready to see something different and were probably rooting for Bush. In fact, as it turned out, Bush and Condi Rice turned out to be great champions of the U.S.-India relationship and took it a good deal farther than the Clinton administration had been able to do.

Q: As you say, you moved back to the State Department into the South Asia Bureau. How did this job come available to you?

CAMP: I was the beneficiary of the good relationship I developed with the South Asia bureau. It was a very close relationship, forged in the travails of the trip. And basically I said I'd like to come back to the bureau and they said, "Tell us what you want to do."

And I said, "Well, I've always wanted to be Office Director for India/Nepal/Sri Lanka." And the DAS at the time, Al Eastham said they would be happy to have me.

And so I took over just as new leadership was coming in. Colin Powell was bringing in new people in the transition and he'd chosen as his new Assistant Secretary a woman named Christina Rocca, who was coming from Senator Brownback's staff. She was in the process of being confirmed. The Acting Assistant Secretary at that time was Al Eastham. Within a couple

of months we were briefing in Assistant Secretary Rocca and she was finally confirmed and at that point Al departed as DAS. Christina had in mind who she wanted as her DAS. We were still a small bureau, one Assistant Secretary and one Deputy Assistant Secretary. She wanted a woman by the name of Michele Sison who was DCM in Islamabad, but there was no way Michelle could leave Islamabad right then. Pakistan was a country in crisis. So Christina looked around the bureau and didn't know me that well, but she said, "Why don't you come up to the Front Office and act as Deputy Assistant Secretary until Michele is able to come?"

SOUTH ASIA BUREAU FRONT OFFICE

I was happy to do so. Al left in the summer and my first day in the job as Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Front Office was September 10, 2001. I didn't have much time to prepare for the crisis that would descend on all of us the following day.

Q: And then 9/11 happens the next day. What happened to you? When did you get to work and when did you know it?

CAMP: We were in our morning staff meeting just as three years earlier with the nuclear tests. The television was on and we saw the plane going into the first tower and then a couple minutes later a plane going into the second tower. We had suspicions right from the start as to who might have done this. And then outside our window, suddenly the Pentagon was on fire. The building was evacuated. We were all standing outside wondering what was to be done. We had no guidance, other than being instructed not to go back into the building. Suddenly there was yet another explosion; it sounded to me like it came from the front of the State Department. It later turned out that it was an auto backfire or something. But it frightened a lot of people.

At that point we were all instructed to go home. And I think we all realized the enormity of what we were dealing with. I spent the rest of the day with my family, with no desire to think about the office. Fortunately, others were and by the next morning, Christina Rocca was at work and meeting with Deputy Secretary Armitage, who decided to call in the head of ISI who happened to be in Washington. We quickly cobbled together what we wanted from the Pakistanis. And Armitage, as has been widely reported, basically told the head of ISI, "You are either with us or against us. Make your decision, now is the time."

Pakistan quickly made its decision. The message was "we're with you. We'll do whatever we need to do. Use our facilities, come and use our bases, whatever."

But interestingly enough, in the days that followed, the Indians made very much the same offer. In fact, everyone did. You'll recall, right after 9/11 NATO invoked the treaty on behalf of the United States making it clear that an attack on us was an attack on all of our allies. In South Asia, Sri Lanka offered air transit rights and whatever flight needs we required. So did the Maldives. So it was a time of considerable unity in the world, support for the U.S, and opposition to those who had committed the crime.

Q: And of course the people in those buildings were not just American citizens. They were citizens from what, some 40 other countries?

CAMP: A lot of Indians died in those attacks. And many, many others.

Q: Can you give us a sense of where the bureau is positioned and who is assigned to what at that moment?

CAMP: We were a very small bureau. We had a fairly new Assistant Secretary, Christina Rocca, who'd come from Capitol Hill and been confirmed just a few months before. I was filling in as the interim DAS until I was scheduled to go back, theoretically, to my job as the Director of the India Desk. We had Torkel Patterson doing the Asia portfolio at NSC -- that was all of Asia over to Pakistan. And then we had Zalmay Khalilzad as the NSC Senior Director for Afghanistan. He loomed very large in the days ahead. The management in the State Department at that point was Colin Powell and Rich Armitage, and they took a very active interest in everything we did.

After 9/11, I was primarily supervising the Offices of India, Nepal, Sri Lanka and public diplomacy in South Asia Bureau, and the Assistant Secretary worked directly with Pakistan and Afghanistan. We knew we had to staff up very quickly. We hired an Afghanistan coordinator, which was a very savvy move, both from workload and from a bureaucratic standpoint. We needed to manage a huge portfolio and we in State wanted to keep the control to the extent we could over all the new activities in the region. We hired Jeff Lunstead, an excellent Senior Foreign Service Officer, who had a South Asia background. He took the lead in all the inter-agency meetings. Christina did a lot of the traveling, and of course she was the point person. She was the one that Colin Powell and Rich Armitage turned to a lot for the decision making process. And I hope at some point she will do an oral history with you as well.

Q: Those first few days must have been pretty long.

CAMP: So long and so full of meetings and decisions that a lot of it has almost been blanked out, I hate to say. Frankly a lot of it blurs together. We had constant meetings at the NSC of the Deputies and Principals (cabinet-level). Christina handled those, when the bureau was invited. I saw one important task for me of staffing up the bureau very, very quickly. We had an Office of Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, which at the time had two officers devoted to Afghanistan. That was it in the whole State Department. But now we were going to get an Afghan coordinator and we had to build up that office and we did so. And I hired some very good people, I think.

Q: Getting back to the work of that time, I'm getting the impression a lot of it was oral. There wasn't time to do a lot of papers.

CAMP: Certainly that was true in the first few days. After a time the paper machine at the State Department took over again. Powell and Armitage were dashing off to the White House for Principals meetings and Cabinet meetings and the like. And Christina would orally brief them beforehand.

Q: Now, less than a month later on October 7, U.S. and coalition forces go into Afghanistan. How aware were you of the timing and the build-up to that?

CAMP: It was a covert operation up to that time and even after that a lot of it remained covert. Not a lot of it was shared at working levels of the State Department. Christina knew the capabilities over there better than most of us. But we all knew that military action was forthcoming. There was already a relationship with the Northern Alliance (the only organized opposition to the Taliban at that time) dating back years, primarily on the intelligence side. But I'd gone to Peshawar a couple times in previous years and been introduced to members of the opposition who were in Pakistan at the time. We knew these people pretty well. We used those ties to build up the relationship in the month preceding the beginning of the fighting.

Q: So it was worthwhile that we had maintained some of those old contacts.

CAMP: Yes. It was fortunate that we had the intel contacts and intel channels. It was also fortunate that we had the consulate in Peshawar, which was our major diplomatic contact with Afghanistan in the days when we did not have an embassy in Kabul. There was a time before 9/11 when we contemplated closing Peshawar. Even now, when we have an embassy in Kabul, there's no question that Peshawar is an important listening post.

Q: Wendy Chamberlin is the Ambassador in Pakistan at this time and she has a similar conversation with the Pakistanis on the importance of standing with us. Did you see any of that reporting?

CAMP: I did at the time. I've also seen what Wendy said to the 9/11 Commission -- the testimony that's now been declassified. She found Musharraf at first a little nonplussed, but supportive. We shouldn't forget that the sympathy of the world was with us in a really big way right after 9/11. I don't think I've ever seen anything like it. The NATO Treaty was invoked and even in South Asia, we were offered, often unsolicited, military overflight rights, and basing rights, most of which we never took advantage of, from virtually all the countries of South Asia. And you know, India had always been a little bit standoffish, certainly in terms of military ties. But in this case they were all in. "We'll give you what you need. You tell us." So we were at a high point in our relationship with those countries, in terms of their willingness and desire to help at our time of need.

Q: Along those lines, Secretary Powell travels to South Asia starting on the 14th. I think he leaves and he arrives in Pakistan on the 15th. You might not have had much time to prepare materials, but what was the message he was going to carry to Pakistan and India?

CAMP: Well, the message at the time was very clearly: "The Taliban and al-Qaeda have attacked us. The Taliban is hosting al-Qaeda. Pakistan, along with Saudi Arabia and the UAE, recognize the Taliban as the government of Afghanistan. You need to help us in our efforts to capture bin Laden and make recompense for the 9/11 attacks." The Pakistanis were supportive. No one could forget their assistance to the Taliban. But they understood that the situation had changed dramatically and irretrievably from their point of view.

Q: And the approach in India would probably be similar?

CAMP: Yes. The Bush administration had come in with a desire to dramatically improve our

relationship with India. And by the way, to lift sanctions on Pakistan as well. But the clear focus had been India. The message to India was, "Thank you for your help after 9/11. We continue to want to move forward and we would like to be," -- and this is always a little sensitive -- "We'd like to be helpful in helping resolve tensions in the subcontinent." India has traditionally not sought our active interest in this process. But particularly in the light of 9/11 and our need for Pakistani help, there was a message that India needed to avoid any possible provocations. In fact, as it turned out, the first provocation was quite different. It was India that was provoked. Only three months after 9/11 the Indian Parliament was attacked in a very high profile terrorist action that is not marked on the world calendar quite like 9/11, but in South Asia, 13/12 as it's called, December 13th, 2001 was a major watershed and marked the beginning of a serious deterioration in India-Pakistan relations. It was a major problem for South Asia because of the threat of war. It was also a problem for us because we wanted to keep the focus on the fighting in Afghanistan, getting bin Laden and cleaning up al-Qaeda.

Q: What was the advice from our embassies at this point?

CAMP: We had two very strong ambassadors in Delhi and Islamabad at the time. Wendy Chamberlin in Pakistan was focused on stressing that Pakistan is with us, that we needed to reinforce that by lifting sanctions and getting back to a solid relationship with Islamabad. "Don't forget," she would remind Washington, "that Pakistan has been in the deep freeze for the '90s and we've got to change that." We had the nuclear sanctions, we had the Pressler sanctions. We had sanctions on them for economic and human rights (child labor) issues. Ambassador Chas Freeman once referred to South Asia as the playground for the functional bureaus. In other words, it was an area where our narcotics office, our terrorism office, all of the offices with specific functional responsibilities could find something wrong in Pakistan or in India and impose sanctions. So yes, it was a huge problem, especially with Pakistan..

Bob Blackwill was our ambassador in Delhi. He came in with a personal desire to build a very strong relationship with India that also reflected the view of the people who appointed him, especially President Bush and National Security Advisor Condi Rice. They were convinced we needed to build a relationship with this major new power in Asia. Strengthening that relationship was really important, although in September of 2001 it was secondary to doing what we needed to do in Afghanistan.

Q: Since you mentioned Blackwill, didn't he run into some personnel problems later or was that earlier? I've forgotten.

CAMP: Bob Blackwill was not a people kind of person. He was policy oriented and he got things done. That's how he saw his job. There were in fact personnel issues in New Delhi. There were a couple of inspection teams that went out and reported back. Interpersonal relationships in the embassy were not the greatest and sometimes relations with the department were not the greatest. I don't think he saw keeping the embassy happy as a major part of his mission. He eventually left Delhi to take over a large portfolio at the NSC under Condi Rice who was one of his bigger fans.

Q: Now you've talked about the bureau expanding under these pressures. I would assume that that's well in train by 2002. So who's joined the staff and how have things changed?

CAMP: We had Jeff Lunstead as our Afghan Coordinator. We had added a Deputy Assistant Secretary position, so we had those new positions in the Front Office, though Michelle Sison didn't come to join us as Principal DAS until close to the summer of 2002. And then we had a strong staff in the country offices. We had David Good as the Director of the India office. That office did not dramatically increase. We had Gerry Feierstein as our Director of Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh. That was the office that became significantly bigger. A separate office of Afghanistan was hived off under the Afghan Coordinator eventually. We also had a growing Office of Regional Affairs and we had an Office of Public Diplomacy, which played quite a bit into our Afghan and Pakistan efforts.

Q: I would assume at this time too the bureau is trying to keep very close to the relevant embassies, keep them informed, keep their governments in line.

CAMP: The embassies here were very focused on knowing what was going on. Maliha Lodhi was a very strong Pakistan Ambassador at the time. And we had Naresh Chandra for India. They both had good ties back in their capitals when we needed to get messages to Delhi or Islamabad, as well as to get word back. Maliha Lodhi, was a political appointee and close to the Pakistan military, while Chandra was the most senior civil servant in India with decades of experience and contacts.

Q: While all this is going on, Musharraf is operating in the domestic Pakistan scene and in April of 2002 he wins another five years in office. How is that perceived?

CAMP: We had issues with the fact that he had come to power in a coup in 1999. We were trying to remove sanctions and build a normal relationship with Pakistan. It was quite a blow that he wasn't going to step down for a civilian government anytime soon. But the military in Pakistan was especially crucial to our efforts and Musharraf was not only President, but also Chief of Army Staff. We were concerned as well with the growing tensions between India and Pakistan. Musharraf was a key to ratcheting those down.

Q: Backing up a little bit, Kabul falls to the Northern Alliance in November and the Marines establish a facility near Kandahar. This is the first deployment of U.S. troops and the UN establish ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) to cover the security situation in Kabul. How are you seeing the planning for Afghanistan? Who's going to do what? Because certainly coordination with NATO's involved, coordination with the UN. Was that being done at the bureau level or even higher?

CAMP: A lot of the military planning frankly was going on at the Pentagon. We were brought in, but not in a lead role as we would have preferred. We were also beginning to think about a significant assistance program. That's where the fact that we had established an Afghan coordinator at an early stage made a big difference. We got a head start on other agencies who were taking a role in development. We and USAID took the lead in starting to plan large-scale development assistance.

The United Nations was an organization we wanted to get involved from an early stage. There

was a UN Afghanistan coordinator. There was no NATO involvement at that stage. That came considerably later. ISAF was established as a UN organization. The UN was well established in Afghanistan before 9/11; they had offices in Kandahar, Mazar-i-Sharif, Kabul and Herat. And they had a small civilian air force in Afghanistan linking their offices; we and others used this as well. The U.S. military established a beachhead in Kandahar, which was a crucial area to control the restive Pashtun area that had nurtured the Taliban -- and near where bin Laden had previously had his headquarters. At that point we considered much of the north fairly safe because that was basically majority non-Pashtun.

Q: Now, you're talking about planning assistance. Did that planning also include the need for resources and where would those resources be coming from?

CAMP: Before 9/11, the bureau had tried to get five million dollars for assistance to children and education in Afghanistan. And we had not been able to get beyond the bureau level. We were told, "Afghanistan -- we're not interested." It was just not part of anyone's scope of work before 9/11. After 9/11, suddenly the heavens opened, and we could pull resources from anywhere. Resources were reprogrammed from other bureaus, from other areas, and from development assistance in particular. Narcotics became a significant problem, so we had narcotics funding. Gradually we got into things like restoring power lines and the Kajaki Dam which USAID had helped build decades before. Refugee assistance was another big priority since there were huge refugee camps in both Pakistan and Iran.

Q: And how was the personnel situation?

CAMP: We had a lot of people volunteering because we had this pent up Afghan crowd in the State Department, people who'd served in Afghanistan and who knew Dari and had a real affection for the country. Some people had been in the Peace Corps in Afghanistan. We had the initial core of an embassy. We worked with FSI at that point to begin to ramp up Dari language training. We had people who had served in our consulate in Peshawar over the years and were familiar with the Afghan scene from across the border so we could pull those people in as well. It later became a lot harder to staff Kabul because once you had those people in for a couple of years they came out and there was not a second tranche waiting in the wings.

Kabul as a city was not as dangerous then as it has since become, and when we set up our embassy in late 2001, we didn't have to fortify it to quite the same extent. We had a very large embassy compound, including playing fields, from the 1960s so we had plenty of setback from the street. We also had a friendly environment in Kabul. That began to change as conditions worsened in Kabul over the years.

Q: Now, Khalilzad was the first ambassador. And he came right from the White House --

CAMP: He came from the NSC, that's correct. He was a logical choice since he had been raised in Afghanistan and had connections both to the Pashtun and non-Pashtun community.

Q: As we move into 2002, 2003, what are your major issues back in Washington?

CAMP: In 2002, I was pretty much absorbed in the growing crisis between India and Pakistan, arising out of the December 2001 attack on the Indian parliament. Tensions were escalating rapidly in early 2002 and we were again acutely conscious of the nuclear capabilities on both sides. When we raised our concerns about a nuclear showdown, both the Indians and Pakistanis told us there was no danger of such a confrontation. Nevertheless, as in the 1999 Kargil crisis, we sensed there was potential for a resort to nuclear weapons. And our ambassador in Delhi, Bob Blackwill, felt this particularly strongly. We worked with him to make contingency plans for what could happen. How would we evacuate embassies in the event of some kind of nuclear conflagration? It was way out there as a contingency, but we had to do it. And we learned the art of “plumology,” how fallout would spread in light of prevailing winds. DOD prepared charts that graphically showed the spread. It was really a scary time. And we concluded that there was no good way to evacuate embassies or consulates in this kind of situation. Bob Blackwill, on his own, took action around April/May 2002. He made the judgment that the situation was too dangerous for embassy dependents to remain in Delhi. Without any consultation with the Department (we felt blind-sided) he sent a cable requesting “authorized departure” for Embassy Delhi. This is a term of art for evacuation of non-essential employees, spouses, and children. This decision had to be made public since anything that affects the official community has to be relayed to the American public by law and by policy. So the fact that we were contemplating evacuating our embassy in Delhi sent shock waves through the region. I’ve never talked to Blackwill about this, but there was a school of thought that this was tactical as well, that he wanted to administer a shock to the government and people of India. It was in fact a tremendous shock in India that the American Embassy considered the situation so grave. The influential Indian business community was concerned as American companies contemplated their own evacuations. This caught the attention of Delhi policy-makers.

At about this time Deputy Secretary of State Rich Armitage went out to India and Pakistan to try and calm the crisis. I was on that trip as Armitage’s South Asia advisor and representative of the bureau. We went first to Delhi and then on to Pakistan, and he was able to use his conversations in Delhi to reassure Pakistan that India wanted to tamp down tensions.

Q: Can the U.S., in fact, take credit, for the end of the crisis?

CAMP: We can perhaps take some credit. But it was also a desire in both Delhi and Islamabad to step back from the brink. We gave Delhi in particular some good reasons to do so. There was the departure of some of our staff from India, of course. But we were also offering counterterrorism cooperation with India. That was helpful. And we still had the after effects of the good feelings of 9/11, and we had Bob Blackwill promoting U.S.-India relations, and looking toward cooperation in new areas, including the very beginnings of the nuclear deal that would be reached several years later.

Q: There was a period when foreign ministers from Europe were coming through Islamabad and New Delhi.

CAMP: That’s true. This was part of the strategy at the time, which was, keep ‘em busy. Keep a flow of senior level visitors into India and Pakistan. As someone not so jokingly said, “They can’t start a war with the Foreign Minister of France in Delhi.” So I think that was part of a

successful strategy as well.

Q: You were saying that we were looking for a large issue to build a new relationship with India that would alter the paradigm?

CAMP: That was the nuclear issue. India was an outlier, almost a pariah in the nuclear world. Because India had never signed the NPT (Non-Proliferation Treaty), because India had tested a nuclear device in 1974, they'd always been out of the club. What we came up with was called the Next Steps in Strategic Partnership, which basically attempted to begin to lift some controls as India made comparable steps. The areas we focused on were civilian space technology (where there was a long standing relationship between NASA and its Indian counterpart ISRO), civilian nuclear energy, high tech trade, and missile defense. But this was only the first step. With Bob Blackwill's active support, we subsequently began, kind of sub rosa, an attempt to bridge the deep abyss of our nuclear relationship and strike a deal on nuclear energy. General Electric had helped India build one of its first commercial reactors in Bombay. And it had always been a very sore spot with India that we cut off supply of fuel and cut off repairs to that GE built nuclear power reactor after the 1974 tests. The Indians wanted us back in the game, not only for this reactor but for full civilian nuclear cooperation. Nuclear energy was one of their priorities for India's modernization. This was absolutely verboten for our non-proliferation colleagues. It was one of the sacred cows of nuclear policy -- no nuclear cooperation with a country that has not signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty. So the Bush administration at the very senior levels -- basically Bob Blackwill in Delhi and Condi Rice/Steve Hadley at the NSC -- conceived of a top-down dialogue with far-reaching consequences. This was done without consulting the non-pro bureau in the State Department, without bringing them into the dialogue until it was quite far advanced. It was a very effective bureaucratic power play by the folks who envisioned a new partnership with India. I can say with confidence that the Non-Proliferation Bureau was kept in the dark because I was the designated emissary to break the news to the NP assistant secretary.

Q: Tell me about the involvement of other Washington agencies as you moved forward on these India issues?

CAMP: As we moved into the next steps on strategic partnership and ultimately the nuclear deal, the Commerce Department played a huge role. The Commerce Department controls a lot of the export licensing portfolio. Interagency meetings tended to be a mess, and very unproductive. At State we couldn't reach a common position between the South Asia Bureau and the Non-Proliferation (NP) Bureau. And like us, Commerce was divided into an enforcement camp and a regional/export promotion camp. NSC would convene a meeting on next steps in strategic partnership and ask for State Department and Commerce Department views. Speaking for State, I'd have to say all too often, "We pass on this one. We don't have an agreement." It was partly our inability to craft a common position with the NP Bureau. But the same dysfunction extended to the senior levels of the Department. John Bolton was the Undersecretary responsible for non-pro issues. He fought for his prerogatives and was not an easy man to overrule, even for his colleagues in the State Department's executive suite. He succeeded in slowing the process but not in stopping it.

Q: For background, one of the reasons that South Asia Bureau was set up was there were those

in Congress that felt the Near East Bureau could not give South Asia the proper attention that it deserved. With 9/11, South Asia's getting a heck of a lot of attention. But it sounds as if you still don't have a lot of clout.

CAMP: We were still a small bureau and by this time we're top heavy with Afghanistan and Pakistan issues. I guess it's fair to say we had the ear of the Secretary and the Deputy Secretary on those issues. But John Bolton ran what looked to me to be an independent satrapy there on the 7th floor. I think that's one of the reasons the beginnings of the nuclear deal were handled so covertly within the bureaucracy.

Q: When you started on this assignment as Deputy Assistant Secretary, how long was it supposed to be?

CAMP: Until Michelle Sison could be sprung from Islamabad where she was DCM. This was pre-9/11 so we thought it could be done quite quickly. I was planning to be going back to the India Desk as Director within three or four months. And of course everything changed. I never went back to the desk and in fact spent much of the next decade in various assignments in the South Asia bureau front office.

COLOMBO AS CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES

Q: In the summer of 2003, you went out to Colombo.

CAMP: Yes. We had a rather long gap between our departing ambassador Ashley Wills and his successor Jeff Lunstead. Assistant Secretary Rocca asked me to go out there for three months as Chargé d'Affaires.

DCM Lewis Amselem was also due out that summer. We had hoped he would stay as continuity but he took umbrage at an outsider (me) being brought in as Chargé, and he left rather precipitously. I didn't stand in his way. The post was just recovering from the discovery of a major visa fraud operation. Diplomatic Security had uncovered the ring -- the management officer Long Lee and her husband, an employee of the visa section, had been selling visas for years, amassing millions of dollars in the process. They ended up in the federal penitentiary. Much of the money was recovered but even years later, more was found secreted in the upholstery in their Colombo home.

Sri Lanka was in a temporary lull in its long-running ethnic conflict. I'd been active on Sri Lanka issues in the Department and had testified on Capitol Hill, so I could bring the authoritative word from Washington as to our desire to find a modus vivendi between the government and the Tamil insurgents, the LTTE. I made a point of traveling by road -- maybe this was foolish at the time -- from Colombo to Jaffna, a journey which had recently become possible because of the temporary ceasefire. And I remember what an impression it made on me driving through northern Sri Lanka, through what was then the LTTE capital of Kilinochchi, a small town in north central Sri Lanka. It had a Central Bank of Tamil Eelam, a Court of Tamil Eelam, and most strikingly, it had policemen with radar guns who were pulling people over for speeding, presumably to raise revenue. They pulled us over too but I declared my diplomatic status and they let us go. But they

had a quasi-state established in northern Sri Lanka. I think that's one of the reasons why the ceasefire didn't hold; the LTTE thought they were on the verge of achieving statehood or at least substantial autonomy, and the government and the army were not going to stand for that.

Q: How big an embassy would it have been at this time?

CAMP: It was a medium sized embassy. We had an AID mission and probably a total of 25 Foreign Service Officers. We never had huge interests in Sri Lanka, but it was a country we were trying to assist.

Q: What's going on when you return with the rest of your portfolio?

CAMP: Nepal was another small South Asian country which occupied a lot of my time in those years. There was an active Maoist insurgency (I use that word because that's what they called themselves; the Chinese always eschewed the Maoist label when talking about Nepal). And then there was the massacre of the Royal Family one evening in June 2001. Crown Prince Dipendra, in a rage fueled by liquor and hashish and anger at his mother for denying him the right to marry the woman he loved, came to a family dinner in the palace armed with semi-automatic weapons and gunned down the whole family. Prince Dipendra then shot himself but survived three days during which time royal rules of protocol were followed and he was crowned king. It was a terrible disaster for the country of Nepal. It spawned conspiracy theories which persist to this day and it brought into some disrepute the brother of the king, Gyanendra who ascended the throne after Dipendra's death. Gyanendra's unpopularity was a further impediment to the government's efforts to combat the Maoist insurgency.

We were actively supporting the government and the Royal Nepal Army in its battle with the Maoists. We were also seeking a ceasefire, which eventually occurred. But in the meantime, King Gyanendra took power to himself and dissolved parliament, creating real problems for our support for democracy and human rights in Nepal. I was sent out to Kathmandu, ostensibly to attend a Nepal development forum meeting, but also to tell the king that he needed to restore democracy. I had a meeting with the king in his summer capital in Pokhara accompanied by Ambassador Jim Moriarty. I told him that it was the US view that he needed to restore democracy. I don't recall that he took that very well. Ultimately the Maoists reached an agreement to end their fight and participate in governance. In fairly short order, the monarchy was abolished, Nepal became a republic, and Gyanendra became a private citizen. In 2010, I came back to Nepal as temporary Chargé d'Affaires. I didn't seek out Gyanendra, but I talked to one of his friends who said, "You know, the king heard you were in town and he wanted me to tell you, 'Do you remember our last meeting? I told you at the time that this would happen!'" So he apparently blamed the United States and perhaps me for his downfall.

Q: There must have been a lot of coordination with others -- especially the Indians -- on the whole Nepal issue.

CAMP: The Indians were the most important and probably the toughest to coordinate with. I and others would always go through New Delhi on our trips to Nepal. We'd always want to talk with our counterparts in the Indian Foreign Ministry. But talking to the diplomats was not necessarily

the way to coordinate on Nepal. Indian foreign policy toward its neighbor was very complicated. Everyone had a hand in it -- especially the Prime Minister's Office, the Home Ministry, the Intelligence Services, and the state governments of Bihar and UP (Uttar Pradesh) which bordered Nepal. Everyone had a hand in foreign policy toward Nepal. I'm sure it wasn't easy for the Indian Ambassador in Kathmandu, with whom we had good relations generally. The British were always on the same wavelength as us on Nepal. The Chinese wouldn't talk to us very much about Nepal other than in generalities ("they're not real Maoists!"). But they were also very influential behind the scenes.

Q: Moving on to another subject. You mentioned earlier that by virtue of your position, you were being called upon to testify before Congress. That's a mark of being a Deputy Assistant Secretary. How does that invitation come and how do you prepare yourself?

CAMP: Well, it's usually the Assistant Secretary who has this burden or responsibility. And Christina Rocca, coming from Capitol Hill, knew the ways of Congress quite well and met often with the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, the House International Relations Committee, and others. She did so when invited. But on occasion, she would be out of town and that's when it would usually fall to me. Preparation for congressional testimony is one of those great bureaucratic tangles when every bureau in the Department want to clear on your briefing papers and make sure you're saying exactly what they want you to say. The result is that your prepared testimony is pablum. But that's followed by questions from the Congress. While you try to anticipate the questions and prepare responses, you're otherwise on your own up there and that's when you have to know what everyone's views are and how to hue to a government position. After a couple years as DAS I pretty much knew the lay of the land and I'm pretty cautious by nature. I don't think I committed any major screw ups on Capitol Hill. I've always said that the saving grace of these hearings, if you're under pressure, is that the member of Congress usually wants to talk at great length and tell you what he or she thinks, rather than genuinely hear what you want to say. So they tend to run out the clock with their long questions. Sometimes the questions are totally off the wall. I remember one Sri Lanka hearing at which a congressman from California, who had obviously heard from his Tamil constituents, asked me, "Why is the LTTE any different from our founding fathers? We used violence to achieve our ends, why shouldn't we treat the LTTE as democrats seeking secession from tyrannical rule from Colombo?" I think I stammered something like "We weren't blowing up central banks in 1776."

Q: That raises the interesting issue of the influence of immigrant groups in foreign policy.

CAMP: South Asian Americans are, by and large, active advocates for the interests of their own countries. That is true mostly for the first generation. In the case of India and Sri Lanka, in particular, the immigrants have been highly educated and financially successful. The conflict in Sri Lanka attracted the attention of the large and influential Tamil community in the US, especially in Boston, New Jersey and California. There was also a Sinhalese diaspora but they were never as organized in defending the government in Colombo as the Tamil-Americans were in supporting their community. Despite the fact that we had designated the LTTE as a foreign terrorist organization, making overt support illegal, they saw themselves as having the cause of freedom on their side.

Q: And the Indian-American community?

CAMP: They are very effective when they organize. They were among the first to encourage members of Congress to create a country caucus. There are a hundred plus members of the House caucus on India. The community came into play in a big way when the Bush administration was trying to get the controversial the nuclear deal through Congress. It involved some waivers of our law. The non-proliferation supporters thought the deal was a terrible one. In the end, the administration got what it wanted and certainly the India caucus played a role.

But you can go back farther and look at some of Bill Clinton's high-profile Indian-American supporters. I believe they were influential in getting him to focus on relations with India during his second term.

Q: One of the events that simply comes out of left field was the Indian Ocean tsunami of December 2004 and our response to that.

CAMP: December 26th, 2004. It was a massive disaster. Most of the people killed were in Indonesia, in Sumatra. But the effects in Sri Lanka were calamitous. The effects in India were also very substantial along the eastern coast. Same in the Maldives. I think this was one of our best efforts as a government. Mark Grossman was Under Secretary at the time and he pulled together a committee to deal with this. The main players were State's Economic Bureau, led by Tony Wayne, the South Asia Bureau, and USAID. But Mark Grossman said, "More than that, we need to coordinate internationally. We need to bring in the Indians, we need to bring in the Australians. We need to bring in others." So I remember a videoconference with India on how we could assist, and Mark Grossman led it. India could take care of themselves in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and in eastern India because their resources were substantial. But it was very clear that Sri Lanka needed a lot of help. And so we worked with India on Sri Lanka. We worked with India on Indonesia. There was only so much we could do. The damage had been done. Many of the deaths had already taken place. But in terms of relief, I think that cooperation on disaster relief was an important aspect of U.S.-India cooperation and in making our militaries more interoperable. Some Indians don't like to think about interoperability because it suggests too much of an ally relationship, but in fact, it works very well in things like disaster relief. That cooperation will prove useful in the future; we need to cooperate for the inevitable major earthquake in Nepal for instance (editor's note: that quake occurred in April 2015).

The U.S. military played an enormous role in tsunami relief. Our military was focused on Indonesia in particular because they brought in one of the hospital ships to Sumatra to help out there. The military performed marvelously, as they always do in that kind of natural disaster. They needed assistance from the embassies on the ground more than from State Department.

Q: Let's move to the 9/11 Commission. You testified before them. What was that like?

CAMP: All of us went before the 9/11 Commission around 2003. In preparation, I reviewed my calendar to try and remember what exactly happened in those immediate days after. But the 9/11 Commission focused a lot on before 9/11 and whether we had been prepared. So my testimony focused a lot on my own trips to Afghanistan back in 1998 and our message to the Taliban. It

was simple: you must render Osama bin Laden. And their questions also focused on our relationship with the Taliban before 9/11, which was controversial in some circles. My answer was “We didn’t recognize them, but they were the effective government of Afghanistan by 2001 and we dealt with them.” This played into our standard theme -- if you want a normal relationship, you need to expel bin Laden and al-Qaeda. I’m confident we were doing the right thing.

Q: In 2005, you have the start of a new administration. Condi Rice moves from the NSC to State Department, sort of like Kissinger, following that path. Did her arrival set a different tone or policy direction for the bureau?

CAMP: What we had with Colin Powell and Rich Armitage was an extremely hands-on seventh floor. I have a lot of respect for both of them in terms of what they brought to the department. Powell and Armitage modernized the State Department. Powell came in and found out that people didn’t have computers at their desks and didn’t have internet access and he was appalled, and suddenly we all did. Armitage and Powell made sure that all of the bureaus knew that taking care of our people was a primary task. We already knew this, but the emphasis was strong to keep an eye on our post, make sure that our ambassadors were doing the right thing and taking care of their people. They both thought that State Department was way behind the military in providing mid-career training to our staff, so they beefed up the Foreign Service Institute and made sure that training was taken into account for assignments and promotions. They were much loved in the State Department.

Condi Rice was a very different kind of person. She also was committed to building up the Foreign Service and resources flowed to the State Department during that period. There were two big things she did for us bureaucratically -- staffing up our Indian posts and transferring responsibility for the five Central Asian states to our newly-renamed Bureau of South and Central Asia.

She knew instinctively what most of us suspected. For historical reasons, the European Bureau (EUR) had a disproportionate share of the resources at State Department. With the rise of Asia, it was time, she thought, to build up our missions in the two great Asian nations -- India and China. And by fiat she did just that, instructing the Department to move positions (jobs) from EUR to India and China. One was to shift personnel resources from the European Bureau (EUR) to our relatively-understaffed embassies and consulates in India and China. It was just in time for our greatly-enhanced relationships with both countries.

The other issue was a little more complicated. The conventional wisdom -- which I have no reason to question -- is that she wanted the nations of Russia’s near abroad to look less toward Moscow and more toward the outside world. One thing she could do was to shift responsibility for the five Central Asian states (“the Stans”) from the EUR bureau -- a legacy of Soviet days -- to the South (and now Central) Asia Bureau. It was also true that the Central Asian states were increasingly important to our efforts in Afghanistan, a priority of our bureau. But this move was, in our little State Department world, nothing short of a cataclysm. The EUR bureau was -- and is -- huge, influential, and very protective of its turf.

I was the point person in the South Asia Bureau for making this merger happen. I researched what had been done in the past. The only example I could find in recent history was Canada's move from the European Bureau to the Western Hemisphere Bureau. That was not so long ago and it was not an easy transition either. But here we had five countries to be moved into our bureau. The Europeanists argued, "The Stans look to the west. They're members of the CSCE (Commission on Security and Cooperation in Europe). They think of themselves as Europeans." In fact, to some extent this is true, I discovered.

I talked to the ambassador from Kazakhstan and tried to explain this to him. He protested vigorously. "But we're Europeans! We're not those South Asians!" There was definitely some prejudice there. They didn't want to be lumped with South Asia. And the Foreign Service Officers who worked on the area were mostly Russian specialists, whose second language was Russian. They also did not see their future as in the South Asian Bureau. So it took a fair amount of diplomacy to make this happen. We haggled with the European Bureau over bureaucratic stupidity like, you know, who gets the conference room, who gets the offices with the good view of Constitution Avenue. It was a lot about real estate in the building. It was very messy.

Q: And who's running these meetings?

CAMP: It was me and our counterpart in the European Bureau.

Q: But M (Office of Undersecretary for Management) didn't play a role?

CAMP: M certainly played a role. I don't recall them trying to mediate very well between us.

Q: And who designated you the South Asia Bureau point of contact.

CAMP: My boss, the Assistant Secretary. This was part of my management role. As Principal DAS by this time, I oversaw the Executive Office, so it was logical that I be the person to do this. It was the upstart South Asia Bureau against the huge behemoth of the European Bureau. Example: our bureau had always shared a conference room with our neighbors in NEA. I discovered that EUR had eight conference rooms, because, you know, they were EUR. So I said, "Well, give one to us." No way. That was the kind of bureaucratic foolishness that we had to deal with.

Q: Also, doesn't this reflect that in the way the State Department is organized, each individual bureau controls resources. The State Department doesn't tell everybody to have computers. Each bureau would buy computers for its people and one could buy Macs and the other bureau could buy PC's. So you had the kind of funding structure in there where the bureaus actually did control resources.

CAMP: And that's true. And I think even more importantly, there's a certain amount of inertia built into the process. I mean, it's not only the bureaus have control, but the allocations have been done for all these many years and it's hard to transfer resources from an old established bureau to a new one. And by resources, I mean not only funding but office space and the like.

Q: Do you remember any of the Russia hands at State speaking derogatorily of your efforts?

CAMP: People were fairly careful because they knew that it was Secretary Rice's decision to do this. We're trained to carry out those decisions, but there were a lot of very unhappy people. And I must say, at this point the Assistant Secretary of the South Asia Bureau is Richard Boucher, a great gentleman whose instinct is to compromise, not to confront. And frankly, I'm of that same school. We're trained to be tough negotiators with foreign countries. And here we were, negotiating with our own colleagues to try and achieve a goal. Over the months, we came to a pretty good *modus vivendi*. Since then, the inspectors have looked at the new South and Central Asian Bureau twice, and come to the conclusion that it's working pretty well.

POLITICAL ADVISOR TO THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS

Q: In 2006, you have a very unique opportunity. You become the Political Advisor to the Chief of Naval Operations. How did you get that job?

CAMP: It was a lucky coincidence that the POLAD (Political Advisor) Office in the Political-Military Bureau of the State Department was looking for someone to go over to the Pentagon to work for Admiral Mullen, then CNO (Chief of Naval Operations), at the same time as I was transitioning out of the SCA Bureau. I'd been in SCA a long time and had helped Richard Boucher at his request in his transition into his new position. It was time to move on. I had never done any political-military work before when this job was proposed to me. I went over to interview with Admiral Mullen, and told him that I was primarily an Asia specialist. His reaction was "Good, that's an area where we have a lot going on," and he invited me to join his staff as Political Advisor. I went over there in the late summer of '06. POLADs have traditionally been assigned to our regional commands outside Washington and I think they're a little different outside Washington where one of the main jobs is to liaise with the ambassadors before the regional commanders go traveling to Thailand or Malaysia or China or whatever. My job was much more to keep the conductivity with State Department that Admiral Mullen wanted, and also to prepare him for his overseas trips. So I was coordinating more with country desks and with bureaus than I was with embassies overseas. I sat in on Admiral Mullen's daily meetings with his senior admirals and got a sense of the whole range of issues he covered. But I think my added value was when he traveled and especially when he traveled to Asia, as opposed to his trips to, say, Eastern Europe where I had never set foot myself.

Let me give you an example of what I think was that added value. My first trip with Admiral Mullen was to Hawaii to something called the Western Pacific Naval Symposium, which brings together the navies of all the countries bordering the Pacific Ocean. It's an opportunity for Admiral Mullen to have bilateral meetings with his counterparts from throughout the region. And most of these are set in stone. But when I got there and looked at the schedule, I realized there was nothing set with his counterpart from China. China had sent an admiral, but not their navy chief. I asked Mullen's scheduler why there was no meeting with the Chinese and was told that the Chinese had not asked. So I went to the Chinese admiral and introduced myself. He didn't speak English and was a bit shy in this environment. I still had sufficient Chinese skills from my tours in China to ask if he would be interested in meeting the CNO. Well, yes, he said, but he would need an interpreter. Well, I wasn't the interpreter, fortunately, but the meeting went very

well and set the stage for Mullen's visit to China early the following year. Just an example of what a Foreign Service Officer can sometimes accomplish on the staff of a military officer.

During my year with the CNO, we took quite a few trips, but the most significant -- for me -- were those to India, Pakistan and China. Admiral Mullen had never been to any of those three places, except that as a young lieutenant he'd been on a ship had made a port visit in Cochin back in the '70s. In India and Pakistan, I was a bit disappointed because he didn't get the kind of senior level appointments that I thought he should get. His host was always the Chief of Naval Staff but we expected to call on more senior officials as well. We got a great briefing in Delhi on the concerns of India's navy, which was primarily China. We got a slideshow presentation of what the Indians called the Ring of Pearls, which was the arc of ports and naval facilities that China was helping to build in Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan -- facilities that India feared were designed to encircle it in a ring of Chinese influence. The Pakistanis, in their gracious way, gave us a very good tour. We went to Karachi, toured a Pakistani submarine, and got a sense of their preoccupations, which were of course entirely India. But no senior appointments.

By the time we went to China on a separate trip, it was already apparent that Admiral Mullen would become the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. And so he got more senior appointments in China. But China can be a little overwhelming for those who haven't visited before -- and by this I mean especially the senior staff who were accompanying the CNO. They weren't quite sure how to interact with their Chinese counterparts. I was in the position of being the social guide as well, leading the required toasts at the banquets and so on. It's a different kind of regional expertise.

It was an important trip for Mullen. The US military was more and more aware of the rapid growth of the Chinese military establishment and especially the navy. We were taken to Qingdao which is a major Chinese submarine base. I had been hoping to go to Dalian but their aircraft carrier program was still in a very early stage at that point.

Q: Now, in this role, would you also be his liaison to the embassy when he's traveling?

CAMP: To a large extent I was the point person for contacts with the embassy. It was fortunate that a lot of the places we went I knew either the ambassador or the DCM. From my previous five years in the department I'd seen a lot of people pass through on their way to senior positions. And the ambassador in Beijing was Sandy Randt with whom I'd served back in Beijing in 1985. So it was good to see him and his wife again. The Foreign Service ties helped an enormous amount.

Q: What was Admiral Mullen's response to this travel and to these new experiences?

CAMP: Like any person who's attained four-star status in the military, he was intellectually curious. He always wanted to learn more. He was very conscious that Asia was an area crucially important to the United States and I think it was an area in which he'd not spent a lot of time. He'd been Commander of the Fleet in Naples and elsewhere. So he wanted to understand where these countries were coming from. He would have been an excellent diplomat just because he didn't see things just from an American perspective. He wanted to understand the other country's

perspective. I found in Admiral Mullen a remarkable personification of the view that you had to understand both your allies and your enemies -- or competitors. That was one of his goals on those trips.

Q: Now, you weren't the first POLAD for the CNO.

CAMP: By no means. There was a long succession. Steve Schleijsker, Carey Cavanaugh, and a few generations before that.

Q: POLAD assignments are one-year tours. So what did you see in front of you at the end of that year?

CAMP: I had gone into the year intending to retire at the end of '07. And that also coincided with Admiral Mullen's elevation to the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs. If he'd stayed on, I might have been inclined to see if I could stay another year as POLAD. So I planned to retire. The State Department has a great program for retiring Foreign Service Officers. It's a two-month course at FSI during which they inundate you with advice and counseling on what's ahead. I went into that very enthusiastically. About six weeks into the course, after I'd signed and submitted my retirement papers, I got a call from the SCA Bureau saying, "We could use your help. The Pakistan office director position has suddenly become vacant. We really need someone there. You know all the people and issues; could you come back for just a few months?"

RETURN TO THE SOUTH ASIA BUREAU FRONT OFFICE

I told them I could return as a WAE ("When Actually Employed") employee after my retirement was official. But they said they had already talked to the Director General of the Foreign Service Harry Thomas who had approved a delay in my retirement for a few months.

The folks at FSI said, "You're the first person to fail our retirement course."

Anyway, I went back as Office Director for Pakistan, but a funny thing happened very soon after that. Not one but two Deputy Assistant Secretaries moved on from the front office. John Gastright, who was the Afghan-Pakistan DAS told me, "You're my ticket out of here. I'd been planning to leave but I couldn't leave until there was some expertise back in the bureau." So they left and Richard Boucher invited me to come back up to the Front Office, first as a DAS and later for a while as PDAS. So I stayed there through the transition to the new administration and a little beyond, in early 2009.

Q: What was the relationship like with India at this point?

CAMP: While I'd been gone, the two sides had completed the nuclear agreement. It was most controversial on the Indian side where it almost led to the fall of PM Manmohan Singh's government. That political debate in India gave us all a new perspective on the deal. The non-proliferation people in the United States had said, "You regional specialists gave away the store in your negotiations with India." But the perspective in the Indian press and the political class was that the Indians had conceded too much to the Americans.

When PM Singh finally succeeded in getting the deal through Parliament, the only flaw was that we hadn't gotten the nuclear liability agreement to our liking so that American companies still have some nuclear liability issues when investing in India. And until that's fixed I don't think we'll have as active a commercial agreement on nuclear energy as we had hoped. But there's no question the agreement gave a real boost to the overall bilateral relationship.

And then of course in 2008, India suffered the horrendous Thanksgiving Day attack on the Taj Mahal Hotel and other locations in Mumbai. Americans were killed in the attack as well so we had multiple reasons to help in the investigation and the pursuit of the killers. India was, in my view, very restrained in their reaction to the attack, since it was very clear that it had originated from Pakistan and quite possibly with some level of awareness or even complicity from military intelligence. But the outcome of our rather intense discussions with India at the time was more U.S.-India intelligence cooperation and sharing than I would have thought conceivable ten years before. But we had built up a large degree of trust, starting with Strobe Talbott and his discussions in 1999, the Clinton visit in 2000 and then the Bush administration's negotiations on the nuclear agreement. We had the credibility with the Indians that helped tamp down the situation after the Mumbai attacks and allowed us to share a lot more with the Indians than we ever had before.

Q: And I think we offered considerable FBI assistance to the Indian Police to make sure they had the evidence to support a court case.

CAMP: Yes. They and we worked very hard on Pakistan to try to get them to bring a case against the hijackers and the LET (Lashkar-e-Taiba (Army of the Good)), which had orchestrated the attacks. So far, Pakistan has not really followed through satisfactorily, but that's no fault of our cooperation with India. We told them all we could pick up on this case, and that was substantial.

Q: You were interacting a lot with the Indian Embassy. What was their perspective on the new US-India relationship?

CAMP: I'd had good, social relationships with the embassy officers when I was the desk officer back in 1988, when the new relationship was in its very early stages. But by 2000, the Indian government had inculcated the notion of a U.S.-India partnership and was working actively to foster it. The Indian Ministry of External Affairs, which can be cantankerous and ornery at times, was very supportive of the relationship. We generally had very good relations with the embassy. And they had a very impressive corps of America experts. There was one fine officer who was in charge of working with our export control bureaucracy to encourage the tech transfer that was high on their list of priorities. By the time he left Washington, we told him he knew more about the export regulations than we did. He later became the Joint Secretary for the Americas and put that knowledge to good use.

The Pakistan Embassy had some excellent officers as well, but they had a harder time dealing with all their counterparts in Washington -- State, Defense, the Congress, the White House -- because we were so often at odds over the issues of terrorism and the like.

Q: Would an embassy like the Indian Embassy be involved in the larger Washington social milieu, charities, etc?

CAMP: Well, maybe they were, but I was not (*laughs*). I don't think the Indians and Pakistanis played this game quite as much, you know, the opera balls and the Meridian House Balls. They were more business oriented. When they had big functions at their embassies, it was to welcome visitors from Delhi or Islamabad. Like us, when they're overseas, they're quite busy doing the work of diplomacy. And I don't think they had a lot of time or resources for doing other events. They were good at public outreach. I'll give you two examples on the Indian side. There was one Indian Ambassador, I believe it was Lalit Mansingh, who originated the practice of celebrating every holiday for every religion represented in India. He would celebrate Rosh Hashanah at his residence with the small community of Indian Jews but also invite representatives of the US Jewish community. He made a big effort to celebrate Eid to remind us that India had more Muslims than most Islamic countries. He did the same for Buddhist and Christian holidays. It was a nice -- and very effective -- gesture that I believe has been continued by his successors.

My second example was a personal interest of mine, and I helped set it up. In 2011, there was a big celebration in Washington of the 50th anniversary of the Peace Corps. By this time I was retired, but I took a small delegation of Peace Corps volunteers who had served in India to propose to the embassy that they play a role in commemorating India's involvement in the early years of the Peace Corps. The embassy seized the opportunity and hosted a reception for the volunteers who had served in India. Several hundred showed up, of the thousands who had worked in India from 1962 until 1975 when Peace Corps left India. These were people who had lived in India at a formative time in their lives, who had a real, visceral tie to India and may not have been connected over the last twenty years. There was one woman who'd served with Jimmy Carter's mother Lillian in Maharashtra in the 1960's. She'd been almost 60 when serving in India and in 2011 she was 103. She gave a short speech as did Dick Celeste, who had been Clinton's ambassador in Delhi as well as Director of the Peace Corps. It was a great occasion for public diplomacy and the Indians really did it well.

Q: Was India your primary responsibility? Did you do some traveling out to the embassies?

CAMP: I traveled to Central Asia since that was a new area for me. I went to Uzbekistan where we had substantial human rights issues. It's one of those classic problems in diplomacy. We had human rights problems, but we also needed the Uzbeks very badly. And I think that's true of a lot of the southern tier of Central Asia now because they're so crucial to our efforts in Afghanistan. First bringing supplies in and now eventually bringing the military and infrastructure out. So my job was two-fold, was both to talk to the government of Uzbekistan about accountability for the massacre at Andijan several years before. But at the same time, we were seeking their assistance in what was called the Northern Distribution Network in helping us bring supplies into Afghanistan. It's balancing act that we all get used to. But it was also for me an introduction to Central Asia, including a trip to Samarkand to see the old Silk Road. Fascinating. I was also traveling to posts to show the flag and make sure morale was high and post management was doing a good job. We were very intent on mentoring our younger officers and getting them to make a long-term commitment to work in the SCA region. To that end, I

went to an Entry Level Officer conference in Madras and talked to the new foreign service officers from throughout the SCA area.

Q: Now, the bureau is expanded in 2006. This is 2007. What's Richard like to work for and the atmospherics around the bureau?

CAMP: He did a very good job in absorbing the Central Asian Stans. He was much liked and admired in the bureau. The South Asia Bureau (and now SCA) has been blessed by a succession of very good Assistant Secretaries in its relatively short history, and Richard Boucher certainly was no exception. He traveled widely. He had many strong points, but of course he came from an assignment as State Department spokesman. So he was excellent as a speaker. And he got out in front of the bureau and was an effective exponent of the bureau all across the world. He spent a lot of time in Central Asia, which I believe was a totally new area to him and really made sure that the Central Asian countries understood that we understood their problems and wanted to be of assistance. I'm sure that the Central Asian states got a lot more attention from the State Department once they moved into the small South and Central Asia Bureau where they were one of 13 countries than they had from the European Bureau which had 60+ countries. Even if you had a very good EUR Assistant Secretary like Beth Jones who knows Central Asia very well, she could not give the kind of attention to Central Asia that an Assistant Secretary who had 13 countries could.

Q: Now, as the bureau was building up and creating this liaison with the embassies, are there any particular embassy problems that came to bureau attention?

CAMP: Bob Blackwill had left. David Mulford had replaced him in Delhi. There is a generic problem that we've had for many years of competition and lack of communication between our missions in India and Pakistan. Some would call it clientitis. It depends of course on the quality of post management and I tend to think that career foreign service officers handle it better than political appointees. If you haven't served in both countries, sometimes you can lack perspective on the other's positions. I was always encouraging our ambassadors to travel widely and to get a perspective from neighboring countries. That did not always go over well.

Q: There are a fair number of consulates in India. Are the consulates reporting directly into the department or do they have to report to you through New Delhi?

CAMP: They had the capacity and the ability and the prerogative to report directly to Washington. In fact, the Washington policy establishment was so focused on the US-India relationship that the consulate reporting was vital to us mostly when it focused on that rather than, say, local elections in part of the country. The consulates are crucial in other ways -- to keep us aware that enormous India is not just Delhi -- the "inside the Ring Road" syndrome. And when something like the Mumbai attacks occurs, the value of the consulates really comes to the fore. But, day to day, the action generally is in the capital. I think that is a little less true in Pakistan where the reporting from Peshawar was crucial in our understanding of Afghanistan and Lahore was crucial politically and Karachi economically.

Visas and American citizen services were two issues that also consumed our consulates. I'm glad

we finally found the funds to establish a new consulate in Hyderabad. I always felt we tended to neglect the south even as the tech boom made Bangalore and Hyderabad so important. Visa applications from the area were increasing dramatically. I remember visiting Chennai and being told our visa section was on shift work; one would work from 6 am to 2 pm and the other would work from noon to 8 pm to try to deal with the visa crush. David Mulford in particular was insistent that visas be dealt with immediately and ordered that the long lines and delays be eliminated forthwith -- it was frankly a good way to approach the problem. But we finally decided we had to have another post in south India; Hyderabad was the choice and that's worked out very well.

Q: Let's move to the so-called Af-Pak (Afghanistan-Pakistan) phenomenon. What does that mean to you?

CAMP: *(laughs)* We're jumping ahead to the arrival of the Obama administration in early 2009. They had some well-formed ideas in their head, and some personnel plans. Secretary Clinton came into office and announced two special envoys, George Mitchell for Israel-Palestine and Richard Holbrooke for what was called Af-Pak. She saw value in linking the two countries bureaucratically in order to deal with the linked problems. But neither of the two countries liked the idea of Af-Pak because it made them a problem rather than a country. Pakistanis in particular did not like the terminology, and finally wore us down to the point that we didn't use it after the first year or so. The other point that needs to be made is that Richard Holbrooke when he arrived intended to be the Special Representative for India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. Not just Pakistan and Afghanistan. The Indians had no intention of being lumped into this grouping. They had always resisted being linked in any way with Pakistan (so-called hyphenation). They wanted to be dealt with on their own. And they certainly didn't want to be linked to these problem countries of Pakistan and Afghanistan. And they made themselves very, very clear at senior levels of the administration and to Holbrooke himself. Holbrooke did not give up this idea easily. But he was announced as the Afghanistan-Pakistan Special Representative. Even after that, I remember a lunch with the Indian foreign secretary in early 2009. Holbrooke was the host and he said, "You know, India's not in my portfolio, but really, you know, that's going to be part of my concern."

And the Indian Foreign Secretary gazed back at him with a steely gaze and said, "That's not our impression, sir." Holbrook was a force of nature, but he lost this battle to the Indians. And when he traveled to India for his responsibilities, as he needed to, he was never received, as I can recall, above the level of Foreign Secretary. The Indians basically kept him in his place.

Q: Tell me more about the transition in early 2009 from the Bush to the Obama administration.

CAMP: Hillary Clinton was named very early after the election. She was quite a surprise, but considered an excellent choice, politically and diplomatically. We were pleased because she had a history with South, if not Central Asia. She had made a very successful trip as First Lady in 1995 to almost all the south Asian nations.

She had a transition team over at the State Department very early on. Like all the bureaus, we prepared voluminous briefing books on all aspects of our relations, India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri

Lanka. And once the news was leaked that Holbrooke would be the Af-Pak czar, we began to think about the consequences for our bureau.

Richard Boucher, to his credit, told us all to cooperate completely with Holbrooke. He told us that he'd worked with him in the European Bureau when he was the Cyprus coordinator and Holbrooke was the assistant secretary -- a somewhat analogous relationship. He promised us we'd find a *modus vivendi* in working with him.

The problem was that Holbrooke wanted a totally fresh start, by which he meant he didn't want to deal with those who had worked on Afghanistan and Pakistan in the previous administration. He put the leadership at the South and Central Asia Bureau in that category. That included myself and that included Richard Boucher. He sat down with Boucher and made that clear. It was not, as later reported in the press, a contentious meeting. Richard Boucher is not a contentious person. But Holbrooke made it clear that he wanted to take the Pakistan and Afghanistan portfolios and have line responsibility over the officers working on those issues. He didn't want them to be under the management of the South and Central Asia Bureau. He wanted to establish his own bureau. Boucher used the Cyprus analogy and proposed a similar arrangement to when he was Special Coordinator for Cyprus." Holbrooke said something along the lines of, "That was then. This is now. That's not the model I have in mind."

In fact, he hived off the Pakistan and Afghanistan Offices and they reported to him. We became the Bureau of South and Central Asia minus Afghanistan and Pakistan. Boucher looked for a way to make this work in a cooperative way. He came up with the idea of making one of Holbrooke's deputies a deputy assistant secretary in the SCA Bureau. The idea is that he/she would come to our meetings and coordinate. It didn't work very well to be honest.

Holbrooke built quite an empire befitting the interagency role he saw for himself. He brought in people from CIA, from Agriculture, from Defense and elsewhere. He even at one point asked NSC to second someone to him, which NSC turned down. His goal was to set up his own interagency coordinating mechanism at the State Department for Afghanistan-Pakistan policy. The NSC saw this as its role and did not take kindly to some of his plans. He was very ambitious and very much a turf builder. He had many strong points and commendably wanted to get a more productive process in place, but he broke a lot of crockery and created a lot of problems in the process..

Q: What was the reaction of the foreign service officers working on Afghanistan and Pakistan?

CAMP: Those in place at the time were loyal to Richard Boucher and they didn't like what was happening. But ultimately they liked being in the center of action and Holbrooke was where things were in those days. That's where the resources were, that's where the attention was, that's where Hillary Clinton's attention was. So he did right by those people, but it was a difficult transition that still hasn't been righted. After Holbrooke's death, there has often been talk about bringing Afghanistan and Pakistan back into the SCA Bureau -- which has to happen for policy coherence. But inertia is a strong force, and re-integration hasn't happened yet.

Q: It must have created lots of problems -- like who writes the personality evaluations and so

forth. When you're running a career service certain things have to be formalized.

CAMP: Holbrooke was not big on formal mechanisms.

One of the minor consequences was a rationalization of some things we had done for years in the bureau. Bangladesh had always been part of the same office as Pakistan and Afghanistan. Pre-1971, Bangladesh had been part of Pakistan and for 40 years no one had bothered to hive Bangladesh off, even though it was separated by 1500 miles of Indian territory. Holbrooke wasn't the slightest bit interested in Bangladesh. So, by necessity we did what we should have done 40 years before, which was put Bangladesh into an office with India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. And it remains there today. There are some positive effects of shaking things up.

Q: Anything else interesting about the transition?

CAMP: Of course political appointees changed over. David Mulford was replaced in India by former congressman Tim Roemer. Boucher moved on -- to the OECD -- and another career foreign service officer Bob Blake came in to be assistant secretary of SCA. He was an excellent choice -- former DCM in India and then ambassador to Sri Lanka which was becoming a high priority in the new administration. Blake had his own people in mind to come in. He asked if I'd continue to serve as principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for a little while as a transition and I was happy to do.

MOVING TO THE NSC AGAIN -- BRIEFLY

And at that point, we get into another aspect of my career, which was the NSC. Bruce Riedel, my former boss back in the Clinton administration, was assigned by President Obama to do a full-blown review of Pakistan and Afghanistan strategy. Bruce Riedel had made very clear he didn't want to come back into government, but he was enticed to come back in for a time-limited review. Holbrooke participated in the review as did Michèle Flournoy, then Under Secretary of Defense. Riedel chaired. I had a role too because I was working on South Asia in the department, and so I had a few meetings with them. And at some point Bruce Riedel came to me and said, "I'd like to recommend you for the job as Senior Director for South Asia at the NSC."

I said, "Well, I'm flattered. I was planning to retire." But it sounded like a great opportunity. I went for an interview with Tom Donilon, who was then Deputy National Security Advisor, and I asked about the parameters of the job.

He told me that I would be responsible for all of South Asia, including Afghanistan and Pakistan, but not Central Asia which was to be part of the Russia directorate. National Security Advisor James Jones had decided to reverse Condi Rice's integration of South and Central Asia -- at least at the NSC. I later was told that Holbrooke had opposed my appointment, on the grounds that I was a holdover from the previous administration and its policies. But Holbrooke didn't have much clout at the NSC, and I was offered the job.

But I came in as Senior Director for South Asia and found myself in a gigantic turf battle that I had not anticipated or wanted. General Doug Lute had been war czar at the NSC for Afghanistan

and Iraq and he wanted to stay on. He had powerful opponents in the NSC who wanted him out. It took months and months of infighting, in which I was a pawn. It was one of a number of turf battles going on in the first year of the administration. For the first six months, the NSC could not even issue an organization chart, since so much was left uncertain. Lute wanted to be the Afghanistan-Pakistan counterpart to Holbrooke at the NSC. Ultimately NSA Jones decided that Lute would in fact be the Afghanistan-Pakistan Senior Director and I would have responsibility for India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Bhutan. A lot of things ended in my decision at that point, but I said, you know, "This is not exactly what I was hired for; thanks, but no thanks." And I went back to State and said, "I think I'd like to retire now." And that's the end of my story.

Q: So basically you stepped out of the NSC position after a few months?

CAMP: Yeah, I lasted from about March to July. I knew I would have ulcers if I stayed on in that current job. Let me just say one thing about the Obama administration's NSC, which is they're wonderful policy people, but I did not find them to be good managers.

Q: And that's key to the way to how the Foreign Service is trained. I mean you can be a good policy guy, a good reporter, but at some point you're going to be a manager. And this is the point they stress in the DCM course.

CAMP: Right. And this was a point that Powell and Armitage emphasized all through their four years. You've got to manage, you've got to manage your people, you've got to manage your resources. It was a wonderful lesson. There are people who just want to do policy but at some point you have to run an office.

USUN AREA ADVISOR

Q: Now, after the brief NSC tour, you went over and worked for the US Mission to the UN for another short clip. Would you explain that?

CAMP: Sure. Let me say that I've never had any complaints about the State Department's personnel system. The Department's always been very fair to me. When I came back from the NSC I said that I was ready to retire but would like to stay on through the end of the calendar year. There's a job at USUN during the three months in the fall when the General Assembly meets. It's called Senior Advisor for South and Central Asian Affairs. The Department usually hires a retiree for the job, but the job was available and the SCA Bureau -- which pays for the position even though it's located in New York -- was kind enough to take me on in that capacity for three months.

So I went up there for the fall and in fact have continued in the same job as a retiree every fall.

Here's the background. The US Mission to the UN concentrates very heavily on the Security Council aspect of its work, which involves very close daily relationships with 15 members of the Security Council, the five permanent members and the 10 temporary members. It does not leave a lot of time for cultivating the other 178 members of the United Nations, who play a very important role in the General Assembly. So during the period when the General Assembly

activity is at its greatest from September to December, USUN has traditionally brought in six area specialists -- one from each geographic bureau -- to serve as their liaison with the missions of the other countries. So I was the Senior Advisor for South and Central Asia, which meant that I was the daily contact of the 13 countries from South and Central Asia and their missions, their ambassadors, their DCM's, their Political Counselors up in New York. The point of my job was not to work on South Asia issues at all. The point of my job was to be familiar enough with the 13 missions that I could lobby them for their vote on issues of importance to us, which were often as not Middle East or environmental or the annual vote on the Cuban embargo (where the whole world votes against us). My job was to try and get their vote for all of these global issues.

Q: And how does one go about lobbying those 13 missions in New York?

CAMP: That's one reason why they hire retired Foreign Service Officers with long histories in those countries, because it helps that we have prior ties. I know a lot of Indian diplomats after all these years, and some of them turn up in New York. Same with Pakistan, same with Nepal. It's traditional diplomacy. You meet them -- in their offices, at receptions, or over lunch -- talk about common problems and explain the U.S. position as clearly as you can and encourage them to vote that way. And the job also involves making sure that our missions out in the field are also lobbying the foreign ministries on these issues. To be honest, when I was out at post earlier in my career and got a request to go into the foreign ministry to talk about an upcoming UN vote about, say, North Korea, I would roll my eyes because I had other fish to fry with the government than North Korea. But it's important and needs to be done. So sometimes I had to lobby our own missions. It helped that I knew most of the folks out in the field as well.

Q: But isn't this an interesting point about the personal relationships that inform diplomacy? You knew the Indian diplomats before, you knew the Pakistani diplomats before. Human relationships are a very important tool of diplomacy.

CAMP: You're right. It's certainly not the only thing. We are often new arrivals to an area and if you're a good Foreign Service Officer you can learn the issues, you can meet the people. We do it all the time. But it does help when you have that established relationship and when you know the issues and when you can talk to the Nepali Permanent Representative at the UN about the history of U.S.-Nepal relations and be conversant with things that are important to him.

KATHMANDU AS CHARGÉ D'AFFAIRES

Q: Now, your formal retirement comes on December 31, 2009. But given your talents and background, you have stayed close to Mother State ever since. In fact, shortly thereafter you're in Kathmandu.

CAMP: Yes. That was an unexpected opportunity that I was very happy to take advantage of. The Department had assigned our ambassador to Nepal to the important domestic position of Director General of the Foreign Service. Someone once said that Nancy Powell has never completed an assignment because she was always in demand for a more senior job somewhere else. And that seems to be true. She is a fantastic officer and in this case they really wanted her back in Washington. Our embassy in Nepal had a perfectly good DCM who could have served as

Chargé d'Affaires until the arrival of a new ambassador. But the DCM took that moment to retire unexpectedly from the Foreign Service to take a job in the commercial sector. So suddenly there were vacancies in Nepal in both the ambassador and DCM job at a time when Nepal continued to be in crisis. So we had to fill that gap and the Department sent me as Chargé for about three months until the arrival of Scott DeLisi as our new ambassador in April of 2010.

Again, an opportunity to run a mission for a short time without responsibility for the long term. It was a well run mission to start with, thanks primarily to Nancy Powell. But there was a lot happening with the Maoists and their role in government and our role in designating them as terrorists, even at a time when we were trying to cooperate with them. So it was a busy and productive three and a half months in Kathmandu.

Q: What would your reporting have looked like from that time?

CAMP: The civil war was over at this point and the big issue was how the Maoists -- now part of the government -- would adapt to the new situation. I had a wonderful Political Counselor -- Tim Trenkle. We would go out to the Maoist cantonments and talk to the commanders about their plans for integration into the Nepal Army. We were encouraging the Maoists to give up their private army, which they were loath to do. I would talk to the commander of the army who was an old school guy who had no intention of letting Maoists into his army because he'd been fighting them for years. So it was a tension filled time. Gradually, the Maoists and the army came to an understanding, partly through our active involvement -- but also because of encouragement from the Indians. India is enormously important in Kathmandu, as is China. And I had a very good relationship with the Indian Ambassador Rakesh Sood whom I had known years ago in Washington. He suffered a lot from the slings and arrows of Nepalis who saw India as the puppet master. I told him that his problem was analogous to those who, years earlier, had called our ambassador in Pakistan the American viceroy. In fact he got a bum rap.

The Indian goal was very similar to ours -- to move Nepal toward a peaceful, prosperous and democratic future. India has a much bigger stake in Nepal than do we. If Nepal descended into chaos India would have millions of refugees flowing across the borders. So I found it a very productive relationship.

I also tried to develop a relationship with the Chinese Ambassador, helped by my (rusty) Mandarin language abilities. I think that relationship is really important in a place like Kathmandu. I hope we've gotten well beyond the idea that we coordinate with the French and the Brits and we run the world. We don't! Particularly in a place like Nepal. The Indians and the Chinese are crucial. And we have to have good relationships.

Q: Now, you come back from that opportunity in early 2010 and again, as a WAE, When Actually Employed, you go to the UN General Assembly experience from September to December. And in fact, you do that again in 2011.

CAMP: It is a job that appeals to those of us who are retired and the bureau has asked me to come back each year. It becomes easier and more productive with each succeeding year because you know the job even better. I don't intend to do it forever, but it's been a very good three stints

up at our mission in New York.

Q: You've had a very interesting career with a lot of different assignments. Let me give you this hypothetical. You're at a university campus. How enthusiastically could you push a Foreign Service career on people?

CAMP: I've had a very good career. I've enjoyed it. I am a great proponent of the Foreign Service. It attracts a certain kind of personality and some people do not like it. It is sometimes hard when you're in your twenties and just starting out to learn that you don't always get your way and you don't even get to live where you want to live necessarily, nor do you have full freedom of expression, because you have to present the position of your government, and that doesn't always sit well. But if you can live with the idea that you can be happy to serve and represent both parties in government, then I think it's a wonderful career and I would endorse it unreservedly.

Q: Now, you started your foreign exposure with the Peace Corps. Do you think that that was really key to bringing this opportunity to your attention? What did the Peace Corps do for you?

CAMP: Peace Corps did a lot for me in terms of being a different kind of person and especially understanding others' perspectives. That's a very important lesson that diplomats need to learn and not everyone gets it. Political appointees especially sometimes don't. I always felt I had a leg up because I had understood life in a foreign society from the perspective of that foreign society. I'd lived in an Indian village, I understood Indian peasants. Sometimes I think I made too much of that because the world has changed since 1972 and so has Indian village life. But it was a very effective demonstration to the examiners who accepted me into the Foreign Service that I could live overseas and thrive in a foreign environment. So it was probably helpful in getting into the Foreign Service.

It was hard to transition into being in an embassy. My first DCM reminded me I was no longer a Peace Corps volunteer and I couldn't wear sandals to the Ambassador's residence, thank you very much.

Q: That's a wonderful way to end our conversation. I really appreciate your time and your sandals.

CAMP: In retirement, I'm back to sandals!

End of interview