

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

**MARY LEE GARRISON**

*Interviewed by: Charles Stewart Kennedy*  
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Interview Incomplete.

## INTERVIEW

[Note: This interview was not finished and was not edited by Ms. Garrison.]

*Q: Well, Mary Lee, when and where were you born?*

GARRISON: I was born at the U.S. Army hospital at Valley Forge, Pennsylvania in 1951.

*Q: Tell me something about your father's side of your family.*

GARRISON: Okay, mine was a mixed family. My father's side is old Southern Protestant, WASP as they come. His father had been in real estate in the 1920s, relatively well off, lived in Lexington, Kentucky, was in a position to send my father to private university. However, my father wasn't in the mood at that time to take good advantage of it and bounced through at least five different colleges, starting with the University of Kentucky. Ended up in the military during World War II as an enlisted man when they were looking for officers and realized he'd had the equivalent of ROTC training. He ended up being told he was going to be a Thompson Act officer. Served in France, my understanding is he was on Omaha Beach, which is where he ended up badly wounded, losing one lung and causing physical problems that eventually led to his death from pneumonia in the 1960s. But as a result of the injury he met my mother, who is from, she was a first-generation U.S. Polish Roman Catholic from the New York Metro area who got her nursing degree from Bellevue and then enlisted in the U.S. Army Nurse Corps before it was amalgamated into the army, when it was a separate unit. And she served in Britain and in France during World War II. She met my father when he was a patient of hers in a hospital in Britain. She said, "The story goes that one night she heard this God-awful sound from the far end of the ward and when she went down to check it out there was this mass under the covers snoring mightily, and she said, 'Lieutenant, are you all right?'" And he sort of peeked his head out, "Oh, yeah, I'm fine," groggily. But the relationship continued from there, with some tension since she was a captain and he was a lieutenant. But they were married after the war and I arrived about a year after they were married.

*Q: Well then, where'd you grow up?*

GARRISON: I grew up in North Plainfield, about 25 miles out of midtown Manhattan. My grandmother had immigrated there from New York City after she came over from Poland in the early part of the 1900s. She had been an institutional cook in Poland and saw no future there, so she packed up with a good friend and the two girls got on a ship and came to the States. My grandmother ended up working as a cook in New York City. Family legend has it that when she worked for the Bloomingdales they wanted to set her up in a business in New York, but she instead got married, moved out to New Jersey, scraped the money together to buy a combination rental apartments, family apartment and grocery store, and ran that until the 1950s. And that's where I grew up.

*Q: This is in New Jersey?*

GARRISON: In New Jersey.

*Q: What about your grandmother's husband?*

GARRISON: He died in the 1940s. He was also Polish. She was from the area around L'viv, he was from the area around Bialystok. I really don't know much of anything about him, other than that he supposedly was a bootlegger, well he was the delivery system for a bootlegger during Prohibition and lived kind of hard and fast. From the death certificate that I finally unearthed for him in the public records several years ago, it appears he was a cook by profession as well.

*Q: So many people come out of Poland, they say, Poland, it's either Polish-Jewish or Polish-Polish. Which was*

GARRISON: Polish-Polish. Roman Catholic Polish.

*Q: How Polish, as an environment, did you grow up in?*

GARRISON: I grew up in a Polish household. My father was pretty badly disabled from his wounds and also from his experiences during World War II and really wasn't a part of the family. Shortly after I was born they moved into one of the rental apartments in my grandmother's house and he struggled with what would be called PTSD now, post-traumatic stress disorder and never really conquered it. So, the household I grew up in was all women. It was my grandmother, my mother, myself, my younger sister. My maternal uncle lived downstairs in one of the apartments with his wife but because he was a bartender and worked nights we rarely saw him.

*Q: What was the language?*

GARRISON: It was a mix. My grandmother and mother spoke Polish with each other, my grandmother having had my mother attend Polish language schools in New York City when she was young, and she taught us to cook, curse and pray, basically and I still do. But she was determined that we would not speak with an accent. My mother worked very hard to rid herself of a Polish accent, and it was a time when immigrants wanted their children to Americanize, to blend, to meld. We still kept all the traditions. In fact, the priest for the local Polish parish in Plainfield, New Jersey, which was then still rather industrial, was a regular visitor to the house, for the Christmas blessing of the house. Actually, it was around the feast of the Three Kings. Every Easter there was a full spread that got the visit from the priest for the blessing. There were not close ties to family members in Eastern Europe but there was still somewhat regular communication. Other members of my grandmother's family, all of my grandparents, came from families of 12, so there were plenty of conduits.

*Q: Was it a large Polish community where you*

GARRISON: No, there were a lot of second and third generation Polish assimilated families but it wasn't the strong ethnic community that you would find in an urban area like Baltimore or New York. It really was the folks who made good and had moved out.

*Q: So it wasn't really a blue-collar area or not?*

GARRISON: Where I lived was a mix. I would call it mostly blue-collar but there were other parts of the town that were very definitely white collar, and Plainfield, while it was industrial, had a very white-collar segment. You were right on the commuter line into New York.

*Q: How about around you? What sort of a mix was it?*

GARRISON: There was a very definite Catholic, non-Catholic break. The area where I lived did not have a particularly large Jewish population. It was a lot of Italian ethnic, Some Irish and mixed Slavic, Poles, Czechs, as time moved on Hungarian DPs (Displaced Persons), as they were referred to, from 1956, and the typical Jersey mix, except for the absence of a large Jewish population in the area.

*Q: Well having the name Garrison sort of kept you off to one side, did it, in a way? Other people they could tell by what your name was, who you belonged to.*

GARRISON: Exactly. With as Anglo a name as that, it wasn't immediately obvious, until you took one look at my face and then you said, "Hmmm, probably Slavic."

*Q: What about in the household? What was it like growing up in that household?*

GARRISON: It was very unusual being in a single parent headed household in a Catholic school and a Catholic neighborhood in the 1950s. That set you apart more than anything else, particularly since my father developed severe alcohol problems as a result of the stress and my parents were divorced in 1957, I believe. We had close ties with my father's family but not having a father in the household and not being widowed, my mother was in a very unusual position. She was working as a nurse. She managed, she worked for General Motors in one of their subsidiaries for probably 30 years but she worked the night shift, which meant she was available during the day for the usual kid activities, Girl Scouts and delivering us to school, picking us up. Having my grandmother in the household also made that possible because my grandmother took over the mother role. She did all the cooking and the cleaning but it was the sort of arrangement where you didn't think about girls getting married and going off and being mommies. You thought about doing what you wanted to do. My mother was someone who believed very much in the value of books and she would, even if circumstances were a bit straitened, she would always find money for books. Not necessarily clothes or other things, but that was always there. We were a block from the library and encouraged from the time we could toddle to go up there and read.

*Q: What kind of books, let's say by elementary school, what kind of books grabbed you?*

GARRISON: Biographies are what got me started and from biographies moved into history, a passion that's stayed with me through my entire life and literature. You get into

the, you back into it as a child with things like the comic book versions of the classics, and then you start reading the classics. And the more you read elegantly written prose, the more addictive it becomes.

*Q: You get involved with the Nancy Drew books and all that?*

GARRISON: I did but I was not that taken by them. I guess I came to them a little too late. By the time I started looking at them I was kind of past them. But they did spark a continuing passion for mystery stories, particularly with female protagonists.

*Q: Yeah, I know for so many of the woman officers I talk to, Nancy Drew being sort of the source of an independent young woman really struck a spark with a lot of people who later moved on*

GARRISON: They were fun but I had that at home so it didn't have perhaps the same effect on me.

*Q: Did you have brothers, sisters?*

GARRISON: I had one younger sister.

*Q: You get in much around the dinner table, discussion about books or what was going on in the world?*

GARRISON: World politics, absolutely. Books, yes, if it was something we'd all read but because of the ties to Eastern Europe through my grandmother and her family and because my mother had served in the army there was always a discussion, particularly through the early 1960s, of what was happening in the world. And if Father Guyevski came to dinner, that broadened the discussion even more. If my aunt and uncle, who were actually my mother's cousins, came in from Westchester, politics was always on the table and always part of the discussion.

*Q: Where did your family fit in the political spectrum?*

GARRISON: My grandmother was an unreconstructed, love FDR (Franklin Delano Roosevelt) Democrat. My mother leaned Republican. She was more of the Nixonian sort, which made it really interesting by the time we got to My Lai and John Calley.

*Q: This was in Vietnam, massacres there.*

GARRISON: Exactly, my father's family were very much Southern Democrats and the interesting spark for a lot of the discussions with that side of the family was, of course, race. I have a very clear memory of going by train when my father was still with us to visit his family in Kentucky and toddling, I couldn't have been more than seven and probably less than that, into the colored waiting room and being told, "No, no, you don't go in there. That's not for you." Segregation had a very strong impact on me.

*Q: How about the Garrison family connection? How strong was that and how did you keep that up?*

GARRISON: My mother made a real effort to ensure that we kept in touch with my grandfather, my grandmother had died in 1958, I think it was, and also with the members of the extended family. My father's brother had two boys who are five and ten years younger than I am, and we continue in touch to this day. His first wife, now deceased, was religious about keeping in touch with holiday cards and birthday cards and gifts and visits. When I was in college I went to spend Thanksgiving with my aunt and uncle and my grandfather came up at one point for a Shriners convention in New York City at the same time as the World Fair, so he stayed with us for a while and then we took him out to the New York World's Fair. There was regular contact which again was very unusual but because of the peculiar circumstances of the split. Neither of them really wanted to split. It was simply my father's inability to deal with the demons that led to them divorcing for, I would call it almost fiscal reasons. She needed to be able to protect her income and us from whatever might befall him.

*Q: What about, you mentioned the priest often, what was your impression of the role of the Catholic Church in your upbringing but also where was, as you saw it, through the priest and the church, where did it stand? There are Catholic churches and Catholic churches.*

GARRISON: All over the place.

*Q: Was this the old style Catholic Church of the law being handed down, thou shalt not go to this movie or read that book or was it different?*

GARRISON: It was interesting because I had three different perspectives on the Catholic Church by the time I got out of high school. I was in Catholic schools from kindergarten on, through Jesuit university and the parish that we attended in North Plainfield was very much the old school, old fashioned didactic church which my mother, interestingly enough, found very comfortable. She was one of these people who followed the rules. Perfect for the army. She believed that the Legion of Decency had the last say on movies, a point of view I did not share from the time I was about 12 on. For instance, *Lawrence of Arabia* was on the banned list because of the reference to homosexuality in the one scene. I will give my mother this, when I really balked about not seeing that, insisted that there was enough value there, I was a young teenager then but she let me go. She realized at a certain point that you can train and you can direct but they're going to make their own decisions so rather than have me sneak she said, "Okay. You can go. Your sister's too young. She's not going." Her church was very much old school and very didactic. In fact, the priest refused to say a mass for my father when he died or even acknowledge his passing because he was a Protestant and this would have been 1963 or thereabouts.

*Q: It's incredible, really, when you think about it but that's the era.*

GARRISON: The Polish priest who was really more my grandmother's confessor than our parish had a different outlook, because he was dealing with a population whose interests were really focused on what was happening in Eastern Europe. They either had managed to get out or were still in contact with family over there, and he was a bit more flexible, except on the subject of communism. The anti-communist propaganda was always in the house and always strong. You could not imagine saying anything good about what was happening at that point. And then the parish that we moved to when I was in high school was a more typically suburban Catholic non-ethnic parish. Still a certain amount of didacticism but also, by this point you're in the late 1960s, an awareness that the Church had to change. It was the post-Vatican II Church. You got folk masses and a beginning of social awareness but the social awareness for me came from the murders of Goodman, Schwerner and Chaney, and Viola Liuzzo in Mississippi. The Freedom Riders stuck in my mind. I became active with the National Council of Christians and Jews when I was about 15.

*Q: Well, let's go through elementary school first. Run by nuns?*

GARRISON: Yes, Religious Sisters of Mercy.

*Q: How nunnish was*

GARRISON: Very. It was sort of the standard Catholic school in the 1950s. You had a lay fifth grade teacher and a lay third grade teacher and all the rest of the teachers were nuns. And like most little girls in second grade I think I decided I wanted to be a nun, and by third grade I had gone past that stage. There were some marvelous teachers and there were some truly atrocious. My sister, who was two years behind me, has a different take on a couple of the nuns that I felt were pretty decent but then she and I come from very different points. I was never a tomboy, never would be accused of that but I'm a passionate baseball fan. I heard my first World Series when I was nine weeks old, sitting on my father's lap and it stuck.

*Q: Who was your team?*

GARRISON: Dodgers. I still bleed Dodger blue.

*Q: Should go back to Ebbets Field.*

GARRISON: It would be lovely but I've made my peace with the Mets. As long as it's a National League team. I've never accepted the idea of pitchers not hitting. It was a very strong religious upbringing. I admit to being a very lapsed Catholic but I have to give the nuns this. They instilled the concept that there are things that are right and things that are not, and that there should be consequences for actions, both good and bad. That you live in a society, that you're not an isolated individual and you have to find a way to interact with that society that causes the least harm and does the most good, and if a church does nothing more than that I think it's accomplished its job.



*Q: We're still talking about your childhood. You didn't rebel against the Church?*

GARRISON: I broke with the Church much later. I did the whole choir and folk group mass thing through high school but by the end of high school I was beginning to think this was not a belief system with which I was completely comfortable and by the early 1970s the stance that the Church had taken on birth control I found unacceptable. Their unwillingness to look beyond lip service to using the Church's resources for poverty relief and finally the issue that tore it for me was abortion.

*Q: Only because it's such an issue today, but were you aware of any problems with priests and choir boys?*

GARRISON: Abuse? No. It wasn't something that we noted at the time. There were regular visits in high school from the parish priest, because I went to a parish high school, not one of the massive diocesan high schools. So, there was regular interaction. But nothing, looking back at it, that would have suggested inappropriate relationships. There is one priest I remember from grammar school where they came in, intermittently as best I can remember, who might have been the sort who would have been involved in a relationship but there's nothing I can point to and nothing specific.

*Q: This is a very spotty thing. It certainly wasn't the norm.*

GARRISON: That's right and it certainly wouldn't have been anything anybody talked about because the shame factor in that kind of conformist Catholic area would have been so strong that even had it happened nobody would have said anything. I can remember the uproar that ensued when the parents of my fourth-grade classmates decided that one nun was just too tough. I had no problems with her. She was academically rigorous but she was hard on kids who didn't study and who she felt weren't working up to their potential, and it affected enough of the class that the parents got together and went to the principal, and said, "Something's got to give and it ain't going to be us." That was the kind of heretical rebellion that you just didn't often see at the time.

*Q: Well then, how would you describe yourself? Say you weren't a tomboy but were you*

GARRISON: Bookish.

*Q: A bookish goody kid or a loner or what?*

GARRISON: I was more a loner. Extremely bookish. Bit overweight. Not really at all interested in sports at that point. Had a small group of friends but not really in any clique. The town divided into East End and West End and I lived in the middle. So, I was in the older section that didn't fit. The town had gone through quite a bit of development after World War II and you got modern split-level ranches built on either end and you had a small core of the older part of town that was more transient residential and a lot more business. My grandmother's store closed in 1955 but the building was still zoned for

three family housing and a commercial operation. At the end of the block was the main commercial strip that went through the western part of the town, and you were two blocks from the main drag through the center of town. So, it wasn't a suburban looking area, it was a little more urban in feel. Not urban in the sense of Baltimore docks but urban in the sense of parts of northwest Washington.

*Q: Well then did you, while you were in elementary school, were there any subjects you particularly cared for, were good in, other ones you weren't?*

GARRISON: Less interest in science although not negligible but really strong interest in math, in history and in geography and secondarily in literature.

*Q: Were you an observer of news, the paper, TV, as a kid?*

GARRISON: Absolutely, I drank it in, as much as I could get. I still have very vivid memories of watching the news during the Congo crisis. There was always a newspaper in our family.

*Q: This was around 1960.*

GARRISON: 1960, exactly. And there was always not just the local paper, which we got during the week but on Sundays there was the *New York Times* and the *New York Daily News* for the funnies and the sports page. That was always a part of it. My mother would allow watching TV at dinnertime if you were watching the news. I've been watching *Meet the Press* on Sunday mornings for as long as I can remember. That was always part of the discussion and part of the way the world went. Watching the Nixon-Kennedy debates was something that you did. Of course, you do that. How can you participate in an election if you don't know what the candidates are saying and what it means?

*Q: You were ten years old or nine years old, but how did the sort of the Kennedy phenomenon hit you and your family?*

GARRISON: My grandmother thought Kennedy was great. My mother was taken by the idea of having a Catholic president but appalled by most of what he was proposing. She was not a Kennedy supporter. She was a Nixon supporter. The school was head over heels that a Catholic could be president and that was a very big deal in the Catholic community then.

*Q: Was Jacqueline Kennedy a sort of a model for the girls or not?*

GARRISON: For many of them, yes. I was never impressed. I do remember watching her television show on the renovations of the White House and thinking how stunning the restoration work was, how nice to have that history there.

*Q: Well then, where'd you go to high school?*

GARRISON: I went to a small, strictly college prep, parish high school in Westfield, New Jersey.

*Q: What's the difference between a parish and a diocesan high school?*

GARRISON: Where the money comes from. The diocesan high schools tend to be one for a large area, funded by contributions from the entire diocese and reasonably competitive to get into. The school where I went was started in the 1930s as a parish endeavor to provide secondary education for the Westfield neighborhood Catholics, and then it started accepting students from outside on a competitive exam basis by the early 1950s. It's now closed, unfortunately, because it's very hard to run a high school with the decline in the number of religious staff available to work as teachers, and with very small class sizes. My graduating class was 69 people.

*Q: Who ran it?*

GARRISON: That was the Sisters of Charity who did the administrative work. It was technically under the administration of a Monsignor who ran Holy Trinity parish in Westfield, New Jersey but the Sisters of Charity provided the administrative staff and the teaching staff for both the grammar school and the high school. We had a mix of lay and religious teachers. Probably at the time I would say we had a 50/50 mix to slightly less than half religious but that changed rapidly.

*Q: All girls?*

GARRISON: No, which is one of the main reasons I went! There was an all-girls Catholic high school run by the Sisters of Mercy, who had taught at my grammar school, in the neighborhood. I did not want to go to an all-girl school. I was in an all women environment at home and I wanted the challenge of competing intellectually with all comers. So, the main reason I chose Holy Trinity was that it was a coed high school.

*Q: You find this a different, as something to get adjusted to or not?*

GARRISON: Not really, because my grammar school, of course, had not been single sex. It was coed and that's why transitioning to single sex at that point did not make sense for me. There are a lot of advantages to single sex high schools and single sex colleges. My husband went to a Catholic and then a public single sex high school and for him it was the best thing in the world but for me I needed the goose of taking on the best that was out there.

*Q: Again, it was a smaller high school. You get involved in extracurricular activities?*

GARRISON: Lots, yes. Classic tennis ball, as well rounded as I could get, except for sports. I was involved with student government, a bit, active with the newspaper but more particularly with the literary publication, still involved in Girl Scouts through my first

year, sang with both the church choir and with the glee club. That was really my love. Got involved in debate and in public speaking. As I mentioned, outside of the school environment I was also working with National Council of Christians and Jews (NCCJ).

*Q: This was during the mid-Sixties?*

GARRISON: Mid to late Sixties, 1965 to 1969.

*Q: That's of course the height of both civil rights and Vietnam.*

GARRISON: Height of civil rights movement, moving into the start of the antiwar movement.

*Q: First place, were there blacks in your area or not?*

GARRISON: In Plainfield, which was really a matter of blocks away from where I lived in North Plainfield, there was a large black community and indeed when Dr. Martin Luther King was shot there was rioting in Plainfield. It was literally three blocks from where I was living. So, yes, there was a black community. In Westfield, where I was then going to school, there was no black community. The black community consisted of two blocks of a street called Cacciola Place. If there were two dozen families I would be surprised but that was the entirety of the black population there. But we were within a half an hour's drive of Newark and one of the things that I became involved in through the NCCJ was working with the elderly in Hispanic sections of Newark, Portuguese sections of Newark, and some of the old ethnic neighborhoods. And the issues for some of these families were very much the same issues for the black population in Newark. Supermarkets that sold tainted food or out of date products affected both groups equally. It affected my mother rather uncomfortably when I joined a picket line, picketing A&P because of their practices. I guess I was 17 at the time and she was afraid she was going to lose her job if anybody saw the license tags on her car being involved anywhere near this protest.

*Q: Back in Poland, the Poles were not renowned for being particularly sympathetic to any other ethnic group, particularly against the Jews. How did that translate to the Polish community, the small Polish community you were in?*

GARRISON: Anti-Semitism in that Polish community could be very, very strong. There was always a clear distinction drawn in my family between Poles and Jews. Someone who claimed to be from Poland but was Jewish wasn't considered really Polish, whether it was Jerzy Kosinski, the writer or whether it was Roman Polansky or whether it was somebody down the block. There was at the same time, however, tremendous sympathy for the World War II survivors. There was a family that moved into the neighborhood where I grew up, probably early 1960s, who were both concentration camp survivors, and there was a tenderness towards them from the World War II generation that was striking, at the same time as they could make a comment about not dealing with a particular Jewish merchant or some other equally stereotypical anti-Semitic remark. There was a

schizophrenia about it. But the same thing held for black people with my father's family. There were "our blacks" who were good and then there were all those rabble-rousers and trouble makers, outsiders.

I got to give my mother this. She stood up to my father's father when at the World's Fair he refused to get on a tram if it was driven by someone of color, and he used a word that I will not use. And my mother just looked at him and said, "Well, James, you can just stand there because the girls and I are getting on." Later she handled the fact I was dating a black guy for a while with certain amount of aplomb, much to the dismay of her brother and sister in law. But she was capable, particularly in her later years, of some really nasty sort of anti-Semitic remarks but there was almost a disconnect between the remarks and her behavior, which was much more even-handed.

*Q: As you say, it's in general and in particular. In particular one can be very open minded and in general not.*

GARRISON: But it's also, I think, reflective of the schizophrenia of the time.

*Q: Did you have after schoolwork or summer work?*

GARRISON: I did, both. I waited tables in an Italian pizza parlor *cum* restaurant for a while in high school. Before that I'd worked in a laundry and dry-cleaning operation. I was making change, handling self-serve dry cleaning operation that was right across the street from our house. I'd worked in the local public library for a number of years. But the least enjoyable of that was working in the restaurant, and I swore I would do anything, and I meant anything, before I would wait tables again.

*Q: What was the problem?*

GARRISON: I simply did not like the work. The physical burden of waiting tables is something you don't really think about until you're on your feet literally for an eight hour stretch, and the constant interaction with people who were not all civilized in their behavior gets wearing after a while. But afterward I worked behind the candy counter in the local theater, which was dealing with the same sorts of idiots, and even worse on kiddie matinees, but it didn't bother me as much. Just a different sort of interchange.

*Q: Good training to be a consular officer.*

GARRISON: Oh, it was. It was definitely good for that.

*Q: Well then, what were you looking at? You were going to be graduating when, around*

GARRISON: I graduated in June of 1969.

*Q: How about Vietnam? How was that playing with you?*

GARRISON: It was evolving. By the time I graduated, I certainly had respect for the two guys from our class who decided that they were going to enlist rather than take their chances but I thought the war was very definitely wrong, and when I got on campus at Georgetown it was, of course, just as the antiwar movement was hitting Washington in a big way, with the moratoria and the various protest marches. We had debates in high school about Vietnam, what the U.S. position should be, whether we should have been in there and this goes back probably to my, certainly my sophomore year in 1966 and probably even to 1965. I remember one set of debates in particular and I'm trying to remember whose class it was. I'm reasonably sure this would have been spring of 1965 that this debate took place, which is actually fairly early on to be talking about it but I guess being that close to New York, too, the ferment from Columbia wasn't confined just to the campus. It really did spread more broadly. The Berkeley Free Speech Movement had its echoes, but not the way influences from the city (New York City) did. I guess in some ways it was just a much more political time.

*Q: Well I think everybody was much more engaged. Did, while you were in high school, did sort of the opening up of the sexual revolution hit it at all?*

GARRISON: Not really while I was in high school. Well, there was a certain amount of it but, of course, the edict had come out in *Humanae vitae* that use of birth control by Roman Catholics was absolutely forbidden which put a limit on how much of a sexual revolution you were going to see among good Catholic girls.

*Q: Were boys and girls going out to movies and things like that at that time?*

GARRISON: Yeah, it was the classic dating environment. You went to the movies, the Catholic Youth Organization (CYO) dances, the school dances.

The school dances were a very big thing. You'd follow some of the battle of the bands. We were close to the Jersey shore. So, you'd go to the beach. You'd go to a concert in Atlantic City at the Steel Pier. I saw Janis Joplin and the James Cotton Blues Band on the Steel Pier as a high school student.

*Q: Isn't there a big orchestra place on the Jersey*

GARRISON: There is now but that didn't exist then. No, that's post-Springsteen. Garden State Arts Arena I think it's called now. No, it was more locations like the Steel Pier or you'd go into the city. It was nothing to go into the city to go to a club or to go to hear somebody play. Go to Town Hall in the city for some of the concerts or go down to the Village.

*Q: Did you see plays and things like that?*

GARRISON: Absolutely.

*Q: They were within financial reach?*

GARRISON: They were easily within financial reach. At that point you could get a same day ticket for a lesser play, not with the main cast often, but say something like Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* for \$3.50. My mother had loved the theater. She started taking us to the Paper Mill Playhouse in Milburn and then into the city when we were old enough to stay awake. I saw *Sound of Music* in the city when I couldn't have been more than 10 and it sparked a love in both my sister and me for the theater that we've never lost but, yeah, the stack of playbills that I still have is about five and a half, six inches high from plays that we saw when we were in high school.

The world felt like it was coming to an end in some ways. You had all of the ferment on campuses. You had the beginnings of the hey-day, if you will, of the antiwar movement and the change from the civil rights struggle as movement to civil rights struggle as institutional battleground, moving from sit-ins to class action suits. So, it was a very interesting time to be hitting a college campus.

*Q: Where did you go?*

GARRISON: I went to Georgetown.

*Q: What was Georgetown like in those days? Was it coed?*

GARRISON: It was coed at least nominally. Obviously, the nursing school had been primarily women all along. The College of Arts and Sciences took 50 women as an entering class for the first time in 1969. The Foreign Service School had been nominally coed. It had been taking roughly 25 women a year since the 1950s but I think there may have been 30 in our entering class. These are out of classes of roughly 250. And the business school had a small number of women. The language and linguistics program was probably slightly more female than male but I honestly don't remember the exact ratio. But in terms of the campus, yeah, it was still very much a men's college.

*Q: Where'd you come from, now?*

GARRISON: I came from Jersey, from a small Catholic college prep school. Out of our graduating class of 69, I think probably 65 of us went on to college. It was a coed high school, so coming into a predominantly male but coed environment wasn't a change for me.

*Q: How Catholic was Georgetown at the time?*

GARRISON: It had a very strong Catholic presence, ranging from the externally conservative to Richard McSorley, who was in residence on campus. Teach-ins on Vietnam were common. So were Latin masses, still. But the curriculum required two semesters of theology and two semesters of philosophy for all entering Foreign Service and liberal arts students, so you got a dose of Catholicism at least in that context. The theology department was not exclusively Catholic, by any stretch. There were a number

of priests among the professors in various disciplines: history, linguistics, can't think of anybody in the economics department offhand. My Latin class was the province of a priest who later went on to head one of the Jesuit colleges in Connecticut. So, there were priests in abundance. If you needed a confessor you could find one. And if you just needed a friend they were available for that as well. I became quite close to Father Daniel Powers, who had been involved in Georgetown's radio and outreach programs since the 1950s. While he was far more conservative than I was, he became quite an influence on me. His political involvement was something that was striking in a Jesuit, and underlined, I guess, the sense of the need to be politically involved. Whether you were on the right or on the left you couldn't be passive.

*Q: On the political side, where were you when you came in? How would you put yourself vis-à-vis the zeitgeist of Georgetown?*

GARRISON: I would have been considered a liberal on the Georgetown campus. I probably would have fallen into the moderate to left spectrum objectively. The place where I found myself comfortable was in the then extant extreme left wing of the Republican Party, the Clifford Case, John Lindsay before he flipped, Republican Party, which had a strong presence in New Jersey at the time, from Jacob Javits on through. Probably somewhat more liberal than that would paint me objectively but rather more uncomfortable with the degree of make the government make it better spending that I saw from the left-center of the Democratic Party. But our focus was really on the antiwar movement and in that sense, I was actively involved.

*Q: When you say actively involved, what does that mean?*

GARRISON: Some organizational work with the campus protests, participation in the moratoria, in the marches, in the massive protest in October-November of 1969 that resulted in the candles on the Treasury Department fence. I was not a member of Students for Democratic Society (SDS) by any stretch. Well, as the radicals go, they were conservative radicals. They weren't the Weathermen. But it was definitely left wing and the SDS group on campus was very small and very fringy. It was a very politically attuned campus. It always had been. This was just a couple of years after President Clinton graduated from Georgetown. The reason a lot of students from the Northeast came to Georgetown was because it was in Washington and because you could see the political process up close and dirty.

*Q: How did you find being a woman on the Georgetown campus was at that time?*

GARRISON: It was kind of fun because you were enough of a novelty that it made it easier to get to know people and you sort of stuck out. It perhaps gave you more ability to talk to some of the professors because they remembered seeing you in a large lecture class. The women's dorm was an interesting situation because so many of the students were nursing students. It was really focused on their needs and activities. It could make it a little bit difficult if you were studying when your roommate had just finished her organic chem finals, and she and her friends wanted to let off steam. That was a little bit



challenging but being in the city made it very, very attractive. You were not confined to campus, even though at the time we had parietal rules. We had to be in by a certain hour during the week, and we had to be in by 2:00 a.m. on the weekends. And there were prohibitions on public displays of affection. If you happened to be seeing someone, one quick good night kiss was about the extent of it. So, there was still that very conservative streak.

*Q: Did you go for the shrubs? I mean that's what I used to do.*

GARRISON: Well that was before you got anywhere near the front door. But we had passed from the point where women were prohibited to wear slacks to take exams, even in the freezing cold. So, ferment had hit Georgetown's campus but it was still, it was still a protective environment for women.

*Q: Well did you find, sort of looking back on it, one of the theories advanced that all women's schools such as Smith and others is that women are not hit by males sort of taking over and showing off. I'm talking about class and all that. Did you find this or were you enough of a minority that you kind of could stick your hand up and, how did that work?*

GARRISON: We had a number of fairly young professors who didn't have the blinders, perhaps, that some of the old guard did with regard to seeing female hands up. But the classes, except for a couple of large lectures, were small enough that it functioned more as a seminar and yeah, you could usually get a word in edgewise unless you were the quiet and shy type, which I'm not. And I relished the competition, the intellectual interchange, with folks who were very, very bright and very articulate. That's why I came down.

*Q: What about the Washington scene, close and dirty? Any particular experiences that you had?*

GARRISON: Standing outside of the House and Senate chambers to listen to the debates on Vietnam was something that I think most of us who were at all politically active did at one point or another. Later in the process, I was still living in Washington, I remember standing with a friend in the freezing cold at President Johnson's bier when he was lying in state in the rotunda. That was obviously after graduation but it was that sort of proximity. It was also the interplay of local issues. The question of whether or not to build a bridge across the Potomac at Three Sisters Islands was a very touchy issue on campus and one that focused a lot of attention and a lot of student protests because of the potential environmental damage.

*Q: What about minorities at Georgetown at the time?*

GARRISON: There was a minority presence. Certainly not as large as it is now. There wasn't a concerted push, as far as I could tell, to recruit minorities. There were some

programs for DC residents that gave some help financially in affording a very expensive school. But in terms of major programs, not terribly visible.

*Q: Did you get involved in any work outside the university?*

GARRISON: Actually, I worked for the university in their payroll department from my sophomore through my senior year. I worked off campus a little bit, actually very briefly, between my freshman and sophomore year but then went back up to Jersey. So, no, my freshman year I was strictly studying and after that I worked for the university.

*Q: What were your courses? Which ones particularly interested you and what were you preparing yourself for?*

GARRISON: I had figured out that the only way I was going to manage to combine a love for math with a love for politics was something like economics. I believe that when I entered I was listed as an international economics major. I considered switching to straight economics and ended up not doing it but I took a heavy course concentration in economics, in statistics and in econometrics. Also courses in trade theory, in particular as it affected raw materials prices and goods like coffee, cocoa, commodities across the board. But for fun I spent a lot of time in the English and language departments. Some of my most enjoyable classes were with a particular professor of English literature who did comparisons of Dante and T.S. Eliot. He had a tremendous store of knowledge about the works of both. He did not particularly discuss anti-Semitism in Eliot which I gather is now the rage.

*Q: It's part of the spirit of the time, in a way, the dark side of something.*

GARRISON: You were more likely to discuss Ezra Pound's pro-Nazi sympathies than you were to talk about Eliot's anti-Semitism but that was one of the most intellectually challenging courses I had there and one of the most enjoyable. It was particularly using Ciardi's translation of the Dante, which is extensively footnoted. One of the best histories of medieval thought that you could have encountered.

*Q: Did you take the course that*

GARRISON: Quigley? No. Because I was international economics I took a class from Bruce Duncombe, who later joined the Foreign Service. It was very weird. When I was in the African economic policy shop to be briefing my former professor before he went out to Ivory Coast.

*Q: In your economics field, there was a time when economics in the academic world became very theoretical and almost useless for the practitioner. How was it when you were doing this?*

GARRISON: It was edging in that direction. That's one of the reasons that I never seriously considered getting a PhD in economics because it was edging towards the

purely theoretical and purely mathematical, and I saw the nonsense that that produced with the government, political science courses using input-output matrices to predict behavior. And the one thing you keep coming down to is the best test of a predictive model is how accurately it predicts, not what you put in it. And if it's your grandmother's corns aching on a particular day that accurately predicts the weather, then it works but scientifically it's crap.

*Q: There seems to be a problem that's crept into the academic world and it's one of the themes to pursue and I try to ask people who have gone through the academic experience how they saw it at the time.*

GARRISON: You need to understand the math to be able to understand the structure of the economy and the interactions. But there's a limit to how far the math can take you. Serving in Zaire, now the Congo, was the best example of that I could have had. One of the first things I encountered when I joined the State Department though was during a brief time on the Vietnam desk over Christmas of 1973 was looking at a beautifully wrought model that had come out of the Department of Defense (DOD) by one of their folks, I guess doing a PhD thesis, modeling the Vietnamese economy that included no factor to predict inflation. What was the point?

*Q: Did the Foreign Service cross your radar?*

GARRISON: Absolutely. That's why I went to Georgetown. By that point I'd pretty much decided that what I wanted to do was join the Foreign Service. It fit well with my family history of international involvement and the strong Southern tilt towards public service. So, the likelihood of my joining the military was nil. Both my parents had been army officers. Both were retired before I was born, my mother by a mere two days, but that life was not appealing to me. The structure and the rigidity just were not what a child of the 1960s was looking for, and the Foreign Service seemed to be the only logical choice for me to pursue the interest that I had. International business would have been a second choice, but clearly a second choice.

*Q: What were you getting, were you rubbing noses with real Foreign Service people?*

GARRISON: To a certain degree, yes. The School of Foreign Service at Georgetown did have a program of bringing in speakers regularly from the diplomatic community, both U.S. diplomats and the resident Washington diplomatic community, and you always had access to political speakers on the Georgetown campus of all sorts and all interests. So, yes, there was an interaction there that I wouldn't call mentoring or close but you had the opportunity to hear people say what they did and talk about what life was like.

*Q: How about the feminist movement? How was this going?*

GARRISON: Ah, yes. This was a very large part of my life, from marshalling at rallies in Bryant Square in New York in August, 1970 through I'd have to call it now harassing the

new dean of the Foreign Service School at Georgetown about when they were going to admit more women.

*Q: Who was that?*

GARRISON: That was Peter Crowe. At the reception for him, his introduction to the Foreign Service community, three of the women from our entering class walked up to him and said, "Hi. Now what are you going to do about getting more women in here? The ratio is atrocious."

*Q: What was the reply?*

GARRISON: "Um, um well, it's something we'll be looking at." I'm pleased to note, however, that now the Foreign Service School of Georgetown is usually if not 50 per cent female within a couple of percentage points either above or below.

*Q: Was anybody giving you warning bells about the Foreign Service and being married? Being a woman*

GARRISON: Being a woman in the Foreign Service, being married. No, not really. I don't remember anything from the period. Actually, not until I joined the Foreign Service. I suppose I knew about the issue of worldwide availability but my assumption was that anyone I married would have to be willing to travel with me.

*Q: How much, with yourself and others in the School of Foreign Service, I imagine the School of Nursing had quite different goals. How much was marriage a goal or not?*

GARRISON: You know, it wasn't something we talked about. We were talking politics, we weren't talking marriage. And for the women in the nursing school, it was much more on the agenda, on the horizon. Not that people were looking for an Mrs. Degree but, yeah, it wouldn't be at all unusual to be getting married right after graduation. My freshman roommate, one of my closest friends now, still, from school, she and I went to high school together, we eased each other's transition into Georgetown. She married a guy she met freshman year. They were happily married until his death a year and a half ago. That was a common trajectory for women out of the nursing school. I was trying to think back to the last reunion I went to. Probably half of the women from the Foreign Service School were married but I haven't kept in particularly close touch. It wasn't high on the list, and you understood that if you were going into a serious career, marriage might not be an option. We would have liked to have had it all but

*Q: You graduated when?*

GARRISON: '73.

*Q: By that time we had pretty well disengaged from Vietnam.*

GARRISON: Well, yeah, nominally. The troops were out but our mind was still there.

*Q: Was the draft still on?*

GARRISON: No, the draft, my age cohort was the last one to sweat out the draft and the lottery period.

*Q: I'm told that once the lottery got going, that took a lot of steam out of many people's feelings, because they were no longer that engaged.*

GARRISON: Well, if you got a low lottery number you still were but it changed the dynamics somewhat. The pressure continued through the time I was in Saigon. The question of continuing U.S. aid to the Vietnamese government was every bit as hotly debated as the actual U.S. on the ground presence. Even though we were nominally disengaged you still had a huge operation out at (MACV?), on the road between the airport, between Tan Son Nhut airport and Saigon proper.

*Q: Was it May or June, the Kent State business, protested National Guard shooting people at Kent State, what happened*

GARRISON: That would have been May of 1970, if I remember correctly, and the reaction on campuses was one of horror and towering rage that it was allowed to happen in the United States, that a nominally peaceful protest was broken up by gunfire from your own people. There were, if you will, sympathy protests afterward, much smaller, obviously. There was a nationwide protest organized after Kent State that, if I'm thinking of the progression properly, resulted in a disruption of the campus, not because of protests on campus but because of protests in Washington that spilled over into campus life, if I'm thinking of the right protest. It's sometimes hard to keep them straight for the period. We ended up not being able to take some finals because tear gas had wafted into the first floor of the library, where some of the language classes were held, as a result of protests that were in Georgetown, down by Key Bridge, elsewhere in Washington that sort of spread up to the campus. The campus in some ways was a haven for protesters and demonstrators because the DC police were kept on the outside of the wall, literally.

*Q: Well did you find Georgetown active at all, the way I understand Berkeley, where you had a lot of, well protesters, essentially beatniks, people who were not, I mean young people who really weren't affiliated with the school but drifting on the campus. Was this*

GARRISON: To a much lesser degree and Georgetown was much more conservative obviously than either Columbia or Berkeley. It had a strongly politicized group but it also had a very strong party tradition. It was still at the stage when *Playboy* in their rankings would say, ranking of drinking schools, would just asterisk Georgetown and say, "We can't rate these guys. They're pros." It was part of campus life and, of course, in DC at that point, the drinking age was 18 for beer and wine. So, yeah, you had a very liquid weekend on campus.

*Q: So, 1973, whither?*

GARRISON: I joined the Foreign Service in October of 1973.

*Q: You'd taken the exam when?*

GARRISON: I took the exam in December of 1972. I took the oral on Valentine's Day of 1973.

*Q: How did that go?*

GARRISON: It actually went surprisingly well. I was, of course, petrified, nervous. This was the old three-on-one oral, not the assessment center's, obviously and because they had your background the questions were more targeted. The one I remember most clearly, they're two, actually, I remember very clearly. We'd just devalued again as part of Nixon's attempt to strengthen the dollar and the question was how did we get ourselves into a situation where we've had to devalue twice in a period of less than a year or a year, I don't remember the time frame, which was a setup. If you were seriously studying economics that question should have been, a hit it out of the park question. And the other one was start at Tierra del Fuego and work your way up to Alaska and tell me what form of government each of the countries has and talk a little bit about it. And at the time you could say military dictatorship for just about all of Latin America and be right on target. You just had to remember the handful that weren't. Fortunately, by the time I got up to Brazil one of the examiners said, "Oh come on, she knows this, let's just move on."

*Q: One of the people who later was ambassador in Central America said, "These are guys with big mustaches and big hats and lots of military uniforms." Did they ask questions about what would happen if you got married or that sort of thing?*

GARRISON: I don't recall it, no.

*Q: That was towards the end of the whole discrimination against women.*

GARRISON: Well, the more obvious discrimination. I do recall a discussion of worldwide availability, after I was told that I had passed. But as to specific marriage plans, no. In fact, it really didn't come up until I was in the A-100 course (the course for new Foreign Service Officers) and the gentleman I was seeing at the time proposed, and I turned him down but I said something to the course organizer about nearly having to cope with assigning a married female officer instead of three single ones.

*Q: Okay, you came in in October of 1973. Talk a little about the basic officer course, the A-100 course. The composition, as you saw it and the spirit of it.*

GARRISON: It was a remarkably collegial group. It was not terribly, it was not cut throat competitive. There were a number of younger officers, including one of my classmates

from Georgetown, who came out of the economics program in the College of Arts and Sciences. I was the youngest, save one, in the class. One guy from Princeton was about six weeks younger than I was. But we ranged in age from just turned 22 through mid-forties and we had a mix of I guess it was three Mustang officers and probably five minority officers. There were four women in the class, of whom I'm the only one who's now retired. The other three are still active, one is Civil Service. It was an interesting mix. It certainly put the lie to the white, East Coast establishment picture of the Foreign Service. The competitiveness showed up in odd places. We were up in the Catoctins, I think it was, for an off-site, and in the football games, the guys really started to preen and to show the "I can do better than you can" effects. But there was a certain amount of it in some of the exercises, the nuclear disarmament, cooperate or get bombed out of business, exercise. But you always got the feeling that people were just playing a role. Somebody was trying to be the instigator or the devil's advocate. There are a few things that stand out like that from the A-100 course. A lot of it seemed more focused on managing the bureaucracy than anything else.

*Q: Well I think, there's an awful lot of time spent trying to let you understand what the environment is, particularly in Washington. Who does what and all that.*

GARRISON: Tour of the Ops Center (State Department Operations Center), things like that. An awful lot of time spent on things like travel regulations and how to handle travel vouchers.

*Q: There really isn't an awful lot of time devoted to what you'd call intellectual discussions on whither American foreign policy or anything.*

GARRISON: None that I remember at all, to be quite frank.

*Q: When you came in there, everybody has an idea about what they want to do or go to. You have any thoughts on what you wanted to*

GARRISON: My academic interest had been Latin America and I really wanted to do economic work in Latin America. How I ended up with my first assignment did show the subtle biases still in play in the Department, as much age as gender. At that point not every junior officer was going immediately to a consular assignment. There were a number of "substantive" jobs out there. Of the four women, two of us were economic officers, one was an admin officer, one was consular officer. Ann got an assignment that was split, one year in Quito doing consular work and one year in Guayaquil doing a consular/econ job at the consulate. Among the guys, I don't remember how many of the econ officers got consular jobs. I think one at most got a strictly consular job. They were, for the most part, either econ/consular or a couple of straight econ jobs but in places like then Dahomey, now Benin. My list of places I would really like to serve was pretty broad, and my bid list included Kabul, Afghanistan; Tabriz, Iran; and a couple Latin American posts and none of them went through. And since we were getting close to graduation day for the class, I'd bid one job in Saigon. It wasn't a consular job. The A-100 coordinator and the assignments officer said, "Look, we got to put you in something.

We don't expect that you'll ever go to this job because it's way out of cycle. We're going to put you in French training, not Vietnamese language training but we're going to assign you to a consular job in Saigon opening up in June or July of 1974" and this was the tail end of November of 1973. And I said, "Okay, fine, no biggie." What did I know? Went into French language training. April 1<sup>st</sup> got a phone call that said, "Can you move up your departure to May?" And so I went to Saigon.

*Q: So you were in Saigon from when 'til when?*

GARRISON: I was there from beginning of June of 1974 until the 29<sup>th</sup> of April, 1975.

*Q: The date sort of sticks in your mind.*

GARRISON: Yeah, doesn't it? Well, you don't expect to leave your first post via chopper to the fleet.

*Q: When you got there in June of '74, what was the situation, from your perspective and what you were getting from your colleagues.*

GARRISON: Well they had just changed the tour from an 18-month to a two-year tour and I was told, "Expect to serve out your two-year tour. Everything's hunky-dory here. The resistance is slowing down. The Vietnamese army is showing itself capable of at least maintaining the situation and the flow in the consular section has slowed to the point where we can probably loan you to the economic section, if they're interested, for a couple of hours each week." Little did we know.

*Q: That's when you arrived. Where were you billeted?*

GARRISON: My first apartment was on the road out towards the airport. I can't remember the exact address but I was moved into permanent quarters right across from the Grall Hospital, heading down towards the river, so right in the center of town.

*Q: Where'd you work?*

GARRISON: In the consular annex.

*Q: Who was your consul general?*

GARRISON: Walter Burke.

*Q: Was his wife there?*

GARRISON: Gabriella? Yes. I could not have asked for a better first boss than Walter Burke.

*Q: Walter Burke was quite a character.*



GARRISON: Yes, he was a real gentleman. And his daughter was slightly older than I was, which made for an interesting dynamic because he had a very protective, fatherly instinct towards me. At the same time, I was an officer and I had a job to do.

*Q: I speak as a former consul general in Saigon so I'm asking, what was the consulate general like? How was it set up at that time?*

GARRISON: The consul general and his secretary were at the far back end of the suite, and then you had, we were down to two visa officers at that point. So you had two visa officers on the entry end, and then in a corridor, working their way down, you had the citizenship and services officer and the shipping and seamen officer and his Vietnamese staffer across the hall from him. And the isolation of the shipping and seamen guy was indicative of his mindset as well as the unique nature of his job. We had a bullpen of Vietnamese staff working both the immigrant and the nonimmigrant visa (NIV) side who divided us from the waiting room, and then the two officers had the very back.

*Q: Let's talk about the work first. What type of applicant were we getting, beginning, when you first got there?*

GARRISON: You got the full mix. You got legitimate students, including one of my former college suitemates. She was going for her MD at Georgetown after graduating, and she came through the office after coming home to visit her family. Much to the delight of the Vietnamese women on the staff she and I had a big hug reunion right in the bullpen, because we hadn't seen each other in, at that point, probably two years. You had some of the resident Indian community. Wasn't huge but some of them starting to get twitchy and looking to get out. We got a lot of fiancés, nominal fiancés, there was a whole lot of fraud, of course, in that area. We had a number of children left behind for a variety of reasons, and we had a lot of what I call family reunification.

Folks who'd met someone while they were in Vietnam either working for a contractor or with the military who went home, realized that life wasn't as much fun without this person and came back. The number of guys who'd gone to work for contractors simply to find the woman they'd left behind was stunning. The sad part was how many of them had one and two and sometimes three divorces for physical and mental cruelty that came across your desk when they made an application to take the current bride home. That could be very, very sad.

*Q: Did you get into the protection and welfare side of things?*

GARRISON: Only when I drew duty. That was handled separately. The same guy who did seamen also did protection and welfare. Basically Mr. B, his Vietnamese assistant, did that.

*Q: How'd you find the Foreign Service National staff?*

GARRISON: Ranging from superb to not quite so, but nice, hardworking, willing to work and at some personal cost. I can't say enough about the quality and the dedication of the women, in particular, who worked the visa side. I exchanged some rather sharp words with someone from the Ops Center who had the temerity during the last days to call and assert that these folks who were trying very hard to look after the welfare of their own families, were out there taking bribes and all that was blocking his in-laws from getting on a plane to come to the States. There certainly may have been but it would have been hard to do in a waiting room as crowded as that one was with no time really to breathe and with the obvious vigilance that there was. You never had a moment of privacy where you could transact something like that.

*Q: How well were you plugged in to the other, you might say the junior officer corps at the embassy?*

GARRISON: We bonded very quickly. We'd either been in language together or had run across each other as members of incoming classes. The junior officer in the admin section was from my same A-100 course. The junior Budget & Fiscal (B&F) guy was in the class afterwards. One of the two junior officers (JO) in the political section was out of the same group of classes. There was a JO in the commercial section, not the economic section, who was a little bit more of an outsider but, again, from roughly the same group. We knew each other from beforehand so we did bond together. Our interests differed. Most of those guys had families.

*Q: Families were there at the time?*

GARRISON: Families were there at the time, yes, spouses and children both, until quite late along.

*Q: What was the feeling about the ambassador when you got there, Graham Martin?*

GARRISON: When we got there? He was generally respected.

*Q: Were you at all plugged in to getting reports from the field, the officers out at the various consulate generals?*

GARRISON: I became plugged into that because of an unusual circumstance. About six weeks after I got out Vietnam I got a letter from someone I'd been seeing somewhat casually in the States before I left, another Foreign Service Officer.

*Q: Who was the gentleman?*

GARRISON: Bob Mosher.

*Q: I interviewed Bob.*

GARRISON: Have you? Good.

*Q: He lives right up the road.*

GARRISON: Yes, he does. Bob proposed and we tried to work the assignments process so that we could at least be a little closer than the Delta and Saigon. This is one of those places where anti-female bias did show up because there was an econ position available in Bien Hoa and I could have moved up to take that job, and Bob could have come in behind me in the consular section but after interviewing with Charlie Lahiguera the decision was made: no; that for the same reason the commercial officer had turned down my help when offered at the time we thought that I would have a couple of hours a week to do something other than straight consular work. His assertion was that the Chinese business community wouldn't deal with a woman. And despite the fact that Terry Tull had been successful in the field; Theresa Tull had been quite successful in the field, the assumption was that a young female simply would not be able to do the job outside of the capital. So, Bob went down to the Delta and I stayed in Saigon doing consular work.

*Q: So, what were you getting, not just from Bob but from others, because often there's a junior officer network. No place is this more evident than in Vietnam.*

GARRISON: Right. Well, with Dave Adamson up in Nha Trang and Bob and Dave Sciacchitano and a guy from my A-100 course, Dave Whitten, down in the Delta, you got a different view of things. When I'd go down to visit Bob, we'd all pile in somebody's jeep and go wandering out in the hinterland. Dave Whitten was a fluent Vietnamese speaker, the rest of us weren't but I was such a novelty that it would draw people in certain instances. Really funny, we were going with one of the Agency for International Development (AID) officers out to lunch at a little restaurant out in the Delta and I was sitting in the front seat sort of leaning out the window, and we were on one of these little rutted back roads and you got reaction from the local women as we were going by, the sort of startled: "My God, an American woman!" That plus Jay Dehmlow was also one of the junior officers there, who's well over six feet tall and had red hair at the time, his visibility just made us magnets for the curious.

*Q: What were you hearing about the Delta the time you were there?*

GARRISON: That people wanted the whole thing to go away, just leave us alone and let us grow our rice. Bob Mosher came from Missouri and he likened it to as, if you'll pardon the phrase, shit kickin' farmers just about anywhere who just want to be left alone. There was that feeling of "Can't you guys sort this out and just leave us in peace?" There were a number of bridges in the Delta that had never been blown up. They were the backbone of the rice trade route and that gave you an idea of what the priorities were. If you went to certain others of the Delta, like My Tho, there was a lot more political ferment around the Buddhist temples there than there was in the farming communities further south and further out. You could travel safely down to Phu Quoc. It was almost as if you had two economies going on, one, center-north that was focused on the war and one in the south that was focused on everyday life.

*Q: First place, did you have any problem going around Saigon?*

GARRISON: Other than the normal concerns of safety in a big city, no, no. Working in the consular section I realized I had to get some Vietnamese language capability, so I started taking classes at lunchtime and just working with the Vietnamese staff who would correct your intonation and help you with sentence format. So, I did develop a little bit of the at least market Vietnamese and the “When’d you meet him? How’d you get to know him? Where does he live in the States?” sort of Vietnamese to be able to do basic interviewing. So that I could tell a pedicab driver where I wanted to go. I could go into the market, and I had friends outside of the embassy community in the sense they were unofficial Americans with Sisters Caritas with Catholic Relief Services who was doing a lot of work with the orphan community. I was the “kids officer”, anything under 21, so you had regular contact with the adoption agencies, had met friends through some of the AID officers whose Vietnamese wives I became friendly with and through them with other Vietnamese women who had ties to the Americans but were not part of the official community. So, you got out a little bit more and it made traveling around the city a little bit easier.

*Q: Were you having a problem that I experienced regarding adoptions? They had an old French law that carried over so essentially if you’re trying to adopt a child and the two parents were Caucasian and the child was Vietnamese the president had to waiver the damned thing. So this, of course, stopped an awful lot of stuff.*

GARRISON: That had been overcome by the time we got there. Adoptions were a land office business. Friends of the Children of Vietnam had been set up by Rosemary Taylor. That was set up for the purpose of moving children out of Vietnam into safer areas where they would have a better life growing up, i.e. adopting them into the West. Hope Children’s Services which had been active in Korea with inter-country adoptions was very much a presence in Vietnam, and Catholic Relief was doing a lot of work with inter-country adoptions. It’s my own particular private theory on this but I saw an awful of adoptions that suggested that the husband knew he left someone behind and decided that this was a way to make things right. You also saw a lot of well-meaning people who simply had no clue what they were getting themselves into and looked on consular officers trying to make sure that they understood what was happening as someone simply trying to block them from doing good.

One particular case where the local French physician had examined the child and said that the boy had degenerative muscular problems that had resulted in lameness that would eventually cripple him. The adoptive parents had been told that the child had a stiff knee and I declined to issue the visa until I was sure that the parents were aware of the severity of the medical problem. The doctor could have been wrong but we didn’t have any way, we had nothing but that. And the folks from Friends of Children of Vietnam put the kid on a plane anyway. Violation of U.S. law, nearly got Pan Am fined for it, sent the kid anyway.

*Q: When you arrived there there was no feeling of panic I take it?*

GARRISON: No, none whatsoever. You were expecting a nice, safe, simple, straightforward tour in something that was a war zone. When I was in temporary housing on the road out towards Bien Hoa you could go out on the terrace of the apartment building at night and watch the firefight in Ben Cat. It was that close but it was also eons and eons away. It was a very schizophrenic sort of place to be at that time. There's this world where people are talking about buying Asian antiquities and shipping things back in their household effects at the same time you have a war going on literally a stone's throw from you. You couldn't drive to the Delta at night. You could drive during the day but certainly not at night.

*Q: Could you get down to, drive down to Vung Tau and all?*

GARRISON: Yes, in fact, we did go up to Vung Tau at one point and thoroughly enjoyed it but, again, you were not safe on the roads at night.

*Q: How about congressional, you get a lot of congressional interest in adoptions?*

GARRISON: Yes, a tremendous amount. Less in the adoptions, although that was there, more in the family reunifications and those were some heartbreakers, where you would get someone in the States who thought they had a loving wife waiting to come to them and who had sent money and tickets, and she never did quite manage to get herself on that plane. And she'd, of course, say the embassy was holding up the visa. We were convenient that way. And it was very hard to say, "Look, she doesn't want to come."

One instance, one of the few times I got really angry with one of our Vietnamese staff members and indeed we had to do a little investigating. There was a, it was one of these cases, and I drafted a letter to go to the family letting him know in the nicest terms what was going on and the letter never reappeared, slipped down behind something in someone's desk and wasn't until several months later when we got another letter from this guy saying, "What's going on?" I said, "Wait a minute. Where's the letter I drafted?" Realizing that I hadn't signed it, knowing that I drafted it, and she found it. We never found any indication that she had purposely hidden it but that's the sort of thing that contributed to the unfortunate negative impression that people sometimes had of the embassy holding up the process. At the time we were getting a lot of bad press, particularly in *Stars and Stripes*, the military newspaper, the Pacific version, was circulated all through the area.

One particularly egregious case that did get congressional interest upset me enough that finally I put pen to paper to do a letter to the editor of *Stars and Stripes* which I never did send but this is how it went: "Dear Sir: After your recent articles concerning the departure of relatives of U.S. citizens from Vietnam, especially your article of April 3<sup>rd</sup> about the wife of a Missourian, I feel compelled to write this letter. While I doubt that you will print it as it doesn't fit with an apparent policy of presenting the Saigon embassy and especially the consular section in the worst possible light, in the interest of accuracy and as a matter of personal and professional pride it must be written. Your article states

that Mr. F has been trying for two years to get his wife and son to the States and implies that the delay has been caused by U.S. red tape. Mr. F's son was issued a U.S. passport in August 1973, shortly after his birth. The petition to grant Mrs. F immigrant status was approved by the embassy at approximately the same time and she and her husband were provided with a letter of introduction to the appropriate Vietnamese ministry to assist them in obtaining a passport and exit visa for her and her son. After Mr. F's departure, with the logical assumption that his wife and child would follow shortly, Mrs. F refused to do anything to pursue her passport application with the Government of Vietnam. For almost two years she remained inactive, despite repeated pleas from her husband and the consular section in response to letters from Mr. F and his congressman. Still no action from Mrs. F. The petition her husband filed for her in '73 was still valid and would remain valid unless their marriage was terminated or he withdrew the petition. As far as the U.S. government was concerned, Mrs. F would be issued a visa as soon as she got her passport and gladly. We are in business to issue visas, not refuse them and in this particular case there was never any question of the visa being refused. Mrs. F was issued a passport by the Government of Vietnam on February 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1974 with an exit visa valid until May 21<sup>st</sup>, 1974. It was not until March 14<sup>th</sup> that she returned to the embassy to apply for her visa, which was issued the same day. During a brief and friendly interview she stated she wasn't planning to depart Vietnam for at least two weeks. She was asked to please tell her husband. This she stated she would do and the interested congressmen were advised the visa had been issued. On March 29<sup>th</sup> the consular section received a cable from Congressman Hungate and Senator Eagleton requesting that we please expedite the case and mentioning a March 30<sup>th</sup> deadline. We received a call from a St. Louis news station on the same subject. We wired back that we issued the visa over two weeks before but that we would try to contact Mrs. F and find out the cause of her delay. To this date I am completely perplexed as to the exact nature of the documents that allegedly were to expire on March 30<sup>th</sup>. They certainly did not pertain to her immigrant visa nor were they for her Vietnamese passport, which had been issued a month before. An employee of the consular section physically called at Mrs. F's last Saigon address. He was informed that she had departed on Saturday, March 29<sup>th</sup> for the U.S. Apparently she had never informed her husband of her plans. We wish she had. It would have saved a number of people time, expense and heartache. There are a number of Vietnamese wives left here by departing GI's who have no desire to join their absent husbands and vice versa. No matter how obvious this is to the consular officer who must repeatedly answer letters from worried husbands, fiancés and congressmen, we can't come right out and say it. It would never be believed anyway. This is what's most heartbreaking. There have been times when I spent more time writing to the GI fiancé of a Vietnamese girl having difficulty getting a passport because she'd been picked up for prostitution that I did to my own fiancé. Consular officers are only human. We can't force someone to go to their spouse or their betrothed. All we can do is beg, plead and tell the fiancé what she tells us. If she lies to us, all we can do is pass on the information as given, which we will continue to do. More than that we cannot do."

On the advice of counsel, in this case one of the more senior officers at post, these further comments were redacted from the letter but we never sent it. It happened at a time, obviously from the days when things started to fall apart and it became a moot point.

*Q: I know, I can recall one case of the same kind where we got a rather nasty letter from Senator Mansfield's office saying, "Why are you keeping Mrs. So and so from joining her husband?" Well apparently, she had gone about a year or so before to Montana the middle of winter and said, "I have to go home for Tet" and stayed. Anyway, it was a common problem. The embassy is used, the consular section is used, as the designated scapegoat in these matters.*

GARRISON: Absolutely. I'm still waiting for the estate of Warren Magnuson to pay us for a visa for a spouse that he insisted we issue despite the fact that neither the husband in the States nor the wife had any funds and he swore up and down he would reimburse us for it. Never happened.

Public charge provisions were also a very ticklish subject for both spouses and for adoptive children. When you got to the point where you'd exhausted your ability to petition for an adopted child and were using the non-preference visa route, which was, as you'll remember, time consuming. The waiting lists were quite long. It was really hard to say that someone who had three natural children, two adopted Vietnamese children, only one working parent and an income at the time of under \$15,000 had the wherewithal to adopt, as a non-preference immigrant, yet another child. Six kids, even in Kansas in the 1970s, was a hard slog on \$15,000 but nobody wanted to hear that.

*Q: Did you get any feel for something I ran into later as consul general in Saigon and that was the fake marriage of a GI to young, in my case young Korean, women who went to the United States and basically ended up working in so-called "massage parlors," that kind of thing.*

GARRISON: There wasn't so much an organized flow of that. What we suspected was a number of the wives would end up in, they started out as bargirls and they would end up as the equivalent in the United States once the marriage soured. As I mentioned, there were multiple previous divorces for physical and mental cruelty and in some cases that was simply the excuse that had been given for incompatibility, given the state of U.S. divorce law at the time, where many states did require fault but as often as not you could see it coming. She was not all that interested in anything other than a meal ticket. He was not all that interested in anything other than someone to massage his ego and body parts. And the likelihood of this being a long-lasting marriage was small.

There were other cases that were really kind of touching and heartwarming. It was rare that someone had an actual pick-up for prostitution, and one of the guys from Sealand at the time, one of the senior managers, was not surprised when told by the visiting INS inspector that there was a problem, that because she had the prostitution not only pick-up but a conviction, it was going to be a waiver process and it was going to be difficult to do because a crime of moral turpitude, as the law stated at the time. And he said, "Look, I'm not surprised. I know where I met her. She was a bargirl when I met her. We've been together now" at that point it was probably 10 years "I love her. I'll do what I need to do." And that marriage, yeah, had a shot.

We were in the Saigon Zoo, when such things were possible, on a Sunday afternoon. I was walking with my then husband and to our surprise somebody called out to us. It was one of the guys who'd been in the consular section. He wanted to show off his family, his wife and her mother and all of their kids. He'd been wounded when he was there as a military officer, or enlisted man, had gotten left behind by his unit. She'd nursed him. He came back as a contractor, went and found her, married her and that one I gave a shot. Those were the cases, he was so proud of his family and so pleased to be able to take care of them. Those made you feel good.

Some of the others you knew they were going to end up hooking. The quirk that we would see was where Dad had met the woman. He was already married, so obviously couldn't petition for her as a fiancé or a wife but he had an 18, 20-year-old son whom he, for whatever reason, managed to convince to petition for the supposed fiancé. We also had a couple of cases where the last child in the series was not his by his wife, it was his by her eldest daughter. Sometimes the eldest daughter was his, sometimes it wasn't. You saw sad things as well where guys had been in Vietnam in the late 1950s as precursors to the Kennedy advisors and the military wouldn't acknowledge that they were there on orders so they couldn't prove that they had been in Vietnam at a time when they could have fathered their eldest child, and the rest of the kids had U.S. passports, that one had to get an immigrant visa.

The other quirks. Families who'd had religious marriages. We had one couple come through at one point who'd been married for over 20 years but they had a religious ceremony, a Catholic ceremony, back in the days of Madame Nhu, and never had a civil ceremony so in the eyes of the Vietnamese government they weren't legally married, and they had a real soul search over whether to have a civil ceremony. I was in fact married in Vietnam in a civil ceremony.

*Q: Yeah, kind of wonder. There was a young woman who'd been a secretary in Belgrade and married a Filipino guy and they got married in a Catholic church, big wedding, I was, I gave the bride away. But anyway, when did things start falling apart and what were you all up to?*

GARRISON: I would date the deterioration probably from around Christmas, when things began to feel uncomfortable and, one of the best indicators in the world, the Chinese-Vietnamese business community started getting immigrant visas for its kids. The ones who were old enough to be in university in the United States got student visas. The ones who were a little younger got visas to stay with their uncles and aunts in the United States and go to secondary school. And the applications for investor visas started going up. By *Tet* you were beginning to see an out and out panic. When Phouc Long fell, everything went to hell in a handbasket, and there was a real disconnect between what we were seeing in the consular section and what the front office in the embassy was saying about the long term outcome of Vietnam. There was a real unwillingness to believe that it was too late to worry about panic setting in. Panic had already set in.



*Q: You had this state which, quite well known, the ambassador digging his heels in and trying keep panic from setting in and trying to hold things together and yet things were really falling apart. Did this affect consular operations?*

GARRISON: Tremendously, because the Vietnamese government was taking routinely six weeks and more to issue passports for people intending to immigrate. And we were also at the time handling not just folks immigrating to the United States but the guys who were working for the international construction agencies and the oil operations were taking their Vietnamese spouses with them to Indonesia, to Saudi Arabia, to a variety of other locations, and the only way they could get out was to file for a U.S. immigrant visa, get a letter of introduction to the Vietnamese government that allowed them to get a visa for the United States and incidentally a visa for Indonesia or wherever. But the request for a travel document came from us so we were, we had a large volume of folks not intending to travel to the United States who were also in the consular section. The delay on passport issuance from the Vietnamese government was the biggest stumbling block to moving people out of harm's way, particularly children. The other thing that was coming up was as the situation was deteriorating the draft age kept dropping and 12 and 13 and 14-year-old boys were considered draft able. So, if you had a male child that age who got left behind for whatever reason your likelihood of being able to get them out legally was nil, unless you were a military officer who was shipping your son out of harm's way on a so-called student visa. One of the few times I had a real disagreement with Walter Burke was over an instance where a military officer was doing just that. One of our Vietnamese national staff heard him say that to one of his entourage out front. She came back and told me. I refused to issue the visa. Went away for the weekend to visit my husband in the Delta and when I came back I found that the Consul General (CG) had issued the visa.

*Q: First place, did we make any effort, I know when I was there we were actually paying and staffing some of the documentation in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for third country nationals called TCNs. Did we make any effort to speed up the passport process by saying, "Hell, we'll do it for you" or anything like that?*

GARRISON: Not precisely but at a certain point and this would have been February, March, probably beginning of March of 1975, 1975 was the right date in the letter, we convinced the Vietnamese government to, instead of issuing a full passport and this was starting with the orphans, to issue a one-page *laissez-passer* that we designed and printed for them. All they had to do was affix the picture and stamp it. Initially, though, they were insisting on the full range of documentation for the *laissez-passer* that they had insisted on for a passport. As the areas in the north began to fall from under government control, obtaining documents from that area were impossible. The other visa officer, Peter Orr, who was himself a Korean-American war orphan adoptee, was the one who was the moving force in getting the negotiations done with the Ministry of Interior to get them to accept issuance of the travel document, and he was spending almost his entire time at the ministry at that point in negotiation and trying to move the process forward.

But, frankly, we were breaking a number of rice bowls by introducing this document and trying to move things along. It meant that the opportunities for graft were removed and, in a system, where your civil servants are not adequately paid or erratically paid, it's not surprising to find them instituting their own user fees and the going rate was, it seems to me, about 300 piastres, and I don't remember what that translated into in U.S. dollars at the time, in order to get a passport moving. But the thing that was crucial and many people didn't understand, many Americans, was whether you paid it or not, it still was going to take the same amount of time. But you could often see the tension as she was arguing that you pay the fee and we'll get it faster and I'll get out of here and he was saying, "Why am I paying a fee plus paying the bribe?" That was the bottleneck, though, getting Vietnamese travel documents. We didn't go to a system of using a consular basically certification of relationship until near the end.

At one point, despite having the military flights coming in to take people out, we were not moving people through the consular section, and Robert and I were sufficiently concerned about the absence of any kind of progress despite the deterioration in the political situation and despite the large numbers lined up outside the consular section even in violation of curfew, at six o'clock in the morning that we talked with Walter Burke and he said, "If you feel this strongly about it, take it to the ambassador." We went to, we had a session with Jake Jacobson and said, "Look, there is, we know that the rules have been relaxed. We know that there's no movement here, that we're supposed to be drawing down non-essential personnel. Well, we're as non-essential as you get." Robert at this point, along with some of the other junior officers, had been moved up to Saigon to help in the processing of potential evacuees. We said, "Put us on a plane. There's no point to our being here if you're not actually going to move people." I don't how much of it was just to make us be quiet and go away and how much of it was serious but I think it did get Jake to focus on the fact that what the upper levels were seeing and what the grunts were seeing was two different worlds. I don't think that there was really an understanding of just how panicked the Vietnamese population was.

*Q: Didn't they see the mobs in front of the embassy?*

GARRISON: Their vista was away from it. The line went out the front door and then turned to the right, facing the street and around in front of the French ambassador's residence. And he, indeed, saw it and asked that we please do something about it. But if you looked out the windows of the executive suite you really had to crane your head to see all of those folks.

*Q: It was the French consul general's residence.*

GARRISON: No, it was the ambassador. It was the ambassador.

*Q: What happened? Were you beginning to get staffed up and*

GARRISON: No. We staffed down, if anything. For much of the time Peter was not in the consular section, he was at one of the ministries. Pat Wazer was our citizenship

officer. She was up to her ears in people trying to document children that they hadn't documented in the past. And we were beginning to get a flood of welfare and whereabouts cables that went on to Steve Hobart's desk and his, I think I called him Mr. B. earlier. That wasn't correct. I believe it was Mr. Minh, took over and went house to house to see if he could find some of these people. But I was alone for long stretches, trying to do what I could and then there was this gentleman, I wish to God I could remember his name, who had served in the consular section at one point, was back visiting, he was assigned in India and he stayed on for a while to help handle the load. Peter would come back for short stretches but I have very little memory of him being in the consular section at that point.

*Q: We were evacuating people. Must have been a surplus of officers.*

GARRISON: Well, but the, we weren't admitting we were evacuating people yet. There was this bizarre disconnect that said, "Well, things are not going well and we're pulling back but we expect that the Vietnamese army will be able to hold them outside of Saigon. We don't see Saigon falling this year. We expect a pause for the rainy season." Terry McNamara in the Delta was talking about a redoubt in the Delta up until the very last day. They were nuts. They just weren't seeing the change in the Vietnamese willingness to continue with this construct of a government in the south. The government didn't function as far as most of the population was concerned.

*Q: What about the consular staff, the Vietnamese?*

GARRISON: As I say, I have tremendous respect for them. They kept working until the very end. Only one of them stayed behind. She was quite young. Her husband had been in the Vietnamese military. They had just had a baby which he had not seen. And his was one of the units that was up in the area near Nha Trang that was hit from the front by the NVA and from behind by their own Popular Forces support allies. She had heard from some of his buddies that he was still alive and trying to make his way back to Saigon and she said, "How can I leave?" I think it was the day before the American staff evacuated, it may have been two days before, she went home for lunch and didn't come back that day but it was that close to the end that she disappeared. The consular section staff was pulled out probably that afternoon. They were given the option, those that wanted to evacuate. And some of the staff from United States Agency for International Development (USAID) was brought in to continue to help us out, just to provide Vietnamese language capability.

We weren't using visas at that point. For the most part what we were doing was certifying a couple of pieces of paper. One that said you had an American sponsor and he would pay back the U.S. government for the cost of flying you out. We probably started doing this early to mid-April. The other was a certification that so-and-so proved he was an American citizen and the following are his family members listed, then sealed and signed by the consular officer. I had the rubber stamp seal tied to my wrist, because that thing was worth its weight in gold in the outside world.

*Q: All right, what happened? There must have been huge mobs.*

GARRISON: There were. The Marines who were on embassy duty were providing crowd control for us and they did a fabulous job. There was, Marinka Bennett, God love her, who was helping as best she could, providing instruction packets and doing the sort of things that eased the process by giving the Americans who were there with their families basic information, so they knew what they needed, so that this other gentleman and I could look at family books, look at documents and establish relationships and then put together this piece of paper. And it literally was a piece of blank paper that we printed off with an embassy letterhead and then used the seal on.

*Q: How were they getting out?*

GARRISON: The Starlifters were going out of Tan Son Nhut airport, the C-141's. The C-5 crash with Baby Lift had pretty much put paid to using the C-5's but the 141's were being used. And I'll get to it in a minute but there was an entirely different operation going on at the airport. We were running buses from the area around the motor pool and the recreation association out to the airport once people got their documents together. We were handing people their approved petitions, rather than leaving them in the file. We'd put it in a manila envelope with all of the documentation we had on file for the immigrant visa, stamp it, seal it, hand it to them and say, "Get on the bus, take this out there and somebody will get you on a plane."

*Q: Working, as far as you were concerned, were complete, on the assumption that when you left that was it, there was going to be no records or anything.*

GARRISON: Yeah, we assumed that everything was going to be shredded. We talked about how to handle shred and burn operations and quite frankly I doubt any of it was ever shredded or burned. The Marines were running the shredder at the embassy, in the embassy building, full tilt at the end but that was just dealing with the, what was in the political section and the front office. The only way you could have done a burn on our side was to throw an incendiary in there and that would have had to have been something strong enough to melt the metal.

*Q: What sort of hours and how were you doing?*

GARRISON: Oh, God, we were flat out! Curfew was six to six but curfew didn't matter. I used to play tennis in the mornings before I would go to work or at lunch time, because we closed for that two-hour break in the middle of the day and I found that whaling the heck out of a tennis ball was better than snapping at visa applicants. Probably by February I'd gone from playing at noon to playing in the morning because we were working straight through. Still somewhat normal hours but working straight through. So, I could play tennis at six, go home, get cleaned up and go into the office. There were recreation association courts halfway between the house and the embassy, and I walked in to work because it was a short walk. But by that point we weren't playing tennis anytime. We'd go in in the morning as soon as curfew broke or shortly thereafter and go

home at nine. We go home in an embassy vehicle, escorted. We were living on milkshakes from the little commissary, the little snack shop that was over by the security office on the embassy compound and Scotch out of Walter Burke's supply that he kept in the back. This is what makes it so hard to talk about this period because the days just run into each other. You were going so hard and so fast for so long.

*Q: Was there any point where the rest of the embassy started to help or were you pretty much on your own?*

GARRISON: No, the junior officers were pulled off or brought up from the various consulates and sent out to the airport. The Immigration Act basically got thrown in a cocked hat. I was supposed to try to follow the revised rules that we got from Washington in the consular section but out at the airport what they were doing was taking a look at the folks who showed up and making an assessment whether they had half a prayer of making a life in the States, and if they did they put them on a plane. They were pretty loose about how they interpreted relationships. These were guys like Bob Mosher, Dave Sciacchitano, Joe McBride. Folks who were on their first tour, who had recent consular training, who obviously were of no use out in the field doing political and economic analysis because there was no political and economic analysis to do, and they became the operation out at Tan Son Nhut. Pat Wazer would go out there from time to time to deal with citizenship issues but primarily she was up to her ears in the building in the city of Saigon as opposed to out at the airport. I never went out to the airport. I was strictly in the city of Saigon so I can't really talk to how it was physically structured.

*Q: In a way, were they looking at the papers you had issued or did they have to go through you or were these people who just arrived*

GARRISON: No, there were both but for the most part if we put a packet together that got you on the bus and that got you out to the airport but you still had to get through the Vietnamese military checkpoint.

A number of these guys would take their families out far enough to safe haven them and then turn around and come back and in some cases then petition for a second family. Often as not they just wanted to be there for the excitement when it all ended. There was an air of unreality about the whole thing. How can we possibly be ending this 20 year plus involvement?

No one knew the day that it ended that we were in fact going to pull out that day. I went into work that morning. Walter Burke told me that they were talking about decreasing the embassy staff down to 50 that day, rather than pulling out completely. I don't what possessed me that morning to grab my get-away bag and to hand Robert his passport because I had had both of them in the get-away bag. Fortunately, I did. He went off to the airport. I came into work. About noon on the 29<sup>th</sup> Marinka got a call from her husband saying, "It's time to go. Come over to the embassy." And she said, "Should I bring Mary Lee with me?" He and Walter Burke conferenced. Walter came back and said, "The

ambassador tells me you should go.” So, I left on one of the earliest choppers with Marinka Bennett and with the ambassador’s wife.

*Q: Mary Lee, let’s talk a bit about Operation Baby Lift. Explain what it was and what happened.*

GARRISON: We probably need to back up a little bit and talk about the whole idea of orphan adoptions which became big business in Vietnam before the pullout of U.S. troops but especially following the pullout of U.S. troops. The law allowed at the time for both physical presence adoptions, where a family was living overseas and had the baby or the child in their home, and for managed adoptions, where an entity overseas contacted folks in the States who were interested in adopting and placed a foreign child that the couple had never seen. The volume of orphans to be adopted that we handled through the visa section in Saigon was such that one of our locally hired employees did nothing but adoptions. She spent a full day issuing passport request letters to the adoption agencies and to private attorneys handling adoptions, putting together the full file for the immigrant visa for these children, logging in and processing incoming petitions for preference visas for these children and also dealing with those interested in a non-preference adoption, since there was a limit of two adoptable orphans for which you could petition. Since there was also a restriction that the child being petitioned for had to be an orphan, there were a number of situations where people were applying for non-preference status. If a man fathered a child by a Vietnamese woman and wanted, with the mother’s consent, to take that child back to the United States to raise, he had no status as the father of the child. At the time, DNA testing was such that you could prove maternity but you couldn’t prove paternity. So that individual had to file for a non-preference visa. If the child was over 14 and no longer eligible for adoption as an orphan, then once again it was the non-preference route. If you were adopting your cousin’s child because she could not care for it but there was a living parent who was not relinquishing custody in the normal sense. Or more often if it was your cousin’s child but she and her husband had six and this was number seven, that child was not an adoptable orphan because there were two living parents and you went the non-preference route. And those were much more work intensive than the normal orphan route. In any case, Susie, as she was called, had a full plate handling just adoptions at that point and that was before things started to look like Saigon was not going to make it as the capital of an independent state past the middle of 1975.

One of the things we saw coming out of Cambodia, where there was also a strong intercountry adoption presence, was that in the very last days of Cambodia there were a number of documented and ready to travel orphans who had not been issued visas and there was strong pressure from the prospective adoptive parents in the United States to get their babies out. At one point, literally a day or so before the flag came down in our embassy in Cambodia I was sitting there faced with a list of I believe it was 14 children who had been gotten out of Cambodia to Vietnam and for whom we had names of prospective adoptive parents in the United States and nothing more. I sent probably what was one of the longest cables to go into Phnom Penh at that point asking whether they had documentation on any of these children identified by name, and what we had in the

way of date of birth and got the shortest response back: one word, no. They had destroyed all their files. So, we got creative in terms of issuing tourist or other nonimmigrant visas to put these kids on their way to the States.

We were trying to avoid having much of that happen when it became clear that the U.S. presence in Vietnam was winding down whether or government admitted it or not. I don't know what the source of pressure to create Operation Baby Lift was. At the time, the beginnings of a movement to get non-essential personnel out of Vietnam was just starting. This would be late March, if memory serves me, of 1975. And in the earliest part of the evacuation the Starlifters were going back pretty much empty, which was causing no small amount of surprise and dismay on the part of the Department of Defense. They're sending these 141's in expectation of moving out crowds of Americans and their families anxious to get out of harm's way, and there are no crowds, in part because the Vietnamese government was still at this time insisting on the full run of documentation that you would normally have for an immigrant visa. That made folks at more senior levels question why they were spending all this money to move nobody. There were also a number of the folks both at DOD and at USAID with connections to the missionary community and to the groups, the non-religious groups, that handled in-country adoptions and intercountry adoptions. There were a large number of the embassy community who adopted in Vietnam. Among the junior officers with whom I came into the service there were at least two out of five families that chose to adopt in Vietnam. There were a number of the single secretaries, both DOD and AID in particular, who chose to adopt, in some cases multiple children, in Vietnam. And that created a natural constituency, when these planes were going out empty, to say, "Why not use them to move these children?" Often it was not anything other than the delay of passports that prevented people from traveling.

Since we were rapidly coming to the stage where the validity of a Vietnamese passport was going to be a moot point, there was some serious discussion, not just with regard to children but with regard to evacuation in general whether we should continue to insist on Vietnamese government documentation to move Americans and their family members. The *laissez-passer* system that Peter Orr had negotiated with the Vietnamese government was effectively no more expeditious than the passports had been because initially the government insisted on obtaining all of the same documentation, including police clearances which, for those who had at any time lived north of Nha Trang, was impossible to obtain. We're now talking about a period after the fall of Phuoc Long and just about the time of the beginning of the siege of Buon Me Thuot and as a result there was no South Vietnamese government north of the province of Ben Hoa. The ability of people to get documentation was nil for anything that far north. So, Baby Lift came about as a way to make use of the American planes to meet the perceived needs of American families in the States who were waiting for "their kids," which is how they thought of them, pending only the Vietnamese government documentation.

We in the consular section were not that much directly involved, beyond certifying that we had a petition on hand and that the child, according to the adoption agency, was the child who was supposed to be destined for this particular family. We did not physically see

the children. We didn't try to match up an identification of any sort. And I wouldn't be at all surprised if there weren't some kids swapped when the agencies discovered that a particular child either wasn't physically capable of traveling or for whatever reason just didn't work out. The whole process was on the fly and of course the tragedy of the C-5A crash which killed so many of the DOD, DOD in particular, support staff, the ladies who were serving as escorts for the Baby Lift babies as well as the children themselves cast a bit of a pall over the whole process.

*Q: What happened?*

GARRISON: As far as anyone knows, it was the same problem that affected the C-5A that crashed in Turkey. The faulty latch on the back-end door blew out and, of course, given when it happened and where it happened, the initial reaction was suspicion that an North Vietnamese Army (NVA) rocket had taken the plane out. There has never been anything to substantiate that. It appears that the design flaw proved tragic for an awful lot of people.

But we did continue to move the adoptable orphans expeditiously. One of the things that use of the *laissez-passer* did free up was our ability to bypass some of the paperwork for these children who obviously did not have a problem of police clearances. We're talking about primarily infants through three, four, maybe five-year olds. One of the saddest parts of the whole adoption picture was that babies were adoptable, toddlers were adoptable, kids were for the most part not. And there was a very clear bias in terms of race. If you served any time in Southeast Asia you saw some of the *metis* from the Senegalese troops who served in Southeast Asia and there were certainly *metis* from the black American troops who served who are some of the most stunningly physically beautiful children you have ever seen in your life. The boys were often adoptable. The girls for the most part were not, in one of, I think, the biggest tragedies from that particular little corner of our solar system.

*Q: Were you aware of any, you might say smuggling attempt, I'm saying smuggling in its best sense, people say, "Hell, we've got these kids, let's get 'em out!" and slipping them on planes and all of this.*

GARRISON: Because I was in town at the consular section and not out at the airport I'm not aware of it although I'm sure it took place. I'm sure any number of the families that went out to the airport with documentation, trying to get on the planes. We talked about the fact that there were two very different operations running here. The embassy more or less was using the greatly modified Immigration and Nationality Act guidelines that were sent from Washington when it became obvious the situation was deteriorating. The junior officers who were out at the airport were using the "do I think these guys can survive and make a life in the States" test. It would not in the least surprise me if the family books that were the basis for the documentation of claiming a relationship were amended or altered to include somebody else's child whose mother or father or both thought the kid stood a better chance if they could get out to the States with a cousin or a neighbor. For a lot of the guys who had Vietnamese wives they weren't the relationship that all of the



family members had anyway. It was actually kind of hard to have to tell some of these fellows that the child that they thought was their wife's, when you looked at the family book, was not. It was her sister's child that she had raised. Or the young woman that they thought of as their wife's sister was a distant cousin, or a not so distant cousin. That was the sort of godawful decision that you were making in those last days, because that meant that that person, at least from our standpoint, wasn't entitled to get on the plane.

*Q: Well, were you, at a certain point, looking the other way and were you saying, "Why don't you go out to Tan Son Nhut and give it a try?"*

GARRISON: There were several times when I said, "Look, I can't do this here but if you can get her or him on the bus with the rest of the family group, go out to the airport, I think you'll have no trouble getting on the plane." The rules went out the window. It's like that damned tree out in the parking lot. It had been sawed on long before the ambassador said it could be touched. You had to be practical. I found it very difficult, though. This was my first assignment in the Foreign Service. I was all of, at the time, 22 years old and you find yourself making literally life and death judgments and that's not an easy

*Q: Walter Burke was consul general. What was he saying to you?*

GARRISON: He was there if you had a question. He was there to provide general guidance. He was very approachable and accessible and he would say, "Use your judgment." He was very much preoccupied with the welfare and whereabouts side of it and with trying to keep us physically running. We were a very small operation to begin with. We had one welfare and whereabouts officer who also did seamen, and we had one American citizens services officer who was up to her ears at five foot three in passport applications, literally. Because everyone who had not bothered to legally marry or if they bothered to marry had not bothered to document a child as an American citizen because they expected to live out much if not all of their life in Vietnam was now coming in to handle those documentations. We had instances where we'd catch the tail end of that on the visa side because some of the folks who came over with the U.S. military in the late 1950s couldn't prove physical presence because the U.S. government was not admitting that they were there when they were there. And the visa section was precisely two of us. Peter was often at the ministries trying to find some way to break loose documentation and trying to ensure cooperation from the authorities. So, it was just us'uns with this flood of Vietnamese and American potential refugees. Walter was the one who was busy making sure that we got enough Marine security guard presence to maintain order outside and to keep contact with the main embassy. At one point when the National Palace was bombed, we were in a separate building. We were past nominal closing point but we still had several dozen Vietnamese applicants waiting on the portico outside to be processed because they made it through the steel gate before closing time. And when those bombs came overhead, bombers rather, we had to move those people into the embassy compound. There was no place safe for us in that little rickety building, just this side of a Quonset hut.

*Q: I remember seeing a bullet hole, came right through, went through a couple walls there. It was there at night and all had to do is trace this thing. You realized that a Marine guard up in one of those towers there probably let his weapon, it was obviously a mistaken discharge. The point being, a bullet could penetrate that entire thing. It was just pressed board.*

GARRISON: Exactly. So, Walter had his hands full with that side of the consular operation. Of course, we had a second floor there that was not occupied by the consular service. That was the folks from FBIS with their monitoring operations and also some of the folks from Drug Enforcement.

*Q: They must have left fairly early, didn't they?*

GARRISON: No, no. The morning of the 29<sup>th</sup> of April, 1975, Walter Burke said to me, "You may be leaving today because we are likely, the ambassador has received instructions that we are to draw down to about 50 people." That's the morning of the 29<sup>th</sup> of April. Obviously, we drew down well below 50 people by midnight.

*Q: Was there much concern about, it wasn't on your desk but it was with the consulate, thinking about Americans who had kind of disappeared into the woodwork? There are a lot of shady characters wandering around there, sailors and I'm talking about merchant sailors but I'm also deserters and Americans having a good time in the brothels of Saigon or something.*

GARRISON: Or having set up out in the boonies where they had their families and a very comfortable little illicit trade in whatever you care to pick: artifacts, ivory, hashish, opium or any number of other things. Gold. We knew they were out there and we did occasionally get queries about, "Can't you go and find my brother, whatever his name is, who is out somewhere out there?" And families in the United States didn't want to hear that your brother is out there and has no intention of ever coming back. When the end came we were not really concerned about them, except insofar as they would want to get themselves and Vietnamese families out. The attitude that the consular section took was we can't force anybody and we will urge strongly that you depart but it's up to you.

This came into play in two instances in particular. There were Mormon missionaries who had just gotten in country, and they were strongly urged to turn themselves around and go home and their attitude was, "God will provide. We're not going." And nobody was about to hogtie 'em and put 'em on a plane. The other was, came directly into my sphere, was that as things began to go down the idea was to encourage as many of the former military contractors as possible to get the heck out of Dodge and take their families with them, so we were requiring that in order to provide transport for the family the American family member had to go with them, which a number of these guys did. They came in, they filled out the paperwork, took their family out, turned right around, as long as there were still commercial flights and came back so they could be there when the fun started. We also saw that where they got the first family out and then came back to take care of the second family because there were any number of what the Mexicans call *casa grande*,

*casa chica* arrangements, where there was a full second family, who of course had, even though they had no right to visa status, they might have rights to passports, since Papa was an American, even if he didn't happen to be legally married to Mama. It was an absolute nightmare from a bureaucratic standpoint.

Walter did the best job I could imagine anyone doing of saying to both Pat Wazer, who was doing citizenship and to me, "Look, use common sense, use your best judgment. If you've got something that you can't handle, call me." Everyday once we'd reach the point where we could stop, breathe, try to get some sense, not file things, that was out the window but organize things so that you could start again the next day, Walter just had everybody back into his office for an exchange of information and a little down time. I think I made the comment that I was living on milkshakes and Scotch by then. The milkshakes came from the little Vietnamese run snack shop that was over by the regional security officer's (RSO) operation and Walter provided the Scotch in the evenings or whatever our drink of choice was. It was a good way to let people know what was happening in the other parts of the consular operation and to give us all a chance to, rather than throw things against the wall, just unwind.

*Q: Was there a concern that we had all these files on people. If the communists took over, good insight into who's related to who, could be used against people.*

GARRISON: There was serious concern in the consular section. Unfortunately, that concern was not shared elsewhere in the building. The only folks who were really focused on that besides us were the guys like Frank Snepp, who on his own came, he had been using our files as reference extensively during the entirety of his time in Vietnam, and came over and started doing his own destruction before the word came down. The only idea that anybody had for how to destroy those files, given the extensive size, was to throw a grenade or something similar in there and pray that they went up. The limited classified holdings were easy enough to shred. But the Marines handling the incinerator/shredder operation were going round the clock already with the amount of paper from the political section and the front office. So, we were at the bottom of the list, unfortunately and it probably did provide somebody with a treasure trove of information if they ever got in there and looked. That and our failure to really focus early enough on the need to aggressively go out, reach out to the documented family members of American citizens that we had on file, who had visa applications pending or were the subject of early welfare and whereabouts queries to me was one of the big failures of the operation. I'll be honest. I could have cared less about orphans to be adopted when I have children of American citizens who we have to get out of there and we did not have the staff to send somebody out to find them.

There is one, one thing that's going to haunt me 'til the day I die. It was the case of a sergeant in the military who married a woman with several children from a previous marriage. Several is an understatement. I think there were six, and they had several of their own. These were not kids. This was not the 18-year-old marrying a 24-year-old bargirl. This was a sergeant of some standing marrying a mature woman with whom he fell in love. And right before the family was to leave for the States grandma convinced

two of the kids not to go, one of the girls and one of the boys. In the confusion when they got to port of entry in the States, one of the girls who was close in age ended up using her sister's immigrant visa. It took us ages, over a year, because the case started before I even got to Vietnam, before we could get to the truth of who had traveled and who hadn't and then try to get new immigrant visas issued for the two children who had stayed behind. The girl by this time was about 14 and the boy was 12 and draft able. They had been actively trying for a good six months by March of 1975. The last I saw of them, I handed the girl the files that we had, we took the petitions and everything else related to it and were starting to put them into manila envelopes, initialed them, seal it with the consular seal and tape them shut and hand them to folks who we presumed were getting on the evacuation flight saying, "Give this to the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) when you get there" because we were so far from any possibility of doing visas then. And I gave them to her and I said, "See if you can get your brother out to the airport and give them this." They were from Philadelphia. I still don't know if they got out. When I came back to the United States I spent some time working on the task force with the computer identification system. A friend of mine who'd been in the Delta had the task force folks waiting for me, had told them that I had some computer experience. I was working with International Business Machines (IBM) on developing a name tracking system, and with the classic garbage in, garbage out problem with data manipulation the names were so mangled that at that point when I remembered the name of the family that we're talking about I tried to check to see if the children had gotten out. I couldn't track it and I have no way of ever knowing.

That was where we missed the biggest opportunity that better preparation would have given us, particularly in the case of children.

*Q: What about the nongovernmental organizations (NGO) and people like that? When did they get out?*

GARRISON: They were uneven. The evacuation side really was not handled through the consular section at all. And so many of the NGO's were staffed by non-U.S. citizens. There were U.S. citizens in the mix but they were often religious, and then the rest of the staffs were Australians, French, many others who didn't feel the pressure to leave when the U.S. citizens did. I couldn't tell you when our prime American contacts, either Catholic Relief or Hope, left.

*Q: You have any feel, I realize it wasn't, beyond your competence at that time but what happened? Was there a significant number of Westerners that stayed on in Vietnam after the helicopters all left?*

GARRISON: My impression is that there was a very large number who stayed on. The only community that seemed to share the "get out now" mentality, actually there were two, that informed the American experience were the Chinese and the Koreans. The Chinese business community started taking precautions by Christmas of 1974. Anyone who had dual citizenship had a Chinese passport, and the gentleman who was at the time representing the government on Taiwan was very generous in his issuance of passports to

dual nationals. He himself had several American citizen kids who had gone to school in the United States and stayed on. He also had at least one offspring in Canada with landed immigrant status. So, he was well prepared to bail quickly. But the Chinese business community was well aware that things were deteriorating and they sensed the same “get out now” requirement.

The Korean community was an interesting subcategory in that so many of them had arrived as part of the Korean Marine troops who had served with the U.S. and South Vietnamese forces. We had a booming business in fraudulent immigrant visa applications from the Korean community, most often as auto mechanics. It was so widespread that the husband of my predecessor had put together a list of questions to ask these supposed auto mechanics, including “Where do you put the water in the engine of a VW bug?” The answer, of course, being, “You don’t. It’s an air-cooled engine.” But you would be surprised how many of these auto mechanics told us that you need to put water in it. But as the end neared, the story which I doubt was apocryphal that made the ranks of the embassy community was that word had been slipped to the Korean community that they’d better get out now because if they didn’t once the North Vietnamese troops arrived payback would be hell. The reputation for aggressive brutality that the Republic of Korea (ROK) Marines had was that even if the story was apocryphal they believed most definitely that they were facing retribution. So, there was a real strong effort on the part of the Korean community to emigrate, preferably to the United States if they could find a way to manage it but otherwise anywhere else they could get out of Vietnam.

Beyond that, no. I think there was more of a sense of “Okay, we’re not Americans. It’s not our problem.” And certainly, the French and Italian and Australian business communities and journalists were intent on staying put.

*Q: Let’s talk about, when did you leave and what happened to you?*

GARRISON: I left at about noon on the 29<sup>th</sup> of April. The night before we’d all been up rather late. I’ve read with some amusements the accounts of who was where doing what during the last days of Saigon. Ken Morefield and my then husband, Bob Mosher, were both out at the airport for much of their day doing refugee evacuation from there. We had a very good view of everything happening in downtown Saigon from the roof of our building and there was access to the roof of our building. So long after curfew, I don’t think we began to come home from the embassy until about nine, nine thirty, and because of the travel restrictions we were in an embassy vehicle. There were I think about six of us living in that building, six or seven, so we were all together coming home and then the guys came in from the airport a little later. The night before we all left Robert and Ken were up on the roof of the building watching the various battles going on around the perimeter of the city until quite late.

We probably went into the embassy somewhere between 6:00 and 7:00 on the morning of the 29<sup>th</sup>. I had been routinely carrying Robert’s passport with me, don’t ask me why, that’s just the way it happened, something told me that day to take a small bag with me, something I had not been routinely doing and to hand Robert his passport and I was very

grateful we did. About 10:00, 10:30 that morning was when Walter Burke told me that we were going down to 50 or so in the embassy that day. About noon was when Marinka Bennett came and said that she was being ordered out and I was to go with her. I untied the consular seal from my wrist and handed it to one of the guys.

There was an American officer, I'm not sure where he came from anymore, it's not our guy from India. And I have absolutely no recollection who this other consular officer was. I know it wasn't Peter Orr because Peter wasn't physically in the consular section at that point but we did have at least one other American officer who was helping handle the visa crush at that point. I handed him the stamp and said, "I've been ordered out." My guess is he went out probably about 3:00 pm with the rest of the staff.

Our Vietnamese staff had been evacuated by this point. They went out a day or so before and the folks helping us, the Vietnamese U.S. government staff who were helping us, were primarily AID personnel who had not for whatever reason been put onto an earlier plane. There was tremendous confusion regarding the evacuation of our locally hired employees and I have no idea whether the intention was to take those AID personnel out or not. It was not even discussed with us. We were told, "You need some hands, these folks will give you a hand." But of course, they knew nothing about the filing system, they knew nothing about visa law. They were simply bodies to help us process whatever the crush was.

In any case, backing up again, I went back, said, "I guess I'm going." Walter said, "Yeah, that's what we've been ordered." Said goodbye to him, I don't know if I even had a chance to say goodbye to Pat Wazer and then went over to the embassy. We were escorted in a tight group up to the roof where an Air America chopper was waiting. There was a Vietnamese couple, I would say late middle age, the ambassador's wife, Marinka Bennett, myself, one or two other women on that flight. The ambassador's dog did not make that trip if I remember correctly. I believe that the dog came later with the ambassador. We were put on the Air America chopper and sent out to the fleet.

The last thing I saw before I left the roof was one of the Marine security guards, as opposed to the troops who'd been brought in to augment in the last days. I'd been particularly close to a number of the Marines because we were about the same age and they came to our wedding. Several of them had developed relationships with Vietnamese women who they were looking later to petition to bring to the States as fiancés, so I knew a number of these guys well. They were our front line in maintaining any kind of order at all in the consular section. The last thing that I did before I got on the chopper, one of the guys got up from behind the mortar he was holding, came over, gave me a big hug. I gave him one, said, "Goodbye. I hope to see you on the outside."

Everything to this point had been calm. What are you going to do? People have said, "Weren't you scared?" No, you don't have time to be scared. You have people all around you who are scared who are depending on you to be sane and calm and it didn't hit me, I guess, until the chopper banked over Newport, over the area where the commissary had been and you could see the muzzle flashes, and as we banked to go out to the fleet, that's

when, for me, at least the reality hit. It's over, we're not coming back. We went out to the fleet, landed on the deck, the LPD *Denver* and started doing paper work.

*Q: What sort of paper work was this?*

GARRISON: Just to identify who the folks were so they that had essentially a welfare and whereabouts list. It was the old Foreign Service. One of the other women, it seems to me it was the AID director's wife, but I'm not sure, suggested that since I was the junior person present I should do the ambassador's wife's paperwork for her. And rather than argue about it I did. It wasn't worth the candle at that point. One of the things that was sort of amusing about all of this is, as it played out, just for a little sidelight here, was because I had married in Vietnam I never changed my name. I was Garrison, he was Mosher. And the senior officer on board really had a bit of a hard time with this rather feminist notion that I was married, he and I were not in the same place, he was on another ship, evacuated somewhere else in the fleet and we had different names. That's not supposed to happen. The radiomen, or signalmen, got rather a chuckle out of the light signal relay, once we finally determined where the other half was between us saying, "She's here, she's all right" and the response back was, "He's very relieved."

But for the next however many days it was and I honestly don't remember anymore, we watched as the various planes came out looking for someplace to land and not really finding anyplace. And then the choppers and the choppers trying to make it onto the deck safely and then being pushed over the side after it became obvious there was nowhere near adequate landing space for all of the aircraft that were going to be coming out looking for a space to stay.

Liz Montagne, who had been the consul general's secretary in Danang, also came out on that same helicopter. The only thing she had with her was her stenotype machine. Since the ship was not configured for female sailors they housed all of us ladies in officer's quarters and obviously room mated up. Liz was my roommate. And they made arrangements so you could post when there was a woman in the shower since that was, again, not set up for a coeducational operation. The mass of the Vietnamese refugees was down on the lower deck. They had Mike boats going out the back of the *Denver* and the other craft to pick up whomever they could pick up because folks were heading out to the fleet in whatever they could manage to commandeer and make run. And that's how we lived.

*Q: Well then what happened?*

GARRISON: We went into Manila initially and Robert got into Manila a day before I did. We landed in Subic and then choppered into Manila, processed through what looked like the Astrodome for the Katrina survivors. It was a massive empty hall where the American embassy and military personnel were processing the arrivals from Vietnam. There was also a Philippine government visa operation. We were given 48-hour visas, which, since Robert got there a day before I did, made things a little tight. We then transferred to Pan Am to fly back to the States, and were told to report to Washington at

some point. I still have the orders, one of the few things I got out. We were not evacuated from Vietnam, we were direct transferred. The U.S. government got out of paying any of us evacuation pay by calling this a direct transfer. Quite an organization we worked for. There was an attempt to actually identify onward assignments for all of us before we were evacuated and the offer of assignments that came for the two of us were to Korea, with me doing commercial work and Robert doing political work. If you'll remember, shortly before this the North Koreans on the demilitarized zone (DMZ) had hacked to death an American soldier.

*Q: That came a little later, in '76. I was there in Seoul when it happened.*

GARRISON: Okay, then it was just a general queasiness. There was something that left us both saying, "Are you kidding? Coming out of here like this, Korea is not where we want to go." It was just too

*Q: There'd been an attempted assassination on Park. That might have been it.*

GARRISON: That might have been it. For whatever reason there was just this sense that it would have been second verse same as the first. So, we declined to take an assignment to Korea but when we got back to Washington, as I mentioned, the task force was waiting for me with open arms. They needed some help. IBM had kindly offered to provide a computer system to handle just identifying and maintaining records of who these Vietnamese refugees were and what camps they were in because the camps were scattered all across the United States. And those without any clear claim to American family members or visa status were in places like Port-au-Prince, Haiti. So, I went on the task force and Robert picked up an assignment in EUR. I spent probably a couple of months on the task force, at the same time looking for a permanent onward assignment. I was in Washington the entire time.

*Q: Was there sort of a, did you feel that there was a bunch of people from Vietnam walking the halls trying to find*

GARRISON: Oh, absolutely. There was a whole world, if you will, of the embassy and consulate personnel who simply had no idea what they were going to do and no clue of where they fit in. A number did go out to the camps. They were particularly looking for Vietnamese speakers, obviously, and consular officers. Pat Wazer and Peter Orr went down to Haiti, where Peter contracted encephalitis and that led to his death several years thereafter. Yeah, they worked the camps in Haiti. Several of the Vietnamese speakers from the Delta, where Robert had been, also ended up at various of the camps in the United States for at least part of the period after they came back while working with Personnel to identify onward assignments.

*Q: We were putting Vietnamese in Haiti?*

GARRISON: The Haitian government agreed to allow a temporary resettlement facility there. I really don't remember, I'm trying to think if there was anyplace else that we had



a facility. That's the one that comes most immediately to mind but I'm sure there were a couple of others and, besides Thailand, I can't think where they would have been. I don't know that we had anything organized in Thailand the way we did in Haiti. We had camps at Indiantown Gap, Fort Chaffee, Arkansas, out on the Coast, someplace Godforsaken in Oklahoma. Spent a lot of time on the phone with the heads in New York of the various nongovernmental organizations. I don't recall any issue with regard to the NGO's because I would have heard about it while I was on the phone with them as we were setting up the computer services. The ability of folks like the Jewish social services organization, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), yes and Catholic Relief Services and some of the other religious organizations who had long experience with refugee resettlement to come in and help make this all work. Lutheran Social Services in the northern Midwest again had a tremendous network. Those people were amazing, the work they did to keep people in camps as short a period as possible and to find sponsors and homes for folks whose lives had just been totally destroyed. Should have been a lesson for the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

*Q: Now, we're talking about Federal Emergency*

*Which made a mess out of the 2005 hurricane Katrina which hit New Orleans*

GARRISON: And the Gulf Coast, yes. This is what caused me a certain degree of amusement but also a certain degree of anguish when people began objecting to the use of the word refugees to refer to the folks who had, who were seeking refuge from Katrina and subsequent storms. The refugee organizations in the United State have been handling resettlement since at least World War II. They know what they're doing. They have a system in place, and if the word hadn't become so fraught perhaps some of the suffering that has occurred could have been avoided because certainly our experience from dealing with the Vietnamese evacuees was that you had very professional operations whose only goal in life was to get people resettled.

*Q: Well then, we're still in 1975, I guess moving towards fall or something?*

GARRISON: Middle of the summer of 1975.

*Q: What happened?*

GARRISON: I had a friend, it turned out, in the Africa bureau's executive office, a colleague of mine from college was the junior personnel officer and he became aware that I had been evacuated. We'd been in intermittent touch since I joined the Foreign Service and he had an opening for a staff aide, junior staff aide, in the bureau of African affairs front office, working for Ambassador Nathaniel Davis. He asked me if I'd be interested in interviewing for the job. I had no particular background in African affairs, not much more knowledge of Africa, and not a whole lot of interest in Africa but the job sounded interesting so I said, "Why not?" I interviewed with Ambassador Davis. He offered me the job, and it was probably one of my most rewarding experiences in the Foreign Service. I ended up, instead of doing one year doing almost a year and a half.

*Q: This would be to 1975?*

GARRISON: This would be roughly the 1<sup>st</sup> of July of 1975 until the end of December of 1976, which was a heck of a time to be doing Africa. I started out working for Ambassador Davis as the junior of two staff aides. Dan Simpson was the senior aide. Ambassador Davis had asked Dan to stay on for another, for an extension of his tour, rather than have two brand new staff aides, the senior and then the junior. There was no special assistant at this point, it was just the two of us and a general services (GS) staff aide who was primarily clerical. Ambassador Davis had left the Director General's job just a few months before and wanting to have the continuity he had asked Dan to stay on, indicating that he would help make sure that Dan had a good follow-on job once the assignment finished up. Dan got the offer of Bulgarian language training and political section chief or political officer job in Bulgaria just about the time I was coming on, and after discussion with Ambassador Davis decided to take the job. So suddenly we're looking at my having a training period of maybe three months, because language classes would be beginning end of August, beginning of September and then having a new second junior staff aide come on. For much of the first month that I was in the job there were actually three of us, because Reed Fendrick, whom I was replacing, had not yet left. So, I was learning from both Dan and Reed. Reed left by the end of July and Dan went on vacation because so did Ambassador Davis.

He was up in New England finishing up the officer evaluation reports (OER) on his folks from the Director General's office so as to at least get some of them before the promotion panels. The boards were on a different schedule at that point. So, I was on the back end negotiating the language of OERs with the likes of Ambassador Ray Seitz while Ambassador Davis was up in New England. It was quite an introduction to being a staff aide.

This was a particularly fascinating time to be working Africa because the Portuguese were just about to pull out of Angola and the three groups, the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), which lasted until the death of Jonas Savimbi a year and a half, two years ago, and the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA), now the government of Angola and the National Liberation Front of Angola (FNLA), which many viewed as a Congolese/Zaire front group, were actively battling, not metaphorically but physically, for control of the Angolan government. When the Portuguese left the capital, the capital became the battleground. There were a series of mercenaries who saw this as a glorious opportunity and the U.S. government was learning all of the lessons of Vietnam very quickly with regard to how aggressively we should try to stop what many viewed as Cuban-backed, Russian-inspired Communist government takeover of Angola in the form of the MPLA.

At the same time, the Church Committee was looking into U.S. government actions in other areas over the years as regards support for the overthrow of what were viewed as hostile governments. The one in particular that affected us in the Africa bureau was the Allende government, since Ambassador Davis had been the U.S. ambassador in Chile at

the time Allende was overthrown. It informed the decision-making process, both of these events, the fall of Vietnam and the presence of the Church Committee, with regard to how the United States should try to affect the outcome in Angola.

You had a series of crisis points. There was the transition in Mozambique at the same time as the pullout in Angola, and of course there you had again an allegedly communist resistance movement that the South Africans were not keen to see on their border. You had the stirrings of armed opposition to a continued South African mandate in Namibia. You had various changes of government in the former Portuguese colonies in West Africa, not to mention the coup a month club in West Africa overall. We were aligned, the U.S. government was aligned with the Mobutu regime in the Congo/Zaire which became our main ally, and many said proxy, for supporting change in Angola. And then there was Rhodesia. The Smith government was coming under increasing pressure from Britain and secondarily from the United States to give up power in favor of a representative government including both white and non-white members. The Derg had only recently come to power in Ethiopia and its tenure was rapidly being cut short by Mengistu's assassination of his fellow Derg members, and the United States continued at that point to have a tracking station at Kagnew. But there was also a kidnapping of Navy personnel that further made life miserable for the Africa bureau (AF) front office at that time.

*Q: We're in the African bureau in 1975-1976 and what were you doing there?*

GARRISON: I was special assistant to the assistant secretary. I started out as the junior of two staff assistants to Ambassador Nat Davis and through a series of unexpected personnel changes I ended up as an O-7 officer with a grand total at this point of two year's experience in the Foreign Service filling the senior special assistant position to him about two months after I took on the job. It was definitely a classic Foreign Service learn by doing experience. Ambassador Davis had moved over from the Director General's office in about March of 1975 and this was just at the point when the Seventh Floor (The floor in the State Department housing the most senior officers) was discovering Africa big time. You had the Angola transition coming up, and you had a series of small brushfires in various places. I think we mentioned the Kagnew repeating station in the Horn of Africa, and relations with the Congo were up and down. We had a large Export Import Bank (ExIm) financed power project that was supposed to light the Congo that was being run in Mobutu's Congo but he had also recently decided to change from a Belgian, Frenchified personality to an authentically Zaire personality, and that was affecting his positioning vis-à-vis relations with the United States. And that linked, of course, to our Angolan policy since that was the launching point for much of at least one of the faction's activities in the pre-independence struggle. South Africa was increasingly on the radar for the Seventh Floor, not so much for its internal policies, although that was a factor, but for its role in the independence struggles in both Angola and Mozambique, and its continued supply of the Ian Smith government in Rhodesia.

And then there was Rhodesia. The pressures were building to remove the Smith regime, if not diplomatically, then Mugabe and company were bound and determined to remove

him militarily. And these various neuralgic points were of great importance to our European allies. The British, in particular, had taken it on as a mission to roll back the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) and create an independent, biracial Rhodesia.

*Q: Which is a cause that Ian Smith had*

GARRISON: That he had espoused, right. That is what had created the independent pariah state of Rhodesia as opposed to the former British colony. But because of the tremendous interest by our allies and increasing domestic pressures in the United States, the Seventh Floor began to take seriously what was happening in Africa. The Africa bureau had always been a bit to itself and suddenly it was finding itself center stage. One of the interesting sidelights here and I'm afraid this discussion is going to be all over the place because the time line is not as neat as it was talking about Vietnam.

*Q: Let's stick to the period that you were in the bureau.*

GARRISON: Well that actually is a fairly long time. I was in the bureau in the staff aide position for a year and a half, went out to the field, was in the econ section in Kinshasa for two years, came back to the bureau on the Congo/Zaire desk for two years and then spent two years as the deputy director of the Economic Policy Staff. So, I cover a very long period but we're talking right now about that period when I was in the front office.

*Q: Well you had these currents going on. Did you get any feel for, you say you're a pretty new officer, about the politics of this, I mean the pressures that were put on him and all?*

GARRISON: The pressures put on Davis or on Kissinger?

*Q: On Davis.*

GARRISON: The pressures that were put on Davis, yes, very definitely. One of the things that occurred while he was assistant secretary for African affairs was the Church Committee hearings on Chile. He, of course, had been ambassador in Chile during the overthrow of Allende. So, he was summoned to testify and he asked me to accompany him to the committee hearings. The recent end of the Vietnam involvement and the debate over the role of the CIA and what was permissible in terms of U.S. use of clandestine activities to influence events in other countries was very much on Ambassador Davis' mind as we dealt with post-Portuguese pullout Angola. I think more than anything else what role the CIA could and should play, and differences between Ambassador Davis and Secretary Kissinger over that in Angola were what informed much of his time as assistant secretary. He was not an Africanist and there was some palpable skepticism when he was named to the job. Again, I think where we were starting was a function of the fact the Africa bureau had functioned as a world unto itself up until that point. It was the place where people who had really, really cared about Africa went, stayed, maybe a side trip to the Africa watcher jobs in Brussels, London and Paris but they stayed in the parish and the bureau took care of its own, was known for it and also

was known for giving officers from the non-traditional reporting areas, consular officers, some administrative officers, opportunities to show what they could do. But so many of the posts were either isolated or unhealthful or just plain difficult that they were always hard to recruit for. I'm sure it's difficult to find anybody to serve in Lagos.

As a result, there was sense of family but also a sense of cliquishness about Africa. We used to joke that when you talked about post closings almost every time somebody suggested, "Well, we could live without this spot" the principal deputy assistant secretary then was Ambassador Mulcahy and he would pop up with, "Well you can't close that! I opened that post." And that happened at least five times in the space of the time I was there.

*Q: I want to come back to the African thing but talk about, what was your impression of Davis and the Church Committee on Chile? This wasn't your bag but you were sitting there and how was he reacting?*

GARRISON: He was feeling very besieged. I have tremendous respect for Ambassador Davis. He was a genuinely nice man. He was an intellectually honest man. And he felt a bit betrayed by the depth of reaction to, well, as you know he was one of the lead activists in filing suit against the producers of the film *Missing* because of the way it portrayed the embassy and the U.S. government. And that I think says a tremendous amount about how he felt about the whole process. He was not acting as an individual, he was acting as a representative of the U.S. government. He was following the instructions he had been given from Washington and he was working with the information he had. He felt very strongly that there was no attempt, certainly on his part and he believed on the U.S. government's part, to be duplicitous. There was certainly no attempt to harm or target U.S. citizens and we certainly were not controlling the Chilean government, from his standpoint and to suggest that we had offended him.

*Q: Did that seem to, during that time, here he was running a very chaotic area and getting hit by Congress and some of the media, too, being the villain, the person who willingly allowed at least one American, young boy, young man to be slaughtered in Chile and maybe even said, "Go ahead and do it" or something like this. I refer to the movie called Missing. Did that seem to affect his ability to deal with these other things?*

GARRISON: It created a tremendous sadness in him and it was certainly the backdrop against which he dealt with what was happening in Africa. I think it did inform his policy recommendations to Secretary Kissinger with regard to the extent of CIA involvement in Angola in support of Holden Roberto's FNLA, one of the three factions, and also with regard to support for UNITA, the Jonas Savimbi-led faction, who were challenging the Portuguese essential handover to the MPLA, which is currently still the government of Angola. His trust for the CIA was limited and his belief that covert action could be kept covert was nonexistent as a result of what he had seen happen in Chile.

*Q: How about, did you get any feel for the relationship of then-Secretary Henry Kissinger and Africa and Davis?*

GARRISON: Two very different relationships. Africa was a nuisance but one he had to deal with. He had respect for Assistant Secretary Davis. I don't know beyond that what the actual relationship was because Secretary Kissinger kept a very great distance between himself and the working levels. One of the really striking things about the whole Angola process was the inclusion of the Angola desk officer in all of the policy discussions in Secretary Kissinger's office. Desk officers were (normally) excluded. The note takers for the Secretary's meetings with visiting foreign ministers and more senior people were office directors, not desk officers, during the Kissinger years. But Ed Fugit, who had served in Angola, was viewed by Secretary Kissinger as an honest and accurate source of information and of good policy recommendations, so he was in virtually every meeting that took place on Angola on the Seventh Floor in the run-up to independence and shortly thereafter.

*Q: His name, again, was*

GARRISON: Fugit, as in *tempus fugit* (*Time flies*). Edward Fugit.

*Q: Is he around, do you know?*

GARRISON: I haven't seen or talked to him in a number of years. He was around as recently as six years ago but definitely retired.

*Q: What was sort of the view of Angola? Was the Cold War going on?*

GARRISON: This was definitely a proxy fight. This was Cuban troops supposedly being used as a cat's paw by the Russians to expand their empire in the wake of the American defeat in Vietnam. It was not about Africa. I don't think any of the discussions, from the Seventh-Floor standpoint, I don't any of what went on whether we're talking about the Kagnev kidnappings or the Rhodesia shuttle that Kissinger undertook or the Angola tar baby, to use someone else's analogy for a different situation but was far more appropriate for Angola, was about Africa. It was about geopolitics and certainly Helmut Sonnenfeldt, who was then Counselor for the Department, was involved in the policy discussions not because of any perception that Africa was important but because of his view, which the Secretary shared, that this was playing out Cold War politics on a different chessboard.

*Q: Did you get any feel, again, you're sitting at a rather strategic location, the fly on the wall, more or less, did you get any feel between the sort of African hands saying, "What in the hell are you talking about? This is, okay the Soviets may be in this but this is an African affair and these are, it gets tribal, it gets everything else." And other ones are saying, "No, no, this is, we've got to watch out. The Soviets"*

GARRISON: Well, that was the crux of tension between the Seventh Floor and the bureau. That the old Africa hands looked at it to the exclusion of Cold War politics and the Seventh Floor saw it only in Cold War terms, and of course Ambassador Davis was the bridge between the two, if you will. His deputies were all Africanists. Ambassador

Mulcahy, Edward Mulcahy, as senior deputy, Ambassador James J. Blake as the economic deputy who also covered West Africa, although he was a North Africanist, first and foremost, and then Ambassador Chuck James did the business outreach.

*Q: Did you get any feel for the problem in South Africa, which was apartheid, a white government*

GARRISON: And at the time Namibia. Namibia was the proximate cause there because the South African government continued to exercise both sovereignty and administrative control of Namibia, following on the League of Nations mandate and the pressure from the outside world, including the United States but gently from the United States at first, at the beginning of this period, was for South Africa to withdraw from Namibia and allow Namibian independence.

Let me give you one example of the disconnect between Seventh Floor and Africa bureau and between Africa as defined by the State Department and Africa as seen by the Africans. Sudan straddles the line. There are a series of northern African states like Mali, Niger, Chad, Sudan, that are as much Arab in outlook, certainly in the north, as they are African, which is the case in the south. And Sudan's continuing civil war has been very much in the news over the last couple of years because of this. This was prior to the assassination of Jaafar al-Nimeiry, who was the military head of Sudan for an extended period. Nimeiry was coming to the United States on a state visit and was scheduled to be meeting, in addition to the White House meeting, with the Secretary of State. AF put together a briefing memo and it focused exclusively southward, on issues that were defined as African. It excluded discussion of the Middle East and of the northern tier of Afro-Arab state relationships. I do not remember in which meeting the fiasco occurred. I only remember that it was from Under Secretary Sisco's office that the blast came afterwards, that the briefing paper prepared by AF was totally and completely useless because the only thing that Nimeiry wanted to talk about was U.S.-Israel policy and Arab-Israeli issues. And once again the discussion was joined, whether in fact Sudan ought to be lifted from the Africa bureau and moved to the Near East bureau along with the Morocco-Algeria-Libya-Egypt tier.

The continuing back and forth between Morocco and Mauritania over independence in the Western Sahara, then known as the Spanish Sahara, was another one of those areas where the Africanists viewed it in one light, and the rest of the world viewed it in another. The insularity of AF really was an issue as far as the Seventh Floor was concerned. It made a lot of the policy recommendations seem naïve and suspect.

*Q: This is, I assume and check me if I'm wrong, this is sort of you looking back on this in retrospect but was this*

GARRISON: This was very much in the forefront.

*Q: At one point Secretary Kissinger went to a meeting of chiefs of mission in Mexico City and came out of that finding that these people who were dealing with Latin America had*

*practically no idea of what NATO was about and he started what was called the Global Outlook Program (GLOP), which was designed as a mix it up, get out there, get experiences. By the way, our Secretary of State Rice is saying the same thing. I mean it's deja vue (already seen) all over again.*

GARRISON: He was right then, she's right now.

*Q: Was GLOP, in other words, trying to get people to get into Africa, was this seeming to have any effect or not?*

GARRISON: Well, there was a perception among the folks who had served in Africa that they did not have a fair shot at getting postings outside of Africa, and to the extent that GLOP would allow folks who'd served in two or three of the less charming places like, say, what was then Fort Lamy, Chad, now N'djamena and Bangui and even the relative charms of Dar es Salaam to serve someplace where you could drink the water, it was viewed as a real nice idea. This, in retrospect would have been fine if what resulted was not a system where everyone who had served in the places where you could drink the water didn't decide that the best way to serve in Africa was to be deputy chief of mission (DCM). And there later came to be a tremendous resentment of the way that the global program or the fair share and hardship tour efforts started to work out in placing non-AF hands in the plum positions, DCM and section head jobs. That's a parenthetical look back on it but the idea of bringing folks from the outside in who didn't know Africa, it wasn't welcomed with open arms but the bureau didn't have a large enough contingent of Africanists to staff all of the jobs that were out there, anyway. So, there was a lot of inflow, just very little outflow once you got into the Africa circle. My recollection is the director of the Office of Central African Affairs at the time was actually more of a Soviet specialist than an Africanist. I certainly was from outside of the Africa fold, never having served in the bureau and having in fact had little or no interest. For the first month or two that I was on the job I kept a smaller version of the map of Africa on my desk with the different regional divisions clearly marked out.

*Q: Did you find, sort of on the personal side, that having helicoptered out of Saigon, did that give you any sort of extra pizzazz or something that you were able to parlay or not?*

GARRISON: Aside from occasionally fielding calls from the folks who were still trying to work with the refugee resettlement computer system, I really closed the door on the Saigon chapter when I left. The decision that Ambassador Martin made that no one was going to get commendations out of Saigon, either everyone was going to get them or no one was going to get them, and the scattering of all of the personnel to different parts of the world really meant that there was nothing to keep drawing us back. And as far as AF was concerned, Saigon was over, it was old history, except insofar as the "lessons of Vietnam" were affecting the way we formed policy towards the newly independent, former Portuguese territories. The one thing that, from a personal standpoint, coming out of Vietnam that way had given me was a sense that you can survive anything. When the gentleman, Ambassador Dan Simpson, who was then the special assistant to Ambassador Davis, decided to take a job he was offered as head of the political section in Bulgaria



and leave the special assistant job about nine months early, when I realized I was going to be what I thought at least was temporarily taking that job, as a very green officer, Saigon let me say, "Well, I can do it. I can certainly give it a shot." And I ended up taking the job permanently for what became a year and a half in a position that normally was a one-year, in and out learning experience. I have to say I learned more in that job than anywhere else. That and the Congo/Zaire desk job were the two best jobs I had in the State Department.

*Q: From the special assistant thing, what would you put as some of the basic things you learned?*

GARRISON: How the building works. The primacy of relationships. The ability to talk to someone on the Seventh Floor, to talk to them outside of formal channels to get a policy decision moving, to direct a request for an action memo or an information memo so that so that the question you needed to have raised was the one that got asked. The opportunity to look at the way the Hill ( the U.S. Congress) and the Department interact that I got from the contentious relationship with the Hill over Angola and from the Church Committee experience I think colored the way that I dealt with the Hill for the rest of my career. It was probably a negative, in fact.

*Q: Did Watergate have much of an effect on you?*

GARRISON: I think in the very broadest sense. The skepticism over anything that THE GOVERNMENT said or THE ADMINISTRATION said from the point of view of the Hill and the press was the legacy Watergate had left. It was almost exactly a year after Nixon's resignation before I got back into Washington and actively involved in the bureau so by then the immediate shockwaves had dissipated.

*Q: After your time there, where did you go, in 1976 or so?*

GARRISON: I stayed in the Africa bureau until the end of 1976. After Ambassador Davis resigned, when he and Secretary Kissinger could not see eye to eye on Angola policy.

*Q: What was the essential difference as you saw?*

GARRISON: The role of covert action and the role of the CIA and the utility of our continuing to support the two insurgent groups, FNLA in particular, but UNITA as well, rather than trying to come to some sort of brokered settlement among the three for an election process in Angola and the differences were simply irresolvable.

*Q: Did you get the feeling that there was a propensity on the Seventh Floor to go for covert action?*

GARRISON: Yes.

*Q: I mean, in a way it's sexier, it's more fun or it looked more effective.*

GARRISON: I think it looked more effective and there was a very strong proclivity on the Seventh Floor to counter the Soviets wherever and whenever possible, and particularly once the intelligence suggested that we had, and this is not anything that hasn't been in public domain since, that the Cuban involvement had gone from doctors and technical assistance to troops on the ground. The Seventh Floor was determined to find a way to counter that movement. Whether it was through backing the Chinese-supported UNITA fighters, whether it was through funneling money to Roberto and the FNLA via Mobutu, with the expectation that a certain amount of it would stay in the Congo as well, or whether it was, not funding but encouraging South Africa to fund troops and put boots on the ground in Angola as not just trainers for UNITA and the others but actual combatants. The Seventh Floor thought that was just fine and Ambassador Davis thought that was just wrong. And the best explanation of his disagreement was his article at that time in *Foreign Affairs*.

*Q: As an aside I'm told that we were able to get a pretty good idea where Cuban troops were by overflights, by looking at pictures and if you saw baseball diamonds, rather than soccer fields, this meant Cubans had been there.*

GARRISON: Yeah, basketball court could have meant Angolans but baseball was not something that was played in that part of the world. You also could see, there are physical differences between Cubans and Angolans. The presence was easy to note and certainly there was a lot of overflight activity.

*Q: Cubans are a really neuralgic concern to any administration.*

GARRISON: And this one in particular with its Cold War bias, absolutely. The minute you said, "Cubans in", whether it was Cubans in Ethiopia or Cubans in, I think it was Guinea-Bissau but Cubans in Mozambique, the warning flags started going up. But Ambassador Schauffele was assistant secretary for the most active period of Kissinger's diplomatic involvement in Africa, including his first and I think only trip to Africa and then the beginning of the actual shuttle talks with Ian Smith and the British government on rescission of UDI.

*Q: You worked for Schauffele, didn't you?*

GARRISON: Yes, I did.

*Q: Talk a little about him and how he operated.*

GARRISON: Very distinct contrast. Ambassador Davis was much more formal and a delightful man but also a bit more explosive. Ambassador Schauffele was as genial and as relaxed as you could imagine and as tough as could be. He was, of course, an Africa specialist. He had long service in the area. So, he knew the tribal politics of the bureau as well as the tribal politics on the ground. But what set him apart from some of the inward-

looking Africanists is that he knew how far that could go and when the rest of the world took over. It was a very easy bureau in which to work. He expected first-rate work from the bureau and he expected timely work from the bureau, which had not always been the case in the past. The fact that he was one of their own made the bureau much more willing to stretch itself a little bit to produce it.

*Q: Well then, in late 1976 whither?*

GARRISON: I got my plum assignment. Since I was part of a tandem, it was a challenge for us to find jobs, particularly since my then spouse was a political officer.

*Q: What was Bob doing?*

GARRISON: Bob was at that point the last living Bulgaria desk officer. He was assistant for Yugoslavia and Bulgaria and Albania desk officer in the Eastern European office. So, we were not seeing much of each other between the crazy hours I was working. Staff aide job at that point, you were alternating. One day you were late shift, you'd go in at 10:00 am and work until whenever you broke, and then the next morning you'd come on the early, get off about 4:00 pm and alternate weekends you were on call. Well, as things heated up I found myself on call more and more. And Bob of course was working more or less normal hours but when something hot hit for him he wouldn't get home until 7:30, 8:00 pm at night on days when I got off at 4:00 pm. But we were able to find a joint posting to Kinshasa, with me going into the econ section and him going into the political section. The only thing was that the arrival dates were about three months off. So, I was due out in March and he wasn't due out until the summer cycle. I went over to FSI for some refresher French training. I'd had French before going to Vietnam, which of course sounds like the most ridiculous thing in the world but since they didn't expect me to go to Vietnam, made perfectly good sense. And got to Kinshasa the day that the so-called ex-Katangan gendarmes invaded from Angola.

*Q: Okay, well let's see. You were in Zaire from when to when?*

GARRISON: From March of 1976 until I think it was April 1<sup>st</sup> of 1979.

*Q: What was the situation in Zaire when you got there? How would you describe it?*

GARRISON: It was in transition. The Angola war and Mobutu's decision to serve as backer/conduit to Holden Roberto, to whom some said he was related ethnically, although that's something that we've never been able to substantiate, was putting strains on the country. There was the long-standing tension between Mobutu and the inhabitants of Shaba, formerly known as Katanga. The bruises from the Simba rebellion and the independence struggle were still very, very close to the surface. You're talking about a period of less than 15 years since things had quieted down and Mobutu had taken power. He had just launched this authenticity campaign, requiring all of the Congolese to take on so-called African names. You couldn't be Christine Moëte anymore, you now had to be Insimba Moëte. That was resented by any number of the Congolese. His security service

was becoming more and more visible, more and more prevalent, and more and more brutal. The economy that had been riding the crest of the commodities boom in the early 1970s was starting to turn downward. The lack of knowledge of basic economics in the upper levels of the Mobutu Administration was beyond stunning, it was horrifying. The inclination not just in Kinshasa but throughout the continent to continue to run countries the way villages had been run, with the senior individual responsible for an elaborate distribution system for not only money but goods and an elaborate but informal welfare system simply doesn't work when you're talking a country that's half the size of the United States and with, if I remember correctly, something like 27 million people at that time. Most of whom were under the age of 18, more than 50 per cent of the population.

So, you were also beginning to get the tension of expectations in youth who had not really known the horrors, although in some cases there was, particularly in the far eastern areas and in Katanga, if grandma was still there and she literally bore the scars of the Simba rebellion and the Tshombe succession attempt in Katanga. To that extent, the insecurities of the immediate post-independence period were visible and a backdrop but the newer generation, the younger Congolese, had no active memory of it. All they had was grandma. And that created a whole series of expectations for an improving life that the Congolese government was not in any way set up to meet.

The politicians, such as they were, in the Congo were very much of the older generation and if you look even a few years down the line, when the opposition to Mobutu started reaching its peak, you're talking about politicians who were there, and not as kids, at the independence table discussions from 1957 to 1960. Etienne Tshisekedi, who became eventually one of the names talked about as an alternative to Mobutu in the last years of the Mobutu regime, was by that time well into his 70s, again going strictly from memory, here. So that you had this disconnect between the political class, which was grandparent generation, and the bulk of the population, which was young.

The education system had begun to deteriorate. Where the schools existed the teaching staffs did not, the books certainly did not. And the increasing use of bribes for passing grades was resulting in a population that was largely illiterate beyond the, I'd say, sixth to eighth grade level. And it becomes very difficult to find jobs for such students when you've got the contrast between a society that's building high rises for itself, the gleaming copper tower of SOZACOM Building, SOZACOM was the marketing agency for Congolese copper, the Hotel Intercontinental, built by Pan Am Airlines next to the high rise built by the French as the home for the state radio station. All these were lovely buildings but in a system, which couldn't supply sufficient electricity on a consistent basis to keep the elevators running up to the 13<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> floors and whose water pressure system didn't always work so that one of the most pervasive memories of dealing with the Congolese government was walking into government buildings, multistoried government buildings, that smelled consistently of refuse and overflowing toilets. It was the absolute definition of a dysfunctional society.

The government was focused on glamour projects as a target for aid funds. I mentioned that the Export Import Bank was financing a large part of the Inga-Shaba power line that

was being built by Morrison-Knudsen, now a subsidiary of Brown Root and Halliburton, if I remember correctly.

*Q: These are all names that come back from Vietnam.*

GARRISON: Absolutely, it was the next generation of construction projects, aid for U.S. construction companies from Vietnam, still going on now in Iraq. But that power line ran from a waterfall just barely up from the Atlantic coast of the Congo clear across to the copper mines, which were almost as far over as Lubumbashi, which is closer to Dar es Salaam than it is to Kinshasa. You're talking about a power line running, it would have been like running a power line from New York to St. Louis but through thick jungle. Flying over there you see nothing but the forest canopy almost all the way down. You see an occasional isolated village that looks like a pen dot. Even if you went south towards the Angolan border, where you had massive refugee movements, if you went south the main road was a two-lane highway and even along the main road there were large stretches that were simply uninhabited. When you got off the main road you're talking about folks who were literally off the grid, where kerosene was the primary heating and lighting fuel, and charcoal was the primary cooking fuel. Where electricity simply had never gotten anywhere near these villages, and running water did not exist. These folks were living the way their grandparents and great-grandparents had. The most technologically advanced item you would see would be a match. And how do you run a country like that?

*Q: Who was the ambassador when you were there?*

GARRISON: When I first got there it was Walter Cutler.

*Q: Who's an old Vietnam hand. I knew him there.*

GARRISON: Really? He had been the office director for Central Africa until Mobutu threw out the previous ambassador, who was Deane Hinton. The story, and I'm not convinced it's apocryphal, was Hinton, of course, being a very sound economist but also not much of a linguist, was said to have gone into a meeting with Mobutu and said, "*Votre economie est malade and vous devez changer*" (*Your economy is sick and you must change.*) and Mobutu responded something on the order of, "*Vous devez partir*" (*You must leave*). So Hinton did indeed leave and Secretary Kissinger sent Sheldon Vance and Walt Cutler on a series of missions to placate Mobutu. Ambassador Hinton was dead on. The economy was sick to the point of collapse, and the flow of revenues from the extractive industries and the other commodities, including coffee and diamonds were strong but they were not being tapped, and they were not being properly used. The budget data that we were able to look at while I was out in the Congo suggested that the entire government budget was being run as a presidential slush fund, with budgetary pockets being picked on a regular basis for whatever the immediate need was, whatever the prestige project was, whatever the political imperative was of the moment. The budget document was a fiction and the budgeting process was a fiction. But Mobutu was

a very proud individual and he was very conscious of his role as the support for U.S. policy in Angola.

In addition, the long-running rivalry between the Congolese and the Nigerians for the role of spokesman for Africa was in the fore. The Nigerians had gone through a series of upheavals, after General Gowon took power and then was deposed while he was out of town for, I think, it was a Commonwealth meeting, and then a period of real instability set in in Nigeria, which gave the Congolese an opportunity to try to move center stage. This also played off the African Francophone-Anglophone rivalry, which was very, very strong. Control of the Organization for African Unity was constantly being challenged in the Francophone-Anglophone format. And Mobutu was not the sort of individual who would take kindly to being lectured.

*Q: What were you doing as economic officer?*

GARRISON: We had a large economic section, actually. We had a fair amount of commercial interest. Not just from Pan Am which, of course, was flying in at that point, had the hotel. You had Morrison-Knudsen, and you had the milling industry, the flour milling industry had a U.S. component. There were a number of smaller U.S. businesses. So, the commercial section was one and a half officers looking after those interests. There was one other economic officer and myself, and we were mostly doing balance of payment analysis and commodity reporting because those were the areas that were most likely to affect U.S. policy, since as an economy the Congo was completely commodity dependent. There were no real foreign exchange earners other than commodities, either metals, minerals, diamonds or agricultural products. And they had been a major producer of cotton and palm oil, as well as coffee. This was a very important segment of U.S. policy. This was, of course, at the time when commodities producers were attempting to cartelize and to create buffer stocks to limit some of the fluctuations in price, trying in general to follow on the OPEC (Organization for Petroleum Export Countries) model.

*Q: Yeah, that was very much the rage at the time.*

GARRISON: It was. At the same time the Congolese had potential oil reserves. They were looking to develop not only the offshore segment, the teeny tiny coastline but Cabinda, the Angolan exclave, was already an actively producing oilfield. And the expectation that Angola would be producing was very near to hand, so the Congolese were also trying to exploit what might be in their little sliver. I think it was six miles of coastline or something ridiculously small like that. But they also had an onshore operation and I was the liaison with the oil industry. There was a Saudi Arabian presence and an embassy in Kinshasa with an eye towards that oil industry and seeing what implications it might have, what ties it might have into the Gulf. There was not a particular religious tilt to the Saudi presence, it was a commercial tilt. So, in addition to doing the usual sorts of reporting on what was happening in the Congolese economy, and most of that was focused on inflation, because inflation was destroying purchasing power for your working Congolese at an astounding rate. We did a regular monthly market basket survey that in fact became sort of a salary increment for the Congolese economic

assistant who actually went out and did the purchasing because, for instance, meat prices were rising so fast that people had cut back from regular inclusion to their diet, to once a day inclusion, to looking at once a week inclusion and finding other protein sources. But we were doing, I was doing that as well as looking at the broader commodity sector and then looking at the minerals and mining and, in particular, at the petroleum sector. As I mentioned I got there the day the first Shaba invasion took place.

*Q: What was that?*

GARRISON: The assertion was that these were the former Katangan gendarmes who had been forced out of what was then known as Shaba province with the defeat of Moises Tshombe and his extraction from Congo, that these folks had taken refuge in Angola and had been sitting around at that point for 15 years, not even 15, for 10 years or so, closer to 15, unhappy and wanting to take revenge. And with the backing of the new Angolan government, the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) which we of course had not supported and the bump-up of asserted training by the Cubans, they were emboldened to make a strike against Shaba in order to divert Mobutu's attention from continuing to support Holden Roberto and the National Liberation Front of Angola (FNLA) in their efforts to overthrow the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) government in Luanda. Tightly intertwined. There was a feint across the border from northeastern Angola at the copper mining capital of Kolwezi that was the site of the largest of Congo's copper mines and most of its cobalt operations. It caught everyone absolutely off-guard and resulted in considerable panic. It did not, as I recall, result in a shutdown in any of the mining operations but it did throw U.S. policy making in an absolute tizzy, because here was our main ally in the region literally under attack and how were we going to respond? Because there were two Shaba incursions while I was there and another while I was on the desk, my memory is just too fuzzy.

*Q: How were we responding initially, do you remember?*

GARRISON: The immediate response was, "We've got to support the Congolese government. We've got to support Mobutu." The question was how, and the bigger question was, what the heck was actually happening. Who were these people, first of all? The idea that these were Katangan gendarmes, well the Katangan gendarmes would have been a bit old and long in the tooth for making this kind of incursion. The gendarmerie were not kids in 1960 and you're now talking 1976. So, the idea that this was a bunch of 56-year olds taking up arms and coming across the border didn't really fly. So, who were they? How much Cuban involvement was there? How much Soviet involvement was there? Where was the aid coming from and what was their supply line like? Could it be cut off? How could you contain this, and keep it from going any further? What was the degree of readiness of the Congolese military? What was the willingness to fight of the Congolese military? It hadn't really been tested in anything in more than 10 years. A lot had happened since the glory days of the Muhammed Ali-Joe Frazier fight, the "rumble in the jungle," boxing match.

*Q: Well, as you were looking at all this, first place, you say you're doing balance of payments, one gets the feeling that all this money was coming in to Mobutu and was he robbing it blind or was he basically distributing a la being a tribal chieftain?*

GARRISON: Both. The money actually would come into the central bank. It's not like it was going directly into a numbered Swiss account, never making it into the country. But, for instance, Gecamines, the mining company, would have a certain amount that it was expected to pay in taxes, which it would pay to the central bank, and then that would go into the flow. But whenever the office of the presidency needed to undertake a special project, and that's where this tribal trickle down would come in, they would tell the central bank, "We need x amount." And the central bank would make x amount available, regardless of what was budgeted. So that when the hospital in Kolwezi needed a new generator, there was no state funding available for it so Gecamines had to dip into its coffers and find a way to put a generator in the hospital because that was the hospital that all of their personnel used, and I'm not talking just about the European personnel. One of the striking things about the Congolese mining system, as opposed to the Zambian, for instance, was the level of technical expertise of the Congolese in the mining operation, and the very small number of white faces involved in the mining operations. Much of the outsider presence was on the accounting and technical sides and at the very highest levels you had almost a parallel relationship. But if Gecamines wanted to keep working and wanted to keep its personnel healthy then it had to become the substitute government in not just Kolwezi but also in Lubumbashi, and also elsewhere in Shaba/Kasai, where it had its largest mining operations. So, it further constricted the revenue stream going into the legitimate government coffers.

There was a notorious figure, to those who follow the Congo, and that was Mobutu's uncle, Leto. He was the bagman, if you will, for Mobutu. He was also the one who did the distributions to the folks lower down the chain. It's alleged that an awful lot of money stuck to his fingers that has never actually been uncovered, that when he died the numbers of the bank accounts died with him. Nonetheless, when he died he was found to have left his family quite comfortable.

*Q: You hear about Mobutu, he's not unique but he probably had more money around than most of these dictators. What do you do with this money? Was this just an obsession?*

GARRISON: This was an insurance policy.

*Q: At a certain point*

GARRISON: That's what his second wife was trying to tell him before he died. His second wife was the twin sister of Leto's wife, and she began, probably by the early 1980s, to say, "You know, there is a limit to how much you can spend. There's a limit even to how much I can spend. Why don't we call it quits, go to Europe and enjoy what we've put aside?" I think Mobutu is villainized far more than he deserves. He was a very shrewd politician. And maybe he had a strong sense of *l'etat c'est moi* (the state is me)



but he was also right. He was about the only unifying figure. If you asked the average Congolese at that point what it meant to be Congolese they'd sort of shrug. They really had much more of a sense of being Kasaian or Luba or Lunda or even more insularly from a particular town. They did not have a sense of a national identity. If you did a name recognition poll, about the only name that really had any kind of recognition from one end of the country to the other was Mobutu, whether it was as Joseph Désiré or Mobutu Sese Seko. He was a Congolese figure. Yes, he may have been from Equator. Yes, he may have been from a minor tribe. But he was perceived as Congolese. His behavior, as you suggest, really was no different from the other African heads of state. He did approach governance as a big man; top down administrative system and the expectation was that he, of course, would keep a certain amount of that. But a lot of what is popularly referred to as having been stolen by Mobutu was distributed as what was called in Chicago "walking around money," that folks were in need, that the largesse was passed out to ensure that people had enough to live on. I'm sure that Mobutu kept a more than adequate sum for himself. I have no doubt about that. But the idea that he was simply out to grab every penny for himself is just wrong. The man did have a strong sense of not responsibility to the nation but a sense that he was the father, if you will, of the nation. I think Siaka Stevens in Sierra Leone was referred to as "the Pa" as in father. Well, Mobutu had that same sense, that he was the head of this operation and he had responsibilities to the operation. The flip side of that was you don't talk back to Dad and he had no qualms about using his security services to squelch those who did.

*Q: I understand though, even there, there was more of a tendency to put people out, put 'em in jail, bring 'em back again. It's sort of a revolving thing. Nobody could get full power but at the same time he wasn't out slaughtering people as some of the other*

GARRISON: Exactly, this wasn't the Ethiopia of the *dergue*, where Mengistu would walk into a meeting and literally slaughter half of the people at the table. His security services were often out of control. Torture was very much practiced and I'm sure there were some deaths. Their lack of discipline was notorious. But, yes, among the more politically charismatic he used preventative detention and exile.

Nguza Karl-i-Bond was a perfect example of how Mobutu managed to keep his friends close, his enemies closer and everybody off balance. Nguza was from Shaba but he had no real following in Shaba. I believe he was related by marriage to the Tshombe family, but his presence in the Mobutu governments through the early 1970s was Mobutu's way of saying to the residents of the area, "Look, I'm willing to include you in government. Here you go. Here's this man who is", may have been prime minister at one point but "very senior politically, very much at my right hand, very much part of the power structure. This is my effort to include you." But when Nguza started being quoted too often and being seen as a potential successor to Mobutu, suddenly the idea that he was treacherous and plotting was put out, and Nguza was out. He was imprisoned briefly, and then he was out of the Congo in exile in Europe, and five years later, six years later, eight years later back he comes in the next incarnation, still without any kind of real following in Shaba but again as a non-Equatorian, not part of Mobutu's home guard mafia, in the government. This happened with at least a half dozen political figures.

One of the best-known Congolese outside of the capital was the ambassador to the UN and at one point deputy secretary general of the Organization for African Unity (OAU), if I remember correctly, very well spoken, smooth lawyer who, in a normal political situation would certainly have been a rival to Mobutu but Mobutu kept him out of the country for the better part of 15 years. You don't build a power base if you're not at home.

*Q: Well now, going back to sort of what you were doing, how did you, in dealing with commodities and all, most of these at the top were run, I'm making the assumption, correct me if I'm wrong, run by Europeans or Americans or something. And what was the feeling there? Were they sort of in it for the short run or did they see a future there? How were they looking at it?*

GARRISON: With what was called Zaireanization, the authenticity campaign, many of the operations had been nominally nationalized and there were parastatal corporations in charge of the marketing of commodities or the production. Nadema was the flour milling operation that was linked with Continental Grain and there were foreigners, but with a Congolese as the head of the operation. Many of them had been there for a long time. These were not in and out sorts of operations, and they were looking to continue to stay involved as long as they could but what was beginning to be apparent during the period from 1977 to 1979 was that the long term future was not looking bright if the government did not take serious control of its spending and, in particular, its debt, hard currency debt, and begin to reassert a degree of control over the operation of the government, that the profligate spending was just so far out of hand, and the toll taken on the flow of hard currency resources by debt service was just so enormous, that there was nothing left to keep the productive apparatus going. You can't grow crops without fertilizer and you can't import fertilizer if you don't have hard currency and there really wasn't much of a domestic production operation there. You certainly had, with the variety of export crops and export commodities, that you could have and should have been able to make the place run but the old hands were seeing the deterioration and even the more recent hands were saying, "We're getting antsy. We'd like to stay here but we're not sure we're going to be able to." When you added the pressure to turn over operations to their Zairian partners or their nominal heads of parastatals, it made for a very uncomfortable period.

And then when the second Shaba invasion came, mid-1978, with its overtones of anti-white crusade, the desire to get out of town became very strong. One of the side notes, almost, but one of the apparent feelings from the second attack on Kolwezi was a perceived attempt to target white residents that left those Belgian nationals that had been living there for years as well as more recent arrivals feeling very uncomfortable. The nervousness levels for expatriates in Africa was quite high, anyway. It was not all that long after Amin's campaigns to expel the Asians in Uganda, which is, of course, right on the border. And there was that looking over the shoulder sense, of how much longer am I going to be allowed to be here that was made much worse by the economic deterioration. There was a very large Pakistani community in the Congo at the time, as well as a Lebanese community.

*Q: The Lebanese, they ran the ma and pa stores, didn't they?*

GARRISON: The Lebanese tend to be more North and West Africa, and the Pakistanis tend to be more Central and East. Of course, the Congo's located right on the divide.

*Q: The embassy was looking at this, we were seeing them as a bulwark against communism but I'm trying to get down to your level. Did you feel you had to pull back on your reporting, things were really going bad*

GARRISON: We had some battles over the way in which something was going to be reported, because I felt very strongly that the Congolese initially had the resources available, with a little bit of decent management, to make their debt service payments and still run the country the way they wanted to, as long as the funds were channeled into the budget in something resembling the way in which they were supposed to be. The policy was, though, that we were looking for debt relief for the Congo. This was one of the earliest of the debt rescheduling candidacies. At this point the Paris Club, I think, had met only once and only to do Turkey, and Congo had come up on the radar just as I was leaving, no, about halfway through my time in the African Bureau front office. And the idea that the exposure of the United States, particularly because of the dam and power line project, was so great that we really felt it was in our policy interest to give the Congolese a break on the debt service as commodity prices began to collapse.

One of the interesting things that we saw, a little side note here, when the Shaba invasion took place was that, as I mentioned, production didn't cease at the mines but the commodities traders in Europe certainly took advantage of the perception that the Congolese would not be able to run these operations on their own if the white folks left. And you saw cobalt, which was selling at a roughly controlled price of seven dollars a pound when the invasion started suddenly shoot up to \$65 a pound, and the marketing agency in Belgium was withholding contract amounts. Not the Congolese marketing agency, the Société Général de Minières and we also found that other minerals traders, U.S. minerals traders, were buying what we called gray market cobalt and selling it back to the U.S. defense contractors. So, the Congolese were meeting their contract to Société Général. Société Général was putting only a portion of it on the market, holding back and selling on the gray market at a much higher price, so that the Congolese were in fact not, there were allegations and I suspect that they were true that some of what was being held back was funneling back to the management of the Congolese marketing agency, SOZACOM and indirectly to Mobutu, and I'm sure that that did occur.

*Q: You were mentioning the U.S. was trying to reschedule debts for the Congolese but this strikes me as being, talk about this, if this was an argument within our economic section about, well this is just giving alcohol to the alcoholics. How did this work?*

GARRISON: This was a very new thing. When I had been in the African Bureau front office the debt rescheduling process for the Congo was first bruited about and begun. And the only real experience that the U.S. government had with debt rescheduling at the

time was for Turkey. There had not been a modern, in the sense of not immediate postwar, debt rescheduling for a ton of countries to lay out a groundwork. Our feeling was that the Congo, and I'm going to use the Congo rather than Zaire just for ease, that the Congo was so important to holding the line against the Soviet-backed onslaught in southern Africa, particularly Angola and whatever was going to happen in Namibia and Rhodesia, that it warranted making extraordinary efforts to help stabilize the economy and keep the regime in power. It wasn't a great affection for Mobutu. It was a great affection for stability in the region and a line to keep the Cuban troops and Soviet influence from just rolling across Africa. This is the immediate post-Vietnam period. It was still very much on our minds.

The Paris Club mechanism was in place, as a result of the Turkey debt issue, again strategically pressed, rescheduling and the Congolese were encouraged to go to the Paris Club at this time. The commodity market had just tanked. The period of the early 1970s was one of commodity cartels, and the Congolese were doing quite well with receipts from copper, from cobalt, from coffee, from silver, byproduct mining and tremendous receipts from diamonds. They had a very strong mineral economy, plus they had a decent agricultural economy. They had been palm oil exporters as well as coffee exporters on a small scale but with high quality, mountain grown coffee from the area near the Rwandan border, and they'd also been, in colonial times, major cotton exporters, decreasingly so at this point. But the economy was very definitely commodity based.

The government had taken on a number of infrastructure projects, several of which should never had been undertaken, they were clearly prestige-style projects, in the early 1970s, as well as the insane vanity projects like the sports stadium and the Muhammed Ali fight, the famous "rumble in the jungle," the world heavyweight boxing match that was staged at what was called the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Village, which, again, the Congo government had built to house a meeting of the OAU, the pan-African organization that, if you were anybody, you hosted. And they quite simply could not manage the debt load that they had when the commodity markets turned.

You were coming up on a period when copper was sinking to its post-war low. Since breached, I believe, but you were talking about copper in the 70 cents a pound range, versus two to three dollars a pound, and the Congolese were at that point if not the world's second largest copper producer, then the third. It was Chile, Zambia and the Congo. They were the world's largest cobalt producer and prior to the invasion from Angola into Shaba in March of 1977 the price of cobalt had been about three dollars a pound, which was good but it wasn't seven. During a period alluded to earlier the price went rapidly to \$21 a pound, and that was giving alcohol to the alcoholic. Certainly, the need for domestic fiscal management lessened.

But the idea with the rescheduling was that it was a carrot to the Congolese to get their domestic finance in order, and also recognition that the creditors could not be repaid on the lower earnings that the Congolese government was getting from the depressed commodity markets, so find a way to stretch it out, to keep a stable government in place and increase the likelihood of getting paid back. The U.S. Export-Import Bank, had a

tremendous exposure in the Congo because of its financing of a series of power dams on the Congo River near the mouth on the Atlantic coast which were not designed to feed power into the western half of the Congo. They were designed to feed a long high-tension power line to bring electric power into the Copper Belt, to lessen the dependence on fossil fuels which were difficult to truck in and expensive to truck or train into that area, and give the Congolese an independence from, again, the South Africans who were the primary source of the coal that was used in the copper production. That power line was a great idea but imagine stringing a power line roughly from New York to St. Louis but across nothing but jungle. And Morrison-Knudsen did it in large measure despite disruptions but the infrastructure development on the Copper Belt side simply wasn't there to make use of it, nor were the investments from the Congolese government to create a grid on the ground to use it once it got there.

*Q: From the embassy perspective what were we saying? Were we saying helping these people, the money is ending up in Swiss accounts or it's going somewhere or were you all sort of clued in the whole idea is to keep essentially Mobutu in power because if he goes the whole place will dissolve, as it has*

GARRISON: As it has.

*Q: Today, in a way looking back on this objectively, this policy made sense, particularly at the time, as you did have a nasty sort of communist, predatory communist force out there playing around. You don't have that any more.*

GARRISON: No, you had Cuban boots on the ground in Angola. There was no question about that. You had instability in Namibia, as Namibia was fighting for independence. You had tremendous instability in Rhodesia as it made the transition to Zimbabwe. And you had a newly independent Mozambique that was fighting its own civil war. And you had a history in West Africa of coup follows coup follows coup follows coup, creating instability in the region. You also had the history of Latin America, with what was it, Bolivia's shortest-lived government was something around 24 hours. You didn't want, the U.S. government quite rightly didn't want to see that kind of instability introduced through a region we depended on for some key minerals and which we depended on for a sense of regional stability and regional moderation.

*Q: At your level, sometimes one can look at the strategic level but if you're in an embassy or something, dealing with an inept or corrupt ministry of economics or something, the level of frustration can be major.*

GARRISON: Enormous!

*Q: But were you all sort of attuned to why we were doing this and able to shrug your shoulders or, what was going on?*

GARRISON: It's interesting, as you know my former spouse was in the political section at the embassy at this time, so we had some very interesting dinner table conversation

about this, but we understood what the U.S. government policy was. To say we all bought into it, no. Particularly one of the political section chiefs made his life miserable there by banging his head against the wall of change against that policy. That wasn't going to change. We all recognized that the Mobutu government was corrupt and inept. The question was the degree to which you could use carrots to get them to behave in a fashion that was more acceptable and less Chicago-style hardball partisan politics and more Theodore Roosevelt good government politics. Actually, I should refer to Tammany and Roosevelt rather than Chicago-style. Mobutu was the ultimate ward politician. Yes, he enriched himself but he also passed an awful lot of the money that was supposedly stolen down through his chain of lieutenants and family members to keep the lower levels functioning.

One of the things that is very arrogant in U.S. foreign policy, particularly when it comes to Africa, is our failure to understand the social structure. The difference between the traditional African pattern here and what we consider normal is striking. If you made it big in Africa, regardless of in what field, you were expected to take care of not just your immediate family but your entire extended family and that extended family could get very, very large. It could grow to the village level. But in addition to the pomp and the deference accorded a chief was the expectation that the chief would provide. It's a very comforting system if you're on the bottom but it can be tremendously sapping of initiative for those who rise to the top, because if you do a little bit better the demands from the bottom become even larger. And that is part of what played into Mobutu's use of his wealth. I'm not saying that he did not enrich himself beyond reasonable measure. That's certainly the case that he and his family did, he himself directly or through his Uncle Leto who was the senior member of his family, his clan. But a lot of that did pass through. I guess my favorite analogy at the period with regard to corruption, the idea that in the United States if you paid a corrupt official for a permit to build something, you got the permit. In Saigon, if you paid a corrupt official for a passport you didn't get it any faster than you would have if you didn't pay for it, but you did eventually get the passport. In Africa, if you paid a corrupt official you got nothing. You didn't get the passport. The only place where you may have gotten something is the children who were paying particularly secondary school level teachers for grades got the grades, got into the university where they had to continue to pay for grades to get the certification that left them, in the end, uneducated and unable to get a job but with a piece of paper in their hand. But in the political structure, paying the politician left you with an empty wallet.

*Q: Was there another side to it? If you didn't pay the politician*

GARRISON: Depended on which politician and how serious the question was. Certainly, remembering the horrors of the immediate post-independence period and the rebellion in particular, Mobutu was very forceful in dealing with enemies and perceived enemies and his security troops were brutal. The problem of cruel and inhuman punishment, to use the term from the human rights report, cruel, degrading and inhuman I believe it was, was quite an issue. Not so much in the prison system because of a desire to degrade all the political prisoners but simply because of a lack of funds flowing to them and simple ineptitude. But on a political level, the use of the special police to terrorize potential

political opponents, including at one point the cardinal archbishop of Kinshasa, was something that was not only condoned by the Mobutu administration but actively practiced. At one point, a very good friend of mine who was then working for the World Bank as a consultant to the Office of Debt Management in the Congo had his home invaded and his young daughters threatened with molestation in order to send a message that the accounts should not be looked at too carefully. There was a German banker who had been seconded by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to the central bank to provide sort of a cover for the Congolese minister, head of the central bank, to take the hard decisions when the politicals came to ask for x amount off budget to fund whatever project it was they wanted to fund, and there were no instances where he was directly intimidated that I recall but there were certainly attempts to intimidate those around him to ensure that the graft didn't stop.

Because in point of fact, bringing this back around to what we were talking about in terms of debt rescheduling, the Congolese could have made most but not all of their debt payments, even on the reduced flows that they were getting, had they been using any sort of rational budgeting system. But the office of the president had a tremendous off-budget drain on government resources. Whenever there was a project that didn't get funded through normal means or that wasn't on the calendar for various good reasons, if it came to the president's attention that this had a political benefit, then it was funded through the office of the president and somebody else got cut out. That meant that, as frustrated as we were, the professionals and there were good professionals among some of the Congolese ministries, were helplessly frustrated. The best of them were constantly looking to find ways to pick up work with the World Bank or the International Monetary Fund and get into a situation where they could use the training that they had to good end, rather than constantly bang their heads against the wall.

*Q: What did this, say as an economic section? Where were you in the economic section?*

GARRISON: We were a small section. This was just splitting off the commerce function and so we had a section head, a senior commercial officer, myself, a junior commercial officer and one more economic officer. We had one foreign service national assigned to the economic section, and then there were a couple on the commercial side. So, at the time it was sizable but there were effectively three economic officers, three full working economic officers and two full working commercial officers.

*Q: What did this do kind of to your thought process and outlook or morale or whatever you want to say, dealing in this thing, understanding we had a policy and all but you have this situation? Did one get very objective? You were still pretty young?*

GARRISON: I was. I was all of 26, not even 26 when I got there.

*Q: Full of piss and vinegar at that point, which makes it harder to accept things.*

GARRISON: It does. The day I got out there was also the day that the Shaba War had started. They had invaded the night before, Shaba One, and Shaba Two was a year later. I

was in Kolwezi the week before it was attacked in Shaba Two. So, the initial period, I was really focused on war-related issues. I was monitoring petrol supplies and aviation fuel and talking to the business community.

When you think of Congo now and Congo then, it's an entirely different world because you had major U.S. investors and international investors there. Fina had the, Petrofina, out of Belgium, of course, had the largest stake of the petroleum industry but Mobil Oil was present, so was Shell. So, I was spending most of my time initially dealing with these folks to see if we had enough, if we had enough money to keep the aviation fuel flowing to make sure that troops and materiel could get to Shaba in order to keep the province still as part of the Congo. And that sort of set up a dynamic for the first four or five months, that kept your attention away from the disconnects in the policy. As things began to settle down between Shaba One and Shaba Two, that was when the tensions began to arise again and the question of debt rescheduling began to loom larger. You also had at the time Pan Am Airlines still flying into the area, Continental Grain had contracts to supply wheat to Madema, the company that handled flour supply for the entire country. You had an Intercontinental Hotel owned by Pan Am. And you had the presence of Morrison-Knudsen doing these two major building projects. So, you had a lot of U.S. private sector interest in what was going on in the Congo, and a lot of U.S. private sector pressure on the U.S. government, to be frank, to keep things stable and keep money flowing.

As it became increasingly obvious that some of these things were not going to continue to fly, the business community began to pull out. That fed into the increasing sense of malaise and increasing disconnect between what we see and what we want to do. There were allegations during the time I was there that the ambassador was censoring reporting. I do remember saying quite bluntly to the political section chief who made this charge that having just come out of Vietnam before this assignment, he had no idea what managed reporting was if he thought what was coming out of the Congo was managed. The ambassador made clear that he understood the points about the Mobutu regime's not being a representative democracy but that wasn't news to anybody. It hadn't been news to anybody for 15 years. That our interest was in maintaining a stable regime and in encouraging movement towards a representative government. And you did have parliamentary elections during this period. You also had an effort to rewrite the constitution to allow Mobutu to become president for life. And I would defer to Bob Mosher on this, because he was involved more intimately than I but my recollection is that the efforts by the embassy to discourage Mobutu from writing that into law, as opposed to allowing himself a third term and I believe it was a seven-year term, did bear fruit.

So you were getting bits and pieces of movement, at the same time you had him doing things like taking the one person who had a lot of backing from the Western powers as a possible successor to Mobutu and that would be Nguza Karl-I-Bond, who had been at various times vice president, finance minister, I think he'd been foreign minister, he'd been sort of jack of all ministries and had a strong following, he was picked up on treason charges and then exiled as ambassador to London. That was the pattern. Nguza, for all



that the West embraced him, was a deracinated Shaban. He had no following in Katanga, or Shaba as it's now called. He was from the Tshombe family but not seen as a successor to Tshombe.

*Q: Who'd been the former prime minister and also very much involved with the Katanga*

GARRISON: The Katangan gendarmes and also alleged to have been involved in the Lumumba assassination. But the idea that Nguza would somehow be an electable successor to Mobutu somehow got stuck in Western minds, and it really was fantasy. For all that he could talk to the West, he didn't have a political base in the Congo and realistically nobody really did. You've talked over the ensuing 20 years about elective politics and alternatives and who could run the Congo. And Etienne Tshisekedi is a name that came up and came up and came up, including in the last go-round when Mobutu was ousted. He'd been around since the 1960s. He wasn't electable beyond a regional bloc in the 1960s and he didn't improve with age but he was a strong and visible member of parliament but if anything Congolese politics is far more tribal or regional than it was in the 1960s. The fragmentation of the Congo, the splintering into what I've argued for some time are more natural smaller blocks was inevitable. The Belgian transportation system moved goods around. It didn't link the country in any meaningful way. And when you look at the geography, it's perfectly rational for the area in the northeast to look to East Africa, Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania for trade routes, because it's closer than Kinshasa. Similarly, the area of Shaba and Kasai look south to the ports in South Africa and to the rest of the Copper Belt in Zambia and to the similar ethnic groups in that area. Again, it's shorter to transport by rail south to South Africa than it was to take it west to the port in Matadi. Remember, you didn't have much of a port structure on the Congolese side. You had a port.

*Q: But back to the thing, how did you find the duty of dealing with this amoral situation where we were part of*

GARRISON: What does morality and foreign policy have anything to do with each other? It was the Kissinger era and you really had to deal with, well, actually, this is now post-Kissinger, this is the beginnings of the Carter Administration but the, I guess I felt the impact of the Kissinger era, certainly in the policy here that you looked at U.S. interests first and sometimes you held your nose, because you didn't like the government that was in power but it was a government in power and it was stable. If you felt the need to try to change it, you tried to change it through negotiation and internal means, you didn't go on a crusade. And this was the biggest difference, as this period goes on, between the Carter period and the Nixon-Ford period, and the Congo's a very good example of it. The idea that Mobutu was among the world's worst human rights violators, which is an exaggeration by any stretch, but he became for Africa the touchstone for human rights violation and the subject of an active campaign by Pat Derian and the other human rights advocates in the State Department in the late 1970s to get us out of there, to pull our support for Mobutu. And that I think had even more of a poisoning effect on morale in Embassy Kinshasa in some ways than did the dichotomy of dealing with a

government you knew was corrupt but in service of a clearly articulated policy that said we want to keep the region stable.

*Q: What was life like there then?*

GARRISON: It was very insular. One of the side effects of the economic mismanagement was a tremendous disconnect between the free market rate of exchange between the dollar and the zaire, as the currency was then known and the official rate. And embassy policy was clearly articulated that Americans would trade only at the official rate. It was clearly articulated but quite frankly it was very unevenly enforced. There were several provable instances of senior other agency personnel trading exclusively or near exclusively at the black-market rate, but because the black-market rate was all pervasive, commodities in the country were priced based on the black market rate, which was, during the period I was there, topped out at probably five to seven times the official rate. Which meant a dinner out in all but a few restaurants and such did exist at the time but a dinner out was absolutely prohibitive.

*Q: This reminds me a bit of when I was in Saigon.*

GARRISON: Exactly.

*Q: Because I played the game of only dealing at the official rate and I couldn't afford to go out.*

GARRISON: No. It wasn't quite so bad when I was in Saigon but we had some close friends at the Dutch embassy who took us out for dinner right before we left at a lovely little outdoor restaurant with Congolese shrimp and a nice Euro-African mixture of dishes, pleasant evening that at the official exchange rate would have come to about \$135 or \$140 for a party of four in 1979, and at the exchange rate that their folks were using came to 30 dollars. One of the real ironies of this process, tough, was that Congolese law said that you could not pay rents outside the country. And the one place where we violated the official exchange rate policy is that we paid rents for our buildings in dollars to outside accounts, which drove some of the other embassies crazy, because they'd let their people trade on the black market but they would not pay rents outside the Congo. As a result, we did have a very nice housing stock.

*Q: Did you feel under threat of robbery?*

GARRISON: The security situation was initially dicey and by the time the security situation had improved the roads had deteriorated to the point where it simply wasn't realistic to try it. You could, however, drive down to the Angolan border. You could head south and indeed Robert and I made one trip down there to look at refugee camps and also to look at the economic situation in the area, where you needed a four-wheel drive vehicle, absolutely, but you at least could go all the way down to throwing distance of a stone to the Angolan border. The riverboat trip was not high class or comfortable but Armajane and Yasshar didn't feel nervous about taking their toddler daughter with them

on that trip upriver. You could get out for little weekend excursions, again assuming you had a four-wheel drive vehicle. There were some lovely falls in the area not too far from Kinshasa. So, if you made the trip in the dry season, when the falls were not at their most spectacular but the road was passable, you could go. You were talking about roads that had an 18-inch, and I'm not kidding, drop between the left side of the road and the right hand side of the road and it was a one car width road. So, you were pivoted at quite an angle as you made your way down that road.

Disease was a problem. It was not unusual for folks to come down with intestinal parasites of various sorts. Not necessarily from contaminated food but from the usual mix of extremely aggressive West African parasites. Walking around in sandals or barefoot could expose you to a type of hookworm, the treatment for which was arsenic and not very pleasant.

So it was Third World living at its best. You had some really spectacular things you could do. You also had an awful lot of constraints. One of the most amazing things I have seen in my life, ranking right up there with coming out of the airport in Chile and seeing the Aconcagua looming over the rest of the Andes, was watching a storm come in from the Atlantic Ocean across the Congo Republic, hit the Stanley Pool on the Congo River and just literally pick up water as it came across the Pool towards Kinshasa. We were in an apartment a half block from the river and just above the treetops and you could see this amazing ball of water just coming at you. It was spectacularly beautiful and scary as can be. The winds were so strong that they popped ten-foot high French doors on both sides of the living room. We just had water coming in.

*Q: Well then you left there in '79 and where'd you go?*

GARRISON: I came back to Washington to be the Congo desk officer, not having enough of the place for two years, I stuck out another two.

*Q: So, you were there from*

GARRISON: 1979 to 1981.

*Q: Which was the end of the Carter*

GARRISON: Yes, the very end of the Carter Administration.

*Q: Who was the head of African Affairs at that time?*

GARRISON: Dick Moose was there for part of the period and Lannon Walker was acting assistant secretary for part of the period.

*Q: How would you say, where did, you had Patt Derian in Human Rights and all. Where did the Congo fit when you arrived? First place, did you find yourself dealing with people who really didn't know the territory? How did you find this?*

GARRISON: It wasn't that they didn't know the territory. They had very fixed ideas about the territory and they weren't good. You had one staff member on the Hill who was working, I can't remember whether he was working for Solarz individually or whether he was working for the committee at the time. Stephen Solarz, a Democrat of New York, he chaired the Africa subcommittee at one point. He had become the prime Mobutu basher on the Hill, a position he later ceded to Howard Wolpe but both were very much involved in getting us out of the Congo, ending U.S. support for the Mobutu regime. And Steve Weissman, who worked for him, had been a Peace Corps volunteer in eastern Congo, and my understanding pieced together over the years of the process here was that there was a student strike if you will on one of the campuses of the state university, the cause for said strike lost in the mists of history, but that Weissman had provided encouragement, support or was perceived to have by the Congolese authorities and he and I believe his family were detained by the Congolese secret police and spent some anxious hours at their hand. It hardened his dislike for the Mobutu regime into a passionate hate for it and this became a useful point for Congressman Solarz. As head of the Africa subcommittee, he really was comfortable with almost all of the positions that the Carter Administration was taking in Africa but he needed something to set himself apart so as not to be perceived as carrying water for the administration solely, and the Congo was it. I don't say that he did not believe firmly in what he was doing. He may well have but it was very convenient for him to bash the administration on the Congo at every opportunity and he took it.

The human rights influence from the Carter Administration was something new to the policy making process as a separate and perceptible entity. And like many crusaders, the office that Derian put together and her own attitude as passed down to her staff was that if human rights considerations don't swing the policy then they can't possibly have been taken into consideration adequately. And that made it extremely difficult to bring any kind of rational balance to discussions of what to do in the Congo. You had yet another Congo incursion during this period, this would have been Shaba Three, if you will, where the Congolese government was under attack and the French took the lead in stabilizing the situation not without assistance from the United States but in part because the United States was so ambivalent about how it wanted to go in and when it wanted to go in. The debate over whether we should continue to prop up Mobutu being in part fueled by the human rights issue.

Mobutu, of course, at this point was politically weaker. The continuing decline in revenues to fund his style of government had taken its toll. The government was beginning to hollow out and the cost of making it right had become so much higher. At the time I first started working on Congolese debt and finance issues you were talking about a gap of maybe three million dollars. We're talking not about a domestic budget here, we're talking about a very wealthy country. It was perhaps, and this is just guesstimating from gut feel, was perhaps 10 per cent of the annual gross revenues in hard currency of the Congolese state, something that's not insurmountable to regularize if you make a commitment.

By the time you got to the late 1970s, you need to add a couple of zeros to that. The economy was decaying. The non-copper, cobalt resources had dried up. The diamonds were being smuggled and not flowing into the government coffers and the agriculture situation was dire. You saw an increasing use of roadside open areas in Kinshasa for impromptu garden plots. Several of my high-level contacts in the ministry said that instead of taking things to the family when they went back to their home villages they were coming back from their home villages with produce to keep themselves fed when they came back into the city, because there was no hard currency being made available for much in the way of commercial imports. This was the point at which Continental Grain began to rethink whether it was even going to continue to supply the mill in Matadi with raw wheat because quite frankly they weren't getting paid and it was shipload to shipload. You spent your time on the aid accounts, particularly the military aid, making sure that the Congolese government was no more than a year in arrears on payments on rescheduled debt, because otherwise they would be cut off under the Brooke Amendment, there would be a cut off of U.S. aid. It applied to Agency for International Development funds, Public Law 480 (PL-480) and foreign military sales assistance. I think also to the international military education and training (IMET) fund. And it was hand to mouth to keep our assistance flowing, especially the PL-480 side of it because PL-480 wheat flour was rapidly becoming the substitute for the locally produced wheat flour that the Congolese couldn't afford to pay to keep flowing.

*Q: What was happening on our side? How did sort of Congress and Bureau of Human Rights and all play on this? Did you feel that you were in almost a rescue*

GARRISON: Under siege was more the mentality. We had a policy that said we were going to try to nudge this guy into an electoral system and into a rational economic system but the word there was nudge, not stiff-arm and not drag, although at times it felt more like dragging. And that was not fast enough for the folks in the Human Rights bureau and it certainly wasn't fast enough for those in Congress who cared. The point is most of Congress didn't care, so that those who did and Solarz and Wolpe are the two primary ones here, got to pretty much write their ticket. Only when you got a member of Congress with a constituency that depended on something like cobalt did you get much interest in the Congo from other members. In one particular instance, Dick Moose was testifying in the annual budget process about the next year's allocations of funds and I think you had four members there: Solarz, Wolpe, a congressman from Ohio and I can't remember who else was there. So most of the questions were from Solarz and Wolpe and they centered on "When are you going to get rid of Mobutu and what are you doing on southern Africa?"

Southern Africa at this point was of far more interest. This is the real lead-up to Namibian independence and the post-Biko period of active political agitation for civil rights for the black majority. This is also the period when the homelands policy had been shown to be non-viable in South Africa. So as far as most of the world was concerned Africa meant doing something in South Africa.

So, Moose was prepped for the usual run of political questions on the Congo and to talk about South Africa and the U.S. policy in South Africa, how we were going to move that situation forward. And suddenly the congressman from Ohio, who has the floor, he asks about cobalt and we give him, Assistant Secretary Moose the usual short briefing page on cobalt and he flips to it in the briefing book and starts to read it and turns around, and I was sitting slightly behind him and to the right. He starts to read and then looks at us and says, "Congressman, I can read you what's on the briefing book here but I've got the expert sitting right here so let's let her take over." So that was my first congressional testimony on the Congo, dealing with cobalt.

It was unfortunately not my last and this will give you a sense of how the Congress played on this. Lannon Walker was I believe acting assistant secretary at the time and there had been negotiations for the date on this hearing. Wolpe was now chairing the committee, Solarz was still on the committee. Lannon had made it clear that he had a limited block of time and he would have to leave after this hour and a half period or two-hour period. He left behind Paul Hare, who was then heading the Office of Southern African Affairs and Paul would continue with the questioning, on the assumption that everything but southern Africa had been covered prior to Lannon's departure. I was sitting in the back of the room, all the way in the back, sitting on the radiator next to a Hill staffer. We come back after the break, Paul takes the witness chair and the first question out of Wolpe's mouth concerns the Congo. Paul looks at him rather deer in the headlights, since his office doesn't even do Congo and he wasn't expecting to have to do anything outside of southern Africa. And Paul begins to look around the room. And as I see him do this I say to myself, or actually half out loud, "Oh, shit" and I start closing up my notebook and zipping it up. And the staffer sitting next to me on the radiator gets this puzzled look on his face and then he begins to laugh as Paul says, "We have someone here who can take that question" and signals to me to come take the witness chair. And I spent the next 30-45 minutes trying to defend our policy in the Congo to two very hostile members of Congress, primarily talking about the way in which Mobutu has handled the arrest of several members of parliament who were technically in violation of Congolese law on assembly, if I remember the pretext, but ought never to have been arrested. And the discussion really centered around should we be enforcing our standards of due process or should we be making sure that the Congolese government enforced its standards of due process, which is a question that still bedevils our human rights relationship. You cannot hold a country, to my mind, you cannot hold a country to any standards but its own initially. If they're not adequate and the Congolese standards on paper were only barely adequate, but if they're not adequate you work with them to get those standards changed. But you're limited on the ground as an embassy to ensuring that they enforce their own standards. You're not limited as the U.S. government to trying to get them to change it but that was a distinction that the members didn't want to hear at the time.

*Q: Could you or people above you make the point, say, "Look, this is not a great government and Mobutu's got all sorts of faults but there is nobody who can replace him and we do have these predatory regimes around there."*

GARRISON: No, the idea that there was no one who could replace him was not something that they could accept. That's where, "What about Nguza?" or "What about Tshisekedi?" comes in. And that's where the lack of depth of knowledge comes in. There were those in the embassy, quite frankly, who felt that there could perhaps be a politician out there who could replace Mobutu. And I know two of the political section chiefs felt very strongly that their views weren't taken into consideration in the formation of U.S. policy. Not just the one who was there while I was in the Congo but one subsequent went head to head with Ambassador Bob Oakley over the way in which Mobutu was going to be handled and the speed with which change should be sought in terms of particularly human rights respect. The political counselor was an old labor attaché and felt that there was a lot more room for other political organizations, including the labor movement, or creating a nascent labor movement in the Congo that could have provided alternate political structures for development of alternatives to Mobutu down the road. He felt strongly and he was an old Africa hand so it was not a naive belief. He felt strongly that we could do more to move the process along than we were doing, that we were sacrificing too much for stability.

*Q: Did you feel, while you were on the desk, the hand of the CIA? The CIA had been sometimes the major player or at least it was word of mouth was that CIA station chief and also obviously the Agency was very much sort of in control of policy in the Congo.*

GARRISON: That was the word. It certainly was not true during the period I was there. There was active collaboration with the Agency. Quite frankly they provided intelligence from the interior that we simply had no way to get to. I had the best and most cooperative working relationship with Agency staff while I was in the economic section in Kinshasa that I had anywhere in the world. They knew they didn't understand what they were getting in the way of documentation sometimes and had no qualms about bringing it to me and asking, "Is this worth paying for?" And as a result, we got things we could never have gotten through open sources. The period where the station chief was more powerful and more clued in than the ambassador and had better access to Mobutu than the ambassador really was waning by now. It was not the old days. The former station chief from the 1960s, he was there, traveling in and out quite regularly as an advisor to a New York diamond and gold dealer by the name of Maurice Tempelman, better known as Jackie Kennedy's last beau, a very nice man with a very clear understanding of how the game was played in Africa and he had hired the former station chief as his liaison not just in the Congo but also in Sierra Leone, where he had extensive interests. And this was the era of "the Pa," the longtime head of the Sierra Leonian government who was in the classic African chief mold and also alleged to be brutal and thuggish, probably even more than Mobutu or more actively so than Mobutu. Devlin had known Mobutu at that point for more than 20 years. They'd been pups together. So, he had an access that other folks didn't have and we made use of it. But to say that the Agency drove the policy, no.

*Q: Well, did you have the feeling that you were being punked by Patt Derian's bureau or was it just a battle, sort of our policy would win but there were a lot of bloody noses?*

GARRISON: The latter. It was a constant battle. In the end the policy would not change but you would have constraints on it. You would have reporting requirements or you would find yourself doing silly things like Public Law 480 (PL-480) Title One was not a humanitarian program. Let's be very frank about what we were doing. We were selling U.S. government surplus stocks of food at effectively no interest loans but at market prices to Third World nations to provide balance of payments support. But in the case of the Congo we ended up having to run the PL-480 Title One program the same way that you ran a Title Two feeding program, which funneled surplus as a grant, I think as grant but funneled it through Catholic Relief Services or Africare or other charitable and voluntary organizations to make it a feeding program. The allegations that PL-480 Title One food was being sold at markups once it got into the Congolese system or not being distributed broadly resulted in creating a bureaucracy to run a Title One program, to make it more a humanitarian program, make it more a "take aid outside the control of this corrupt government" as a result of pressure, not just from Derian's group on this particular issue but again from Solarz and Wolpe on the Hill. The Government Accounting Office (GAO) was instructed to do an audit of the PL-480 program and also of the military assistance program to look for signs of diversion and corruption. The idea that once we sold to the Congolese the PL-480 commodities that then they should go into normal commerce in the Congo simply disappeared. The Congo was treated as something different from the rest of the world. It had to have constraints and limits put on any U.S. government money that flowed through there.

*Q: Well did you feel that during this time, this would be 1979 to 1981, that there was a real threat from other forces? I'm thinking in Angola, the Cubans, the communists, other movements that were going on?*

GARRISON: Rwanda was not a factor at this point. It really was the Cubans. It was instability in southern Africa moving north and it was the real animosity that the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola,(MPLA) government in Luanda had for Mobutu and company for having supporting in particular Holden Roberto and the National Front for the Liberation of Angola (FNLA) against the MPLA in the post-independence war for control of Angola. Savimbi and company were the much larger force, and there was some Congolese support to Savimbi but primarily it was to Holden Roberto and the FNLA, and they faded rapidly. The Congolese may have also provided assistance to the Front for the Liberation of the Enclave of Cabinda (FLEC), which at the time was the main source of Angola's oil revenue. That has since changed but the resentment that the MPLA felt was palpable and there was a paranoia in Kinshasa, I speak particularly of Mobutu and the government, that the Angolans would mount yet another charge. Where the first two Shaba rebellions could plausibly have been, although just barely, said to be former Katangan gendarme coming across to try to reclaim Shaba, by the time you got to Shaba Three it was clear that these were not ex-Katangans, remembering you're now talking about almost 20 years after the Katanga rebellion. So, the Katangan gendarmes would have been rather long in the tooth for fighting forces but it was clear these were at least in part Angolan troops coming across to destabilize the Copper Belt. And whether the idea was to topple the Mobutu regime or simply to destabilize the Congolese economy didn't



really matter. It had the effect of creating a panic and a paranoia that also encouraged Mobutu to be even more heavy handed in his use of the security forces.

*Q: Now did the Democratic Republic of the Congo play a role?*

GARRISON: No, it really was, it was just emerging from its own Burma-style nightmare, if you will. We, it would have been late 1978, early 1979 when the United States reestablished relations with the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Embassy Kinshasa provided some administrative support to set up the new embassy in the Republic of the Congo but it really wasn't a political player. It was French, not Belgian, so it didn't have any influence in Kinshasa. It had been isolated for a long period from the United States so we were feeling our way. We didn't have any influence there and vice versa. And there had never been a break in commerce between the two Congos. That was strictly a U.S. division. And they just weren't players. They were small, they were poor, they were in their own world.

*Q: What about, while you were on the desk, were any European powers playing any role in the Congo? Were we joined with them, seeing eye to eye, or were we sort of going our own way?*

GARRISON: We were in constant touch with the British, the French and the Belgians on the Congo and in less frequent touch with the Scandinavians and the Dutch, who also had interests there. The Belgians obviously had a huge interest and the Congolese mineral wealth was marketed through a Congolese entity that was in effect a little brother to the Société Général de Minères, the large Belgian minerals trading and commodity trading colossus that had marketed Congolese products during the colonial period. Again, the saying was that it was more important that you pay a call on the head of the Société Général than it was to pay a call on the head of government in Belgium, if you wanted to talk about Congo policy. The French saw possibilities for much of this time for expanding their own business interests in Africa and were very much inclined to play a role in the Congo. As I mentioned, they were on the scene in Shaba Three to provide military assistance with Foreign Legion troops when the rest of the world was slower to respond, and we were caught up in a debate of whether we were going to be able to respond, in part because of Brooke sanctions. We didn't always see eye to eye but we all understood why the other was there and what they were doing.

The idea of trying to force change in the Mobutu regime was not something with which either the French or Belgians were particularly comfortable. I don't remember that the British articulated a position on it. I'm sure they did but there's nothing that leaps immediately to mind. They were interested in supporting us in order for us to support them on their efforts in southern Africa. In contrast, the Scandinavians and the Dutch really wanted to see faster movement on human rights and on a post-Mobutu regime but they were not looking for regime overthrow, they were looking for transition.

*Q: Did you have a folder titled After Mobutu?*

GARRISON: Oh yes, absolutely and there were several good papers done and I will nod to my ex-husband on this one because he did one of them, on what should come next, what would come next, how you handle a transition and where you want to see it go. But nobody was expecting it to be what it eventually became, the weakening and overthrow that took another 20 years, not quite 20 years. Yes, there was planning for post-Mobutu Congo but we expected a post-Mobutu Congo that still had an economy that could be made to function again. One of the sharpest differences between the Congo and Zambia was that the Congolese mining industry was run largely by Congolese, by trained Congolese geologists and mining engineers and technicians and assayists. There were a very limited number, particularly after Shaba One, of high level Belgian technical support personnel, particularly on the finance side, who made up the upper management level but the very top management was at least nominally Congolese and the middle and upper middle management was definitely Congolese.

In Zambia there was a hollowing out. You had a Zambian work force but much of the midlevel was not Zambian and there was a tremendous guy at the Bureau of Mines who had been a technical assistant in Zambia who said that this was one of his frustrations when he was working there is that he tried to train Zambians to take over and found himself stymied regularly. But Curly, who was anything but, was an enormous help to the embassy and to me on the desk in understanding the dynamics of the copper and cobalt industry because he had worked in the region, and he knew the structures, and he knew what you could and couldn't do, given the technical expertise of the people you had. And you should have been able to in the 1980s bring the Congolese economy back on stream, bring the mining sector back on stream, had there been a gradual, stable transition to a post-Mobutu government or even to a more constrained Mobutu presidency that had a working parliament and that had had the powers of the president channeled. But if you look at what's come after, you're still in the mold of the imperial presidency, regardless of who it has been. It's what works.

*Q: Was there any thought of saying, "Maybe we'd be better for the Congo to break apart?"*

GARRISON: That was anathema. Yes, it was said in Washington but remember at the time the Organization of African Unity (OAU) dogma was that colonial borders are inviolable and this was the one article of faith that no one would touch until Eritrea broke off. But in order to prevent a series of brushfire wars in just about every country on the continent, one of the founding principles of the OAU was you leave the borders alone. And Congo certainly would have benefited from a federated system of four or five states in loose confederation, what the Syrians and Egyptians and Iraqis tried as the United Arab Republic at one point. But it wasn't going to happen. Politically the continent wasn't ready to deal with that and really until the end of the Eritrean War, which succeeded in breaking off an independent Eritrea from Ethiopia, in mid to late 1990s, the Eritrean independence war at that point had been going on for at least 25 years that I'm aware of and probably longer. But until that reestablishment of an Eritrean state, that really is the first time I can think of that there was a change in the colonial boundaries of any size that was acceptable and even that has had some dustups since over what goes on

which side of the border. Now maybe you can do it but at the time, no. There was absolutely no possibility of dismembering the Congo into smaller states that would have been a lot more practical. But unfortunately, if you'd broken it up into four or five there would have been two or three of them that would have been as nonviable as the Central African Republic. They simply didn't have anything there. And one of those would have been near Mobutu's home region in the upper equatorial region right near the big bend in the Congo River. Certainly, the Shabas and the Kasais with their mineral wealth could have been made to run either separately or together. The area near the Rwandan border, where you have the Mountains of the Moon, the gorilla preserve and the best coffee growing region as well as some diamond resources, if memory serves, could have been viable on its own and facing eastward. The area from Kinshasa south, yeah, okay, you could make a state out of that. What it would do, how it would generate revenues other than developing a port presence there, I don't know.

*Q: Was oil at all a factor?*

GARRISON: Oil was discovered onshore in that little sliver of Congolese coast, but not in sufficient quantities to make it really interesting to exploit. That was one of the tensions over Cabinda, the idea that maybe an independent Cabinda could be encouraged to affiliate itself with the Congo, that the oil resources of the Congo could be developed as an offshoot of the Cabinda operation but that was never going to happen as long as the People's Movement for the Liberation of Angola, (MPLA) was in power in Angola. Cabinda was never going to be independent. There may well be more offshore resources in that stretch of Congolese coast, given the production above and below it, Angola and Cabinda. It's highly likely but again you're talking about something that would be expensive to exploit on its own, as opposed to part of an integrated shelf there and the price of oil at the time simply wasn't anywhere near high enough to do more to encourage exploration. There may be gas fields in the interior. Certainly, the discussion of the gas fields that are around it, Gabon has quite a booming oil economy that may have some geological spillover but now you don't have anywhere near the degree of stability in the government to be able to develop that.

*Q: Well then, in 1981, Carter Administration's out. Where do you go?*

GARRISON: I kept doing the same thing in a different hat. I moved to be the deputy director of economic policy staff for the Bureau of African Affairs. The director, Ambassador Robert Pringle, had a strong background in development economics. Indeed, he's well published on the subject. They wanted someone with more of a finance background, which was not Bob's strong point and I had probably the most experience in the bureau with the repeated debt reschedulings, the workings of the Paris Club and good links into the International Monetary Fund (IMF) because of the series of aborted IMF programs that it had put in place in the Congo to funnel short term assistance to the Congo while it was working itself through this supposedly temporary crisis. One of the linkages in what was evolving as a debt rescheduling policy was that nobody got official debt rescheduling without an IMF rescue program in place, and that debt rescheduling was contingent on meeting the targets for curtailment of domestic spending and

regularization of the use of hard currency resources that were enshrined in an IMF program. So, it was a natural fit for me to move up upstairs.

*Q: You were doing this from 1981 to*

GARRISON: 1981 to 1983, as the deputy director of the Africa Economic Policy Staff and by this point Congo was no longer the unique debt rescheduling case. It wasn't just Congo and Turkey. The world of debt rescheduling had expanded rapidly as commodity prices had tanked and several of the Latin American states about which we cared had found themselves in a bind and Turkey had gone back for an additional rescheduling. The Congolese had been back several times and now more and more of Africa was finding itself unable to meet its debt obligations with the reduced level of commodity hard currency flows and resources in general. In addition, the aid flows were tightening and the lackadaisical management of their economies was catching up to them.

*Q: There's been a lot of criticism, again, a lot of the criticism comes from people who really don't want to pay, of IMF restrictions, regulations and all, that they actually exploit the poor*

GARRISON: Ah, yes, the Bono school.

*Q: What was the attitude at that time, your attitude and others who were dealing with it?*

GARRISON: This was a debate. Quite frankly, I think it's crap, because what the International Monetary Fund (IMF) programs do are set guidelines for the level of government spending. They don't tell you how to spend it. They don't tell you what your priority sectors need to be. They simply tell you, if you're going to put your economy back on a balanced footing, you have to constrain your spending this much. Now if you chose to spend it all on your military, well, then that's your decision. We recommend strongly against it, but the actual sector-by-sector decision making came from the countries in the program, not from the IMF. The failure to follow through on making sure that budgeted resources got to their target falls squarely on the responsibility of the countries, not on the IMF. It's fine to say you're going to spend x amount on education and I'm going to go outside of Africa for an example here, the Mexican government puts tremendous money into its education programs, but doesn't ensure that the pay actually gets to the teacher in the schoolhouse. That was the case in the Congo and the case in a number of other locations.

There's also a very strong bias in I suspect much of the world but certainly in Africa to do reverse subsidization in agriculture. Where the developed world subsidizes the farmer, the African elites, dependent on the support of the urban masses, tended to keep prices for staple food products artificially low, including by bringing in imported rice or imported wheat or imported corn to ensure supplies in the capital at lower prices, undercutting their own agriculture sector. And the use of middlemen in agriculture tended to jack up the price artificially of local production without a corresponding flow to the producer, discouraging production.

If anybody can get their hands on it, there's a very good airgram, back from the days of airgrams, that came out of a trip up the Congo River on the river boat, it's called *The Backward Bending Supply Curve*, and it talks about the disincentive to production, even at rising prices, in the rice sector in the upper regions of the Congo River that had supplied large amounts of rice. Classic example of distortion, where the prices for rice rose and the supply contracted, because there was nothing else in the economy for the rice producer to buy. So, once you've bought your bicycle and your transistor radio and the trade goods you needed, you stopped producing, because creating more rice would have driven the price down, selling more rice would have given you more money but nothing to spend it on. So, you produced to find your spot on the indifference curve where your needs were fully satisfied and then the supply declined.

*Q: I was in South Korea in the mid-1970s and one of the great accomplishments of the then ruler, Park Chung-hee, was that he made sure that the rice farmer and all got solid compensation for what they produced, which kept them on the farm, kept them producing*

GARRISON: And kept them out of the cities.

*Q: And kept them out of the cities. At the same time it meant, of course, that rice was more expensive but the Koreans are pretty interested in food, very interested in food and this was a major element in the recovery of South Korea, going from a very poor country to one of the more affluent, stable economies.*

GARRISON: And it was one thing that you could not get any of African nations to accept. The ruling parties were so attuned to any hint of violence in the capitals, strikes, disruption, that they would not risk it and with some reason. If you look at Liberia and the transition from a stable, slightly screwed up but a stable, functioning state in the Tubman-Tolbert era and for a 100 years before that to the dysfunctional Liberia that came thereafter, the rice riots by the market mamas in Monrovia really were the kickoff point for the end of the "colonial" Liberia. After Tolbert and his ministers were machine gunned on the beach outside of Monrovia, it was a pretty graphic reminder to everybody else that you take care of your urban populations first.

*Q: Okay, you're on the Economic Policy Staff. Where were your problems? This was the 1981-1982 period.*

GARRISON: You had two sets of problems. At one point we had 22 IMF programs going on the continent. Everybody but South Africa, just about, had an IMF program. So, you had a broad instability, economically and politically, as Africa was adjusting to a changing world.

The decartelization of commodity prices was an important factor in that. The only commodity organization that continued to function at all well was the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), and if you didn't have oil at this point you were seeing the real impact of the late 1970s oil shock. It wasn't just having to wear sweaters.

It was industries that could no longer afford to function. So that was the broadest measure.

But we were still in the throes of what happens post-*apartheid* in South Africa. You were in the last stages of the Namibia independence struggle. Namibia was not Namibia yet. Rhodesia was only recently Zimbabwe. You still had the Savimbi-led civil war in Angola. Southern Africa was the hot spot. So that was where the focus was: what can we do, can we provide any sort of aid? What would we do for a post-independence Namibia? What sorts of carrots do we have out there?

We were still struggling with the Congo, trying to get Mobutu to move forward. It was a continual thorn. I may have left the desk, but I didn't feel like it, in large measure.

*Q: Talking about the IMF, what was the relation between the IMF and the State Department and what you were doing?*

GARRISON: We had very, very good relations with the IMF and very good relations with the offices in the Treasury Department who were technically responsible for U.S. interchange with the IMF. We had to be very careful not to tread on their toes, because we did have some direct access to the IMF staffers, which we had to use very carefully. You could not cut Treasury out. There were often pitched battles between us and the Treasury working level over how strict an IMF program ought to be and how the United States ought to phrase its support or lack thereof for an IMF program, because Treasury's role is to be the economic purists and State's role was to bring an element of political reality into the balance.

We were more activist, perhaps, than some other bureaus in dealing directly with Treasury and the IMF, keeping the Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs (EB) in the loop.

GARRISON: Because we had more expertise in house perhaps than some of the others, we did a lot of the analysis work ourselves rather than depending on EB for it, which eased their burden in some ways but it was a careful balancing act. You had to make sure that you weren't cracking anybody's rice bowl here, but the IMF asked us for information because we had folks on the ground, and at this point I had a four year relationship with folks who, like me, had started out working Congo and were now working regional. So, they would pick up the phone and call.

*Q: Did you feel any impact, or lack thereof, with, teaching of economics in universities and all this is getting to be pretty esoteric. They had computers and they were doing models and all and I'm just wondering, here you had the academic world creating these magnificent structures and you had people like yourself just trying to slug away and do it. Was there any contact or value to what was happening or not?*

GARRISON: This is one of my favorite areas. You have your finger on why I do not have a PhD in economics, because so much of what was being done at the time, in the

practical sense, was crap. I could read the econometric footnotes in an IMF or a World Bank report. That was not the norm among economic officers in the State Department, to be very honest, but I did have a background in statistics and econometrics from Georgetown during my undergraduate work and I had taken work at the graduate level at the time. It was fascinating, it was fun but in a practical sense it only took you so far in talking about developing world economics, because of the inability of any model, no matter how you constructed it, to deal with human irrationality.

I like to use the example of the Congolese central market, where there would be five or six vendors with cans of powdered milk stacked up for sale and you would think that, as with gasoline stations where you have three or four clustered on the same block, they would all end up with the same price, as one undercut the other, driving it down. Didn't happen in the Congo. You would find the same powdered milk brand being sold at no less than three different prices, because individuals would patronize only a particular vendor. They were from the same tribe or they were neighbors or there was a social link that sent them to that same vendor, and no model I have ever seen could factor that in.

*Q: Today, as I go down roads here in Northern Virginia, I see maybe up to a 20 cent difference in gasoline prices and yet the stations, the more expensive ones, still have cars going in there, which always strikes me, I figure there has to be a certain amount of habit or*

GARRISON: Well, but there's also a tradeoff in how much gas and time you spend looking for a lower price. When you're standing in the same market and I'm talking about the distance of this room, one powdered milk stand from the other, with different prices and they still both have customers. It takes it up a level. You're going to have price differentiation. Some people won't buy from off brand stations, claiming that the gas is watered or not as good or the octane isn't as controlled or whatever. Those are perception things and one of the real weaknesses in econometrics is finding some sort of adequate proxy for that. In dealing with the academic community, which I did more actively on the Congo desk, because you had far more people interested in the Congo who wanted to talk with the State Department than you did writers on economic policy interested in talking with the State Department but some of those folks did write on economics.

It was the sort of thing that didn't get you published in any of the higher-level economic journals in the United States at the time. They were just so far off on the econometric and mathematical fringe that it didn't play for us. It may well have played with some of the economists with the research department at the IMF and flowed in that way.

*Q: Did you get any feel for the IMF, was there an IMF point of view, personality or what have you, particularly thinking about Africa? Was there a divergence?*

GARRISON: I think there was a realization that Africa was not ready to take most of the steps that a classic IMF program would require and a frustration, because it should have been. I think it was perhaps harder for the staff at the IMF, which felt tremendously pressured by not just the United States but by Western governments to come up with

these programs in order to allow debt rescheduling that they felt really didn't stand a realistic chance of success, because the governments just weren't committed to taking the major steps necessary to put their economies on a sound footing.

*Q: While you were dealing with this, did you ever run across someone saying, "Screw it, they can't do it. We're going to tell 'em off and let 'em live with it" or did we always sort of chicken out?*

GARRISON: Do a Burma. That would come out in frustration at least once and then political realities would set in, because up until the cutoff of aid to Kenya over the IMF program and this is the late 1990s, now, the Goldenberg scandal and subsequent, I don't think there was enough resolve, particularly on the part of the United States, to step back from anybody. I stepped away from Africa for a fairly long period in the 1980s and early 1990s. Things will have gone on during that period that I just don't remember.

Guinea may at one point have been left in that mode, but more often it was a case, as I recall it, of not the IMF or the Western donors saying "To hell with 'em" but the country's government saying, "Look, we're not going to do this. What are you going to do to us? We can't we get any aid because we're in arrears on payments, nothing's flowing in anyway, it can't get any worse. To hell with ya!" In most situations I believe we did continue to provide humanitarian assistance, particularly Public Law (PL) 480, through voluntary agencies, but it's really the case of you owe five bucks the banker's in control, you owe 5,000 the balance is a little closer, you owe 500,000 bucks and you are in control, not the banker. Well, these guys had no prospect of paying us back. Were we ready to write it off? Probably not, at that point.

*Q: During the two years you were doing this, the IMF business or our policy towards Africa, was it working?*

GARRISON: No, it wasn't. We were starting to edge towards what was called the Washington consensus on what constituted a sensible package of assistance and programs, but about the only ones who were signing on and having success with that, if I remember correctly, were the Ugandans. And, indeed, one of the reasons that I stopped doing Africa at this point was I was fast approaching burnout.

The IMF programs were all beginning to run together. I could practically write one without reference to the specifics of the country, because the problems were the same and by the time you've read the twentieth version, I was increasingly frustrated over the Congo, because you'd see this thing come together and you'd say, "They're not going to do it. They haven't managed to make targets on this yet and why do we think they're going to do it this time? They're not. We need to take a more realistic picture of what it is we're doing here."

At this point I think we really were supplying alcohol to the alcoholics.

*Q: In 1983 where did you go?*



GARRISON: I went to a year of Hungarian language training before heading off to Budapest.

Something we haven't covered here is a brief sojourn I did in 1980 up at the United Nations (UN) as the Africa watcher during the General Assembly session. I believe that heretofore the bureau had used ambassadors at loose ends for this assignment. I don't remember what the series of circumstances were but I was asked if I would be interested in going up to fill out the mission's capacity for coverage of Africa during the session. Dick Jackson was the Africa watcher assigned and his expertise really was more the Middle East, so it was a good fit. My experience was sub-Saharan, so it worked out very well. They had a separate Namibia operation, this was 1980, and since I had just gotten divorced it was also a good time for me to get out of town for a couple of months. It worked out very, very well personally.

It was very interesting to see the UN in action. I spent a lot of time with the Third Committee on decolonization issues, because we were still going round and round over southern Africa, in particular Namibia, but we discussed the whole decolonization process.

It left me with a profound lack of respect for the UN. Arguing for hours literally over the placement of a comma. Yes, it makes a difference in the wording but that sort of debating society approach just really made me feel as if what was being done in New York made no sense at all. The culture of the UN, where meetings are called for 9:00 am and by 9:30 am people are beginning to filter in and then by 10:00 am maybe you get rolling, and then you break for lunch for two or three hours, where the real work is done as people get together informally, and then you have a session that supposedly starts at 3:00 pm but doesn't get underway until 4:00, 4:30 pm and then runs long, drove me absolutely nuts. It's dysfunctional. It's the only debating society we've got really for these issues but as a decision-making body, not on a bet, and the saddest part is I feel that you do need a UN peacekeeping force to provide that buffer in places where there is no obvious honest broker.

But does the rest of the structure make any sense? Does it provide any real benefit? None that I can see.

Working with the UN from an economic development standpoint, it's worse than useless. It becomes a bully pulpit for some of the oddest theories of development economics that you've ever heard, and it succeeds in diverting money and attention away from the practical.

Our refusal to do infrastructure projects with U.S. development funds in the post-Vietnam world I think was one of our biggest sins. We're now to the stage where no single country can afford to do the sorts of infrastructure project that much of the developing world desperately needs and the only options out there are for the World Bank or a consortium

of donors but this is an area where the UN could have and should have been in the forefront and it has totally missed an opportunity.

*Q: Okay, you took Hungarian, I take it, 1983 to 1984?*

GARRISON: Yes, starting in the summer cycle of 1983 and then leaving for Hungary in early 1984.

*Q: How did you find Hungarian?*

GARRISON: Difficult, as much because the program at the Foreign Service Institute (FSI) was in transition and the teaching system was a bit disorganized. You had a coterie of 1956ers who were teaching and teaching well, but you also had younger émigrés who were, in at least one of the two cases, not teachers by training and it made the first month or so of Hungarian training rather difficult. We had two classes going at that time, grouped according to ability, and one class got a much firmer grammar basis than the other did. Fortunately, in some ways I think the class that was naturally adept at language got the less firm grounding but it did affect my overall comfort level with the language when I got to the country.

*Q: You were there from 1984 to when?*

GARRISON: Until 1986.

*Q: What was the situation in Hungary, both politically and economically, in 1984 and then what were relations between Hungary and the United States like?*

GARRISON: This was the era of “goulash communism” and learning from what had happened to the Czechs in 1968, the Hungarians had taken a different road in establishing their own “socialist identity.” One of the things that was striking in Budapest was that you never saw lines, at a time when the rest of the Bloc was still dealing with a degree of economic privation, or at least shortages, and where the politics were reflecting the need to keep a lid on a society that could easily become restive.

The Hungarians had moved in a different direction. They had focused on their consumer economy. The agricultural sector in Hungary, unlike in Poland, had never been completely collectivized. There were a number of legitimate cooperatives and there had been a tradition of continuing contact with the West in both agriculture and science, amazingly enough. As a result, the agriculture economy was allowed to flourish in this nether region. It wasn’t collectivized, but it wasn’t privatized. You had some private operations within the economy, particularly in things like the small-scale wine industry. The markets were full of private sellers of produce, meat, fish.

The larger problem sociologically was with the industrial retiree class. That’s where you saw the biggest pockets of poverty, and then the Romany, the gypsies, the migrants in the rural areas. There was pressure from the job standpoint at the educated school leaver

level, not the high school but the university students were finding it difficult to find jobs that were sufficiently challenging. But on the whole the Hungarian government had done a very good job of managing the economy in such a way that there was a stream of basic necessities that was pretty much unbroken and there was a flow of consumer goods, including imports from Pakistan, India, places where a sophisticated barter arrangement could often be worked out.

So, the only time I could remember seeing a line for anything in Budapest in the two years I was there was at Christmastime when the oranges came in from Cuba, because they were a short supply treat for the holiday.

*Q: I take it, after 1968 in Czechoslovakia, a very hard line government came in in Czechoslovakia and sort of the whole intellectual class and all was really hit hard. Was this different in Hungary?*

GARRISON: Exactly. What you saw in 1968 happened in Hungary in 1956 after the revolution, but over the ensuing 25, almost 30 years, a more nuanced form of protest came into being. We joked about the government politically salami slicing off freedoms, little by little by little, so that it reached the stage, if not quite where the Czechs were in 1968, pretty darn close and in some ways went beyond it, but in such small increments as to not raise eyebrows in Moscow until after the fact.

The political cabarets were quite active in Budapest at a time when they simply weren't allowed in Czechoslovakia, in Prague. A joke that was circulating at the time was that Chernenko was making a tour of all of the Bloc capitals and he had with him a length of woolen goods that he picked up on a trip to Britain. He wanted to see if he could have a suit made. And his first stop is Prague and the tailor looks at it and says, "Sorry, there's no way I can make you a suit out of this." Next stop is Sofia, Bulgaria. The same thing: he finds a good tailor, who says, "I'm sorry, Comrade President, there's no way I can make you a suit out of this." This happens in Romania as well, which of course by this point had lost favor as the shining star of non-Russian socialism and was falling back into the Stalinist mode. Finally he arrives in Budapest and asks whether there's a tailor that would be capable of taking on the task. Tailor comes in, looks at the length of wools, measures his distinguished customer and says, "Okay, Comrade, we'll have this for you by the end of the week. Chernenko was dumbfounded and said, "How is it that I can go to Prague, to Sofia, to Bucharest and everybody says they can't possibly make me a suit out of this, and you say, 'No problem?'" The tailor responds "There you're a big man. Here, you're not such a big man."

That was very much the Hungarian attitude: we're different, we're not Slavs, for one. We're strongly tied to the West, we've always been strongly tied to the West and we will handle our own problems and create our own solution here in a way that suits the Hungarian world. Well, while I was there, there were Hungarian parliamentary elections that, still within the cover if you will of the party, had multiple candidates and were actually contested and brought a degree of representative government to Hungary at a time when it was unthinkable anywhere else within the Bloc. It was fascinating to watch

within a year of that first contested election how rapidly the individuals who were still Communist Party members began to realize what constituent service was about and what they were going to have to do if they were looking to be reelected.

Hungary also benefited from a very good economic team. Janos Kornai at the central bank, who was a master at working the international monetary elite, he was a brilliant economist and a very shrewd politician. He'd been around for a while. The history, if you will, is he started out Janos Kornhauser and after World War II became Janos Kornai, knowing that his German heritage was not going to be helpful in post-World War II Hungary. He worked with the international banking community to get Hungary's credit rating to the point where it could borrow easily in the international capital market and did borrow quite easily. He had a lot of short-term lending at one point that was too much of a drag on a growing economy, so he was able to stretch out the terms. But if Hungary needed any kind of short-term financing at that period, it could get it without any of the heartache and, if you will, acid reflux of worries about whether they had the hard currency base to pay it off if for some reason the loan had to be called.

*Q: How was the Hungarian government treating those who fled in 1956?*

GARRISON: They were schizophrenic about it. Almost every Hungarian you met had a relative in the States or in Canada or in Australia, because so much of the population had taken off in 1956. I don't remember as a percentage what it was, but you're talking about a country that had 10 million people, the bulk of whom lived in Budapest and you had as many Hungarians in Cleveland as you had in Budapest. So, there was this understanding that we have to come to terms with the fact there is a large overseas Hungarian population that can advocate for us, that can be a conduit for funds. At time I was there the U.S. ambassador was Hungarian-American.

*Q: Who was that?*

GARRISON: Nicolas Salgo. Interestingly, he called himself Nicolas Salgo. His son was Miklos Salgo.

It was the first time we had had a Hungarian-American in the job in recent memory.

*Q: Were Hungarians coming back?*

GARRISON: The folks who had left in 1956 or in the postwar period were coming back with no problems. Some of the later émigrés, they weren't dissidents, they simply took off for economic reasons and for them it was trickier coming back. There was a renunciation of citizenship procedure. The only time that we ran into any sort of consular problems were when folks had left, say, between 1968 and 1980 and decided to wait for the period necessary to establish U.S. citizenship before renouncing their Hungarian citizenship. Sometimes they would travel back on their Hungarian passport and if they did that it could be taken, if the government wanted, as a reaffirmation of their Hungarian nationality. Then the penalties for having left illicitly came into play. It wasn't a major

issue. There were a few cases where it was a continuing issue, but not to a point where it was a thorn in the relationship.

The flow between the United States and Hungary was constant and reasonably heavy at this time. Even without any major U.S. government sponsorship we were handling at least one and often two or three scientific exchanges a month, in all of the hard sciences and also in space-related technology.

*Q: Did you feel that the scientific exchanges, when we're dealing with the Soviet Union, the feeling is that they're sending people over to essentially find out as much as they could and then allow Americans to go in and look at icons.*

GARRISON: That was not the case here.

*Q: They weren't a catspaw for the Soviets?*

GARRISON: Not at all. The hard sciences in Hungary were taught very well and taught very aggressively, so there was a base there, particularly in the medical profession, that Americans could learn from. In fact, we had a number of young Hungarian-American students who were in med school in Hungary. The Hungarian system was set up so that you began as an undergraduate and it was a five or six year program, but you came out with an degree as a medical doctor (MD). This was quite popular, particularly the University of Szeged had a coterie of these young students. At the same time the research in, for example, spinal bifida was such that a number of Americans would be coming in to look at the techniques they were using and to work with some of the doctors there.

The woman who was head of the statistical survey for Hungary was actually a legitimate statistician and the deal was she would not publish rather than publish altered data. So, you would find gaps in the statistics sometimes, but you could depend on what you found. She, in fact, was president of the International Society of Statisticians and one of her deputies was quite actively involved with the United Nation's (UN) training of statisticians in the developing world. So, it wasn't the sort of thing that you saw with the other Bloc states.

It was quirky things, too, like, any number of the cattle operations in Hungary, dairy cattle, were member of the Holstein Breeders Association and they continued to be members through all of the various political upheavals. They were tied into the international agricultural scene.

*Q: What about political repression?*

GARRISON: That was definitely still there.

If this nonsense kept up I would just go to talk to [no idea how to spell this name], who was the Americas desk officer, who later became the Hungarian ambassador to the United States and just say, "Look, this is silliness. You're going to tape it anyway. So

why play games? Just tape it and be done with it.” That was the last time my phone went out while I had duty.

*Q: Was there a significant number of people in jail?*

GARRISON: Not that I recall. Certainly not for dissident activity. It was more subtle. You wouldn't get to travel. Your professional avenues would be circumscribed rather narrowly. They didn't resort to what had happened in 1956. It wasn't the mass incarceration and maltreatment that had taken place in the immediate postwar period.

*Q: As I recall, there weren't Soviet troops in Hungary?*

GARRISON: Actually, there were: the “Southern Group of Forces.” I believe Soviet troops were stationed continuously in Hungary from the time they liberated it in 1945 until the collapse of the Soviet Union. You obviously didn't go taking photographs anywhere near Hungarian army installations, but the Defense Attaches (DATT) had a very easy working relationship with their Hungarian counterparts. We had both an air and an army attaché. One of them was quite a good linguist, had served in Bulgaria and spoke pretty darn decent Hungarian, and had known his primary counterpart in a previous overseas posting.

It was tricky for Hungarian officials to do things like come to your home, but in this case, I remember quite vividly him inviting his military counterparts and them coming to his home without any trepidation. When I invited some of my professional colleagues, we knew they had to get an okay and if you invited four people, three of them would be able to come, the fourth wouldn't. But it wasn't the sort of heavy-handed squelching of contact.

*Q: How were relations, start with the Soviet Union, at that point?*

GARRISON: Hungary was very much operating in its own sphere with its relations with the United States. The major irritant had been the Crown of St. Stephen, which had just been returned before I got there.

*Q: I interviewed Philip Kaiser, who was very proud of being able to*

GARRISON: Bring it back home?

*Q: That damned thing had been around, with a crooked cross on it, for so long and now, anyway, it removed an irritant.*

GARRISON: The folks at Ft. Knox were very glad to get rid of it. But that had been a major irritant in our relationship.

Because the Hungarians were trying to keep themselves at arm's length from the Soviets they were looking for ways that they could branch out. They still played the party line in

the United Nations (UN), for instance and if there was going to be a vote on Israel, you could count, for instance, on the Hungarians voting with Moscow on Israel, on disarmament, Zionism, racism, on Cuba, on any of the laundry list of things that mattered.

But when it came to treatment of their Jewish population, the Hungarians had gone off in a completely different direction. There was none of the repression that you saw in the Soviet Union and none of the tension that you saw in Poland, for instance. The Hungarian Jewish community had been protected right until the very end of World War II, until the Germans were actually physically in Budapest. Again, you're talking about a small world. There was a lot of intermarriage.

So, the basis for an independent Hungarian foreign policy was already there.

*Q: Did the Soviet embassy or the Soviet ambassador sort of dominate?*

GARRISON: I wouldn't even say he was first among equals. He was an important figure, but the Hungarians weren't looking East, they were looking West. They were looking at, internally, how they were going to transition from where they were into what they were going to become. They knew they were in the process of becoming something different from the Cold War-defined political entity, but they didn't know what they were going to be.

*Q: Was Solidarnosc something that they were looking at?*

GARRISON: The Catholic Church didn't play anywhere near the role in Hungary that it did in Poland and the labor unions didn't have the strength that they did in Poland. I think this was the period when the Polish security service killed the priest. There was no movement in Hungary that emulated *Solidarnosc*. It was just a completely different set of circumstances. There was a horror that the Polish authorities would actually do something that stupid, not even focusing on the killing of priests, but knowing that it would create a martyr and the reaction that it would have created in Hungary. They just never would have done it.

*Q: I go back to the time of the cardinal*

GARRISON: Mindszenty. With his death, that took a lot of pressure off the relationship, too. He had been allowed to leave Hungary in 1971, and died in 1975. Once Mindszenty left the embassy, that was the transition to the next phase in Hungary. It lessened the role of religion in politics pretty much across the board. The Hungarian Protestant Church, they were not particularly political. In the Catholic churches, mass always ended with signing of the pre-communist Hungarian anthem as the recessional, which really reflected more the sense of Hungarian identity than anything else.

There was a strong patriotic streak throughout the society. Even the most political young and comers within the party structure would talk about the Battle of Mohacs which

took place in 1521 as if it were yesterday. It was a part of their Hungarian identity. They were Hungarian far more than they were socialist.

*Q: The relationship with Romania must have been a little difficult, because this was Ceausescu and*

GARRISON: And the whole question of ethnic Hungarians in Romania and treatment of the whole Transylvania question. This was the bigger foreign policy issue, as far as Hungarians were concerned, because so many families did have relatives across the border, and Hungarian newspapers were for the most part banned in Romania, and the living conditions were so sharply dissimilar, with Hungarian families taking food to their cousins. That was a real irritant. The border guards had been instructed to confiscate contraband like newspapers and food. Bibles also became a subject of some irritation.

But to give you a sense of the difference between Hungary and the rest of Central Europe in general, but particularly between Hungary and Romania, it was the coldest winter in something like 120 years in the winter of 1984-1985 and some of our personnel in Bucharest were finding that soda bottles kept in an interior closet in their apartments were freezing and exploding because they simply didn't have heat, as oil supplies dried up and there wasn't sufficient foreign exchange available to buy what they needed to maintain a livable climate. The Swiss sent all of their support staff home to Switzerland from Romania, because they couldn't guarantee their health and safety. The Swiss weren't the only embassy to do that. All throughout the Bloc you had reports of the cutbacks that these governments were making in order to ensure that there was an adequate supply of heat to their populations. The biggest cutback that the Hungarians made was to cut back the TV service to, I think it was, three or four hours at night, because they had access to coal internally and they also had hard currency available and the flexibility in their economy to be able to shift funds to make sure that there was a pretty steady supply of heat in the urban areas. Now there were severe situations in some of the rural areas but that was a function of the distribution system, not an absence of funding.

That sort of dichotomy between one side of the border and the other, along the Transylvanian border, just really highlighted how bad Ceausescu's system was and made the Romanians all the more sensitive about any attempts by Hungary to help out the ethnic Hungarians living in Romania. There were basic concerns about irredentism to begin with, but no matter how many times the Hungarians said, "No, we're not looking to take Transylvania back" the Ceausescu regime never believed them.

*Q: Did Czechoslovakia play any role, or were they kind of looked upon as a group of people who couldn't handle the situation very well or something?*

GARRISON: There was that pall still hanging over Czechoslovakia. The Hungarians and the Czechs had normal interactions, but there certainly wasn't any sense of comity and there wasn't any sense that the Czechs would be amenable to the Hungarian road or that there was anything that the Hungarians could learn from the Czechs, other than in the



negative. It was striking how beautiful Prague was, and how dead the city was at that time.

The cafes in Budapest were full on weekends. If you went to the opera on a Saturday, you'd see grandmas taking their grandkids to their first experience at the opera and then going to one of the pastry shops that had been around for a century and a half. It was a normal night life. You had political cabarets, you had theater and you had people on the streets. You also had Christmas trees decorated in the middle of the main shopping plaza, which you didn't really have elsewhere.

*Q: Austria?*

GARRISON: That was another very interesting relationship, because the Austrians had a sense of "our little brothers, the Hungarians" that was maintained and the balance was beginning to even out. The difference was the Hungarians could not flow steadily, easily, out.

*Q: But was it opening up at all?*

GARRISON: Opening up a bit, but not easily. You had to have business reason to travel. You didn't just get a passport to go visit someone. The truck traffic that went through Hungary from Paris to Turkey was constant and that also added an element of forced opening, because you had so many diverse peoples just moving constantly through, it was like being in the middle of U.S. Interstate I-81.

*Q: What were you doing there?*

GARRISON: I was the economic section, when I got there. We added a science officer about halfway through my tour because we just needed one.

*Q: I would have thought being an economic officer in a place that certainly wasn't stagnant would have kept your hands full. What were our interests there?*

GARRISON: Our interests were primarily in the financial sector. The central bank governor had been working his way through a couple of International Monetary Fund (IMF) programs and avoiding debt rescheduling but doing some sophisticated rollovers with the commercial sector. We were looking to see how they were going to continue the balancing act, whether there was enough vibrancy in the Hungarian economy writ large to keep the monetary sector in as good shape as it was then. We didn't have any major neuralgic points. There would be occasional dustups over things like frozen food exports or something like that. We did have some concerns on air traffic, but they were the routine sorts of concerns that you had with any airline relationship. Periodic negotiation of Pan Am Airlines' transit rights was on the agenda. Steel dumping was a now and then sort of issue.

The commercial relationship was expanding. We did have a commercial officer and a couple of commercial Foreign Service nationals (FSN). In fact, that section grew quite a bit while I was there. That was where more of our interest, quite frankly, was.

*Q: On the economic side, often when you have a country where a considerable number of people have emigrated to the United States and all, they're trying to get their property restored, they're trying to do this or trying to do that*

GARRISON: We had a short property list and we didn't have very much in the way of transfer flows, oddly enough. I think that was far more of an issue in the 1960s and probably even the early 1970s. But by the early, mid-1980s it wasn't high on the list.

*Q: Did you have people come back, getting Social Security and all that?*

GARRISON: You were just starting to see folks retiring to Hungary. It wasn't like Poland, where you had a large number.

*Q: I was in Yugoslavia in the 1960s and that was a significant part of the balance of payments with Yugoslavia.*

GARRISON: It wasn't with Hungary. The political freedoms weren't there to the degree that they were in Yugoslavia, to make it all that desirable for Hungarian-Americans to come back. They would come back to visit, so the currency restrictions would sometimes come into play. So, you had someone send his daughter to school in the United States for a year and her uncle in the United States would pick up the tab, and then when the uncle would go to visit the family in Hungary and the girl's father would pay for his entire stay. You couldn't transfer money out to pay for the kid's education. The uncle avoided having to exchange dollars into florins at an unfavorable rate when he came to visit.

*Q: You were saying you were blessed within the Bloc by having pretty good statistics and of course that's what economic sections live on.*

GARRISON: We had very easy access to some of the senior personnel. It was amazing in that sense, how easily we could find out a lot about the statistical nature of the Hungarian economy. One of the things I regretted most, though, I spent a lot of time briefing journalists and bankers. I'd say more than a third of my day was taken up with briefings of one sort or another, the highlight of which was an opportunity to brief George Kennan. It was like talking to God.

As a result, you didn't have the time to do the things that I think are most important when you're trying to assess an economy: get on a local bus and wander around town and get a sense of how many guys are hanging out on the street corners. Are buildings being used or are factories sitting idle? Get more of a pulse. Statistics will give you one thing, but they won't give you that sense of how the numbers are translating on a human scale. That was the question for the Hungarians: how much of what we were seeing in growth was working its way all the way down to the population. How equitable was distribution and

what did that mean for budgeting and planning? One of the issues the Hungarians were having with the IMF as they were going through this period of getting their economy well stabilized was on transit subsidies.

The Budapest transit system was marvelous, a well-designed, integrated public transit system, a mixture of bus, subway and trolley car but it was heavily subsidized and rather than dealing with the need to differentially subsidize, for instance for children or war veterans and the elderly, they subsidized the system top to bottom. It was that sort of evolutionary technical question that was bugging the Hungarian planners.

That and the transition from a planned, command economy to a more responsive economy.

But access was great. The embassy was literally next door to the central bank and on more than one occasion I just walked in the side door and went up to talk with one or the other of my contacts, all of whom were members of board of directors of the bank.

*Q: Was English pretty much a language of banking and all?*

GARRISON: The banking and finance world ran in English, whether it was French bankers or German bankers or whomever, the working language was English. We found this the case even dealing with the Congolese in an earlier incarnation.

*Q: How was the ambassador?*

GARRISON: Very intent on proving to his schoolmates that he'd done well.

*Q: His schoolmates being Hungarians?*

GARRISON: Yeah.

*Q: This is one of the problems. In another interview I'm conducting, there was a similar comment concerning an Italian-American serving as the U.S. ambassador in Rome. When you send somebody back most of the time they're trying to prove something, "I've made it!" rather than getting on with the business, with very honorable exceptions, but this is one of*

GARRISON: This is one of the problems and his optic was "Let me explain these Americans to you" rather than "I'm here representing the United States." It became very difficult to get him to focus on what the U.S. interest was. Coming from the business world, his interests really were on commercial exchanges and expanding commercial opportunities, primarily for the Hungarians in the U.S. market. That made for a difficult experience at times.

*Q: Did you have any presidential visits or anything of that nature?*

GARRISON: We had Secretary Shultz, but no presidential visits.

*Q: How would you say, as far as relations go, how did Congress and the White House view Hungary?*

GARRISON: Congressman Steve Solarz of New York was making a tour to talk about the plight of Jewish communities in each of the Soviet bloc countries and he stopped in Hungary briefly. There wasn't much for him to do, since there was not a persecuted community and the only functioning rabbinical seminary in the Bloc was in Budapest.

But other than that most of our congressional interest, in my recollection, was in the trade sector. We did have one rather large congressional delegation that included Senator Byrd and Senator Dole. That's the only one I can really remember. There wasn't a congressional delegation a month.

*Q: Some of these places, even Romania with that monster Ceausescu, by being sort of at odds with the Soviet Union was kind of on the circuit. Was there the feeling that Hungary was moving by its salami tactics was really moving into the West? Within a couple of years after you left, without a big fanfare it just sort of said, "We're already there, let's take down these silly gates."*

GARRISON: As soon as they were able to, that was exactly the attitude. Every Hungarian political figure would say "We're part of the West, we've always been part of the West. Our thought pattern is Western. We're Christian, we're in large measure Roman Catholic. We don't belong in the Bloc. We're not comfortable with Eastern thought." They considered that the divide between East and West was definitely east of Hungary. The Bulgarians fell on the eastern side. The Romanians half the time fell on the eastern side. The Poles and the Hungarians and the Czechs were definitely on the western side. The Slovaks, they weren't so sure about sometimes.

*Q: How about the security services there? Were they restive? What were they up to?*

GARRISON: They were not in control, but it's like having a pet python. You always want to make sure they're well fed. That's the way the politicians treated them. They very definitely had an active role to play. They would try to target Americans and try to turn Americans but it was an underlying reality of the place, rather than the sort of aggressive, omnipresent harassment that you saw in places like Poland, where they would drop excrement through car windows. You weren't getting notes from dissidents dropped in your car or in your mailbox, so that the security services didn't have to respond in the same way. But they put transmitters on your car from time to time.

*Q: They had to have something to play with, I guess.*

GARRISON: Their treatment of their own people was a little more aggressive but it wasn't Romania.

*Q: How did we view the Hungarian Army? By this time, was the whole idea of somehow or another something happening and the Soviet force pouring through the Fulda Gap, was this completely gone?*

GARRISON: At least as regards Hungary it was. The assumption was that if they got the call from Moscow they would make their way slowly to wherever it was that Moscow wanted them to be. All deliberate speed would have been the appropriate term.

The stature of Janos Kadar was such, it was clear that he was in charge, not the military. What would have been interesting would have been a transition taking place at a time when the rest of the communist bloc was not falling apart.

*Q: Were you all watching events in the Soviet Union? This is, Gorbachev is coming in and nobody quite knew what it meant at the time, an improved communism or something. Was this something that you and maybe your Hungarian colleagues would talk about?*

GARRISON: Not really. It wasn't an overwhelming element of the planning process as far as the Hungarians were concerned. It was, what are we going to have to do to keep them at a distance, to get them to leave us alone?

*Q: The West Germans, were they pretty aggressive, because this was their old territory?*

GARRISON: They were aggressively involved in the construction industry and in expanding the tourist industry. There was quite a bit of activity from the West German business and banking community in Hungary, which set up for some interesting rivalries with the Austrians, who viewed it as their neighborhood. There was this sense that if you wanted to get yourself well placed for the next growth round in Central Europe you needed to get into Hungary now, that it could give you a jumping off point for the other parts of the area. Poland was still too unsettled. The two power centers for the next round were viewed as Poland and Hungary, and they were proceeding at different rates and in very different ways.

*Q: In Czechoslovakia the dissidents came out of the cultural field. What about in Hungary? What was sort of the cultural climate there? Playwrights, poets, movies, that sort of thing.*

GARRISON: One of the most popular musical plays at the time was *Stephen the King*, which was done as a cross between the rock operas *Tommy* and *Jesus Christ Superstar*, very much in that sort of modernist mold, talking about Hungarian history and the kingship of St. Stephen and what it meant to be Hungarian, maintenance of Hungarian identity, and it was political parable for the late 1970s, early 1980s. There was an active and well-known literary community but I wouldn't think of somebody like Adam Michnik finding a parallel in Hungary.

*Q: Was there much inflow from East Germany and Czechoslovakia, of tourism into Hungary and were some of them looking for a way to get the hell out?*

GARRISON: There was a goodly amount of tourism, because of course you could do it on the cheap, with funny money i.e., nonconvertible currencies, particularly to Lake Balaton, which was a lovely resort area. When you went up the Danube, the first thing you noted when you went from the Hungarian border to the Czech border was that the barbed wire appeared. The transit controls that the Czechs and certainly the East Germans maintained were such that not going back was hard enough, even if you were just talking about staying in Hungary and not going back. Using it as a jumping off point to go to the West, not so much.

*Q: Well, you left then in*

GARRISON: In 1986.

*Q: Where'd you go?*

GARRISON: I came back and worked in the inspector general's office for the next year.

*Q: 1986-1987. What were you inspecting?*

GARRISON: I was actually working on special projects and doing some of the reviews of implementation of inspection report recommendations. I had developed some health problems in Hungary that were getting worse. Turned out I had bleeding stomach ulcers. So, when I first came back I got married, which hadn't been on my agenda, and then was dealing with the medical issues. This was also the period when the rheumatoid arthritis started to, it went from being mildly noticeable, I'd had a couple of rounds of surgery already but at this point it really began to become a problem.

So, I was working on things like a review of housing standards. They had just completed what was more a bench test than an inspection, a review of what housing standards were. I was working with some of the senior inspectors on the conclusions of the study.

*Q: Talking about housing standards, was the idea to in a way cut down or make it better?*

GARRISON: That we were often over housed overseas. This was one of Nicholas Salgo's pet ideas, too. They were building housing. As Hungary was becoming more urbane and more of a destination, if you will, the pressure on prices for suitable housing was going up and it was difficult to explain to him that no, not all of us were living in two room flats in the United States. You were talking about adults with families who'd been in professions for long enough to have pretty doggone good accommodations in the United States, that we were not willing to trade down overseas, that you had to have a certain amount of tradeoff, particularly in a place like Hungary, where your American support staff do not speak Hungarian and do not get language training.

So, their ability to take advantage of everything that's out in the culture is very heavily circumscribed. You have to provide the space at home and the amenities at home to allow them to lead a reasonably comfortable life. Nobody joins the Foreign Service to be a monk. It's not a vow of poverty, chastity and obedience.

*Q: Particularly coming from a wealthy ambassador*

GARRISON: It's pretty damned insulting.

*Q: During the year you were there, how did things work out? What was developing?*

GARRISON: We were having some back and forth, because of this question of standards for singles, first off, and overall housing standards and the difference between adequate housing and representational housing. My own experience in Africa showed me that an officer needed the space in Africa far more than in the developed world because that became your place to entertain. Adequate restaurants or adequate options for outside the home entertaining were just not there.

So, it was that sort of back and forth over the on the ground realities versus the theoretical yeah, okay, if you were living in the United States you'd be living in a three-bedroom house in Manassas. But you're not living in the United States and over housing in Paris and over housing in Ouagadougou are two different realities.

Much of what we were doing, though, in terms of compliance, really was focused on the management side of the inspections. It really did surprise me how seriously people took inspections and how often you didn't get the sort of "not only no but hell no" response from posts but you actually got into a serious dialogue if they felt the inspectors' recommendations missed the mark.

*Q: Well then, 1987, where'd you go from there?*

GARRISON: I went to the Economic and Business Bureau (EB), to the Food Policy office in EB.

*Q: One always thinks of the cafeteria*

GARRISON: EB Food Policy turned out to be one of the more fascinating things I've done in my life, because we were getting ready to start the U.S.-Canada Free Trade Agreement and then we moved into the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) agricultural talks. It was probably the most neuralgic issue in the GATT talks and one of the biggest pains in the butt in terms of finding an equitable balance in the U.S.-Canada talks. My husband still jokes about refusing to drink Canadian beer, because of the taxes the Canadian provinces level on American beer.

*Q: What were the issues, say, in the U.S.-Canada talks?*

GARRISON: Wheat was one of those things that, if you look at the United States and Canada, logically you think that trade would flow north and south. It often doesn't, it flows east and west. When you look at the distances you say "Why?" and why is often because of things like transit subsidies. The Canadian government wants to keep poor Thunder Bay on the Great Lakes, at least when it's ice-free, alive and well and running.

*Q: I never heard of it. What's it called?*

GARRISON: Thunder Bay.

*Q: Tell me about Thunder Bay.*

GARRISON: Thunder Bay is on the far end of the Great Lakes and it's a transit port to get you into the Great Lakes shipping system and into the U.S. heartland. The Canadian system had, I assume they still do, subsidies for use of the port of Thunder Bay, rather than shipping through the coastal ports. It made shipment of wheat from Canada competitive with U.S. domestically grown wheat from the Mid-West. It was one of those points that for maintenance of the rail system and the Canadian transit system, not so much the wheat growers but the transit system, the Canadians insisted on maintaining at least some degree of that subsidy.

There were also disagreements over whether or not it was actually a subsidy. Your subsidy is clearly a subsidy. My subsidy is a price adjustment.

*Q: Well, did we have a counter to that? Did we have our own Thunder Bay somewhere or something?*

GARRISON: We had sugar containing articles. Sugar and sugar containing articles are one of the areas which were grandfathered under the GATT and which we intended to continue to grandfather in the U.S.-Canada Free Trade Agreement, that and milk products. We have real restrictions on milk. So, we argued back and forth over these for the better part of a year. It's the sort of thing that affects a very small number of people but it affects a sensitive sector of the economy.

*Q: Well, yeah, on these issues, I've interviewed Roz Ridgeway on fish, but fish goes back to the pre-Revolutionary period. I would think that all these subsidies wouldn't be solved in a free trade agreement.*

GARRISON: No, but you make progress on them and you do get it to a point where you think you have a tradeoff between Canadian wheat coming through and U.S. hops going up from Idaho.

By the way, do you know what canola oil is, or why it's called canola oil? It's Canada oil. It's shorthand for a particular type of rapeseed oil and obviously a lot more saleable as canola than as rapeseed. That was, again, one of those sections that the Canadians



cared tremendously about, that there be a special designation for low erucic acid rapeseed oil, known as canola oil.

*Q: Because we have, rapeseed's a huge product in the European market, lots of subsidies for that and all. Do we grow our own rapeseed?*

GARRISON: It's not that we grow it. The Canadians wanted to be distinguishable from the European and to have access to the U.S. market, as a substitute for soy or safflower, which we do grow. Because of the supposed health properties of the polyunsaturated oil they wanted their chunk.

*Q: You've got all these hops and canola oil, sunflower, saffron, all this, there must be people sitting around a table saying "We'll give you three of these and two of those. You give me two of those and three of these." Of course, every one of them affected a very distinct group of*

GARRISON: Domestic producers, exactly. The teams from the agricultural side, Agriculture Canada and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), had intensive discussions with their individual sector reps. The role of the business community in any of these negotiations is something intriguing to behold, because, yeah, you get each special interest group coming in and saying, "I can't live with this. I can't live with the admission into the United States under the U.S.-Mexico arrangements of broomcorn brooms, because it will put out of business my blind broomcorn makers." I'm not kidding about broomcorn.

Yeah, you get a steady and regular flow from the business community. It was as much a negotiation within the delegation over how far can you go with this and how far forward is this going to go. That's one reason why the U.S.-Canada Free Trade Agreement wasn't an agreement until right down to the wire, because there were so many areas where the technical level could just go head to head for so long and you have an impasse.

*Q: As the State Department representative, did you feel like an outsider in a family quarrel, because I suspect that the Canadian and American people, they're civil servants, they've been doing the job since time immemorial, they knew each other, they'd been in each other's pockets for years and here you are, bouncing in*

GARRISON: You needed to remind them every once in a while, that "Wait a minute, guys, yeah, that's nice, but remember, you have this other treaty obligation" because they were agriculture techies and they were looking at it as agriculture techies. The same was true whether you were talking about telecommunications or any of the other specialized sectors. When it got up to the deputy assistant secretary level or above, then you would get a bit broader perspective. But at the working level, which was us, yeah, you were there just to keep reminding them that what you do here has implications for agreements with other states or has implications for international agreements on which these folks would be less likely to focus.

*Q: There must have been a great deal of pressure, because this was politically really hot stuff in the Bush I Administration and also in Canada, too. Both sides really wanted this. This is as big as they get, in a way and so a bunch of techies and all aren't going to get in the way of the big boys.*

GARRISON: Indeed. That was why it came down to the political level at the end. You basically got to a point where you got a mostly signed off on agreement and you have a couple of neuralgic points and the big guys have to make the decision on those neuralgic points. They were not going to be agreed anywhere below the political level. The tradeoff between, for instance, progress in the agriculture sector versus progress in wood products or intellectual property protection.

Canada has a mandatory licensing program for the drug sector, so that if you get the patent on a particular pharmaceutical and aren't using it and the Canadian government sees a need for it to be produced, you give them the option of producing it or being forced to license it to a Canadian producer, something that is absolute anathema to the U.S. intellectual property protection sector, and particularly to the pharmaceutical sector. That was one of those issues that you really had to go back and forth on.

Which is more important, that or canola oil? Sometimes canola oil was going to be the loser.

*Q: How were you viewed by our agricultural people?*

GARRISON: They were remarkably collegial, as long as they thought that you understood where they were coming from, because their constituency was so completely domestic. They understood why you had to be there. They sometimes weren't sure what benefit it was, but they understood the why.

*Q: How about Commerce? Did Commerce enter this?*

GARRISON: Yeah, you had Commerce, State, the National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), for fisheries, the Department of Agriculture and the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR). Those were usually the players. The other reason it was always handy to have the State Department around for that we wrote the cables faster than anybody else, because we were used to it. Because when you were doing, for instance, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) talks, you knew you were going to have to produce the segment of the outgoing reporting cable, and we've done it so often we can do it in our sleep, dictate the darned thing.

*Q: How long did you do this?*

GARRISON: Just for two years, then I moved over to the Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs' Office of Developing Country Trade.

*Q: How did you feel during the two years you were dealing with food?*

GARRISON: I really enjoyed it. It was one of the most frustrating things, because doing the GATT talks and listening to the pure balderdash that was bandied about Japanese guts being different from Western guts and not being able to handle Western rice, or farmers being the backbone of practically any nation, Switzerland or France or the United States, this idea that you lose your identity if you don't protect that farm base, is so heavily enshrined that

*Q: Of course, the farmers in all these countries are now big industrial outfits, no longer*

GARRISON: They're big industrial outfits or they're 87 years old on their miniscule plots and none of their offspring is willing to take up that lifestyle. It did provide an opportunity for me to travel some in the States. Having grown up in the Northeast, where farming is smaller scale, you're not talking about anything like the size of what you see when you go out to the Great Plains or even Idaho. I spent some time with sugar beet and bean farmers in the area south of Sun Valley, and the two groups of farmers were talking a totally different language, because what a dairy farmer in upper New York State does is so completely different from the type of mechanized farming that these folks used.

One of the things that interested me, whether it was in Idaho or in Geneva, was this idea that was in the minds of so many of the farmers that the fact that they wanted to farm meant that society owed them the right to farm, whether or not there was a demand for their products. If my daddy farmed beans and my granddaddy farmed beans, then I should have the right to farm beans. There was no willingness to understand that you also have the right to go broke.

In 1989 I went to the Office of Developing Country Trade to handle Mexico, which meant the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). I was also deputy director of the office.

*Q: What does this mean? You were there from 1989 'til when?*

GARRISON: 1989 to 1991. The office was fascinating. We were negotiating the Mexican components of the free trade agreement.

*Q: The Mexican one was finished shortly after Clinton came in. He came in in 1993.*

GARRISON: I remember sitting in the office when we were talking about deliverables for President Bush (41)'s visit, I guess it must have been for an Organization of American States (OAS) Summit and saying, cynically, "Well, if you really want to do this, do free trade from penguins to polar bears" and we suddenly found ourselves looking at instructions to negotiate NAFTA.

But the office was nightmarish to run, because developing country trade at that point included China, which was in GATT accession talks, it included Korea, with whom we had major intellectual property issues, as well as agricultural trade issues.

We ran the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) program, which provided trade breaks for a variety of goods from the developing world, and each year you had a certification process. The continuing problem was graduation from GSP for countries like Israel. Why would we still be providing GSP to Israel, Singapore, Malaysia, the Asian tigers, and the aggregation of a variety of social criteria onto the GSP process. At the same time, we were also talking about trade with Africa, which was negligible except for certain commodities, and trade with the rest of Latin America, which had its own issues. Brazil was a perennial on our intellectual property watch list. Sanctions could come into play on any of these countries for failure to protect internationally recognized intellectual property rights.

So, NAFTA was only one part of a very complex and very interesting trade sideshow that was going on at this time.

*Q: Let's talk about the intellectual rights thing. Sort of a new age is beginning to dawn, of computers and computer programs. Compact discs (CD), films, were they*

GARRISON: Yes, not so much films as music discs at this point. But it was the whole question, what's copyrightable? We had protection for intellectual goods, if you will, through trademark and copyright protection up until this point. But what does it mean now that you are moving into genetic engineering, and now that goods are so easily portable and adaptable. The hip hop artist who takes your music and then oversamples it and records it as his. Is he creating a new entity, or is he misusing your copyrighted material? The whole question of reverse engineering a patented commodity and then changing a small non-crucial part of it. What constitutes a substantial change in a patented commodity? It was really beginning to come to the fore.

*Q: From your perspective, obviously, you've got to get some guidelines but who was providing answers to this?*

GARRISON: It was coming out of the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) and the Department of Commerce, primarily. Treasury also played in the game very actively, but USTR was the front line, working with, obviously, the recording industry and the various trade associations on the patent side, to determine what was reasonable, and the Congress, of course, was busy setting its own policy for the United States, since it was dealing with the same questions. Most of what we were doing was really on the enforcement side, where folks had signed intellectual property commitments almost without reading them, I would argue.

The level of sophistication in most of the developing world vis-à-vis what the protections meant in trade agreements was not particularly high, or they didn't, with the exception of, say, a Brazil or an India, believe that their industries would reach a point where it would

matter to them. Well, suddenly, their industries were approaching the point where it not only mattered but mattered a lot much more quickly than they had anticipated. Argentina and Chile were sophisticated enough manufacturers to find that they could, particularly Argentina, mimic a drug. I won't say easily, but profitably.

*Q: How were you dealing with these?*

GARRISON: Often by banging our heads against a brick wall, constant discussions with governments over enforcement and enforcement and more enforcement. It was one of the most frustrating parts of my Foreign Service experience, because you often would get lip service with no intention of really attempting to enforce.

To give you an idea of how persistent the problem still is, this morning on television they were discussing two dogs that have been trained in Malaysia to sniff out compact disc shipments, like drug sniffing dogs. They can sniff out a shipment in a bonded warehouse or anywhere else, and then the humans have to determine whether these are legitimate or whether these are counterfeit. The counterfeiters have put a contract out on the dogs. This is today's news, 15, almost 20, years later.

*Q: Did we do much in the way of enforcement, or did we talk a lot?*

GARRISON: Domestically we did a lot of enforcement. We weren't in a position to do much in the way of enforcement overseas. We did some joint efforts. Customs did a lot of training to get people in these countries in a position where they could do enforcement, but you come smack up against corruption and organized crime.

*Q: You mention developing countries and you're throwing out names like South Korea, Singapore, Israel.*

GARRISON: At that time, you wouldn't have really considered them developing countries. They weren't. They'd moved into the next step.

*Q: Were they kept as developing countries you might say for political reasons, to allow, Israel is a prime example*

GARRISON: One of the reasons that we didn't move rapidly to promote or the phrase is "graduate" the Asian tigers is because if you used any kind of objective criteria, including in particular per capita income, you'd have graduate Israel and the pressure to allow Israel to continue to benefit from Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) status, from the U.S. domestic side, was strong. Once you got the U.S.-Israel Free Trade Agreement in place it lessened some of that pressure. But, yeah, it was very much a political decision.

*Q: What was in it for Israel to stay as a developing, not a developed, country?*

GARRISON: It gave them access to GSP, which lowered tariffs on their manufactured goods. Gottex women's bathing suits would have been going for \$180 instead of \$100, if you had been paying the full bang on textile quotas.

It was also a perception of support. This was the same point when we began the battle on graduation within the World Bank, to allow more of the World Bank's development funds to be available to Africa and also to China and India, to be blunt about it, rather than going to Singapore and Malaysia and Korea. And that was a particularly bloody battle, because we weren't alone but we were pretty much fighting an uphill battle, with the Europeans in some measure on our side, not consistently and not completely. The desire to continue to have access to that cheaper source of funds was strong and the development in those countries was so uneven that you could make a case that there was still a need for some sort of preferential funding or rural development projects or for rural infrastructure.

*Q: I imagine negotiations over things like intellectual property and all with India would be particularly difficult, because the Indians have high protective barriers and also have always been able to take from other countries in a sanctimonious way.*

GARRISON: And they also have some of the most professional and best trained diplomats and negotiators working on these issues. We used to complain about, the most difficult foreign service counterparts with which to deal were the Indians, the Mexicans and Brazil, because they left people in place for a very long time, they were trained lawyers, they knew the ins and outs of international law on this and they would have you screaming and throwing things at the wall after you left the negotiating table.

*Q: Where'd you go next?*

GARRISON: I spent a year doing some aid-related work in the Bureau of American Republics Affairs (ARA) Economic Policy Staff.

*Q: What were you doing?*

GARRISON: There really isn't much to talk about in that. It was purely bureaucratic, just keeping an eye on the aid process, to make sure that policy considerations were taken into account in the Agency for International Development's (AID) budgeting process. AID at that point was very much doing its own thing and mightily resisting incursions from the State Department. The idea that you would link foreign policy interests and assistance was not one that AID has often relished, particularly post-Vietnam. This was probably the beginning of the end for AID as a totally autonomous organization.

*Q: Were you considered a spy?*

GARRISON: Not so much a spy. More a nuisance than a spy. They knew that my job was to remind them of what the bureau's priorities were in terms of funding levels for aid across the board. And also, since my background was as an economist it just gave them

another set of eyes, looking at some of the projects, particularly those where you had linkages to balance of payments performance criteria, to make sure that things made sense to us as well as to the development side. Often, we were also working with Treasury or with other organizations that were monitoring International Monetary Fund (IMF) programs or linking to IMF or World Bank programs, and you wanted to be sure that you had a coherent and consistent package.

The Washington consensus was coming to the fore as the standard for measuring who were good players and who were not in the development aid allocation process. What we were trying to do was make sure that aid conditions were no more onerous than they needed to be and were linked to what the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund were requiring of their program partners at the same time, so that you didn't have AID going off in one direction in terms of conditionality where the rest of the package was moving in a different direction. This would come up again about 10 years later, when I worked on Haiti.

*Q: When did you go to Mexico?*

GARRISON: I went to Monterrey in September of 1992.

*Q: You were in Mexico from 1992 'til when?*

GARRISON: August of 1996, through the elections, the fun part.

*Q: All right, let's talk about Monterrey in 1992, the city, where it fit in, the political and the economic situation.*

GARRISON: Monterrey was the most gringo-ized, if you will, of the big cities in Mexico. It sits up in the mountains. It is not pretty. It's not colonial. In fact, it had no role in colonial Mexico. It didn't really exist as more than a pin dot on the map until the late 1800s.

If you listen to the dialogue in that old classic Western *The Alamo*, the John Wayne character talks about sending his wife and some of the other wives to safe haven in Coahuila, which was about a 40 minute drive west of Monterrey, even further up in the mountains. Coahuila was the colonial capital. That was where it was all happening. Monterrey was nothing, for good reason.

There really is not much there, other than several huge mountains that produce some of the best cement in Mexico and were developed as a source of cement and then later the headquarters for what's now the world's second or third largest cement conglomerate. You also had the base for a darned good brewery which came into being with a little assist from some German brewing techniques in the latter part of the 1800s. The best thing, as far as the brewers were concerned, was not water quality or anything like that, it was the sand to make the glass for the bottles. So, you had Vitro, which affiliated with Corning, now at least 25 years ago and is one of the world's major glass producers and

probably, if not the largest, certainly in the three to five largest in terms of glass production for the U.S. market, everything from glass bottles to patio table tops through commercial glass. You also had, as the economy evolved, some very shrewd family groups, who put together not only an economy but an educational structure in this little hick backwater town that became the Mexican equivalent of Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT).

They used their own money, developed from controlling a wide variety of businesses, to make sure the management class was educated, often in the United States: Harvard, Stanford, Chicago Master of Business Administration and economics degrees and then came back and built a secondary school *cum* university level operation that was designed to meet the needs of business and not a liberal arts university in the classical sense.

I'm telescoping 60 years of development here, but it gives you an idea of the character of the city. What drove Monterrey was business. The climate was, prior to air conditioning, inhospitable, to say the least. It's like living in Tucson or Phoenix without air conditioning. It's the eastern edge of the Sonora Desert climate loop, if you will and the eastern range of the Sierra Madre Mountains, which delimits the southern end of the city. You're up there on the high plateau. Dust all over the place, even after they stopped strip mining the mountains for cement and moved underground, you still have dust all over the place.

When I got there, late afternoon, towards the end of September, the temperature was 104 degrees. So, you knew you were not living in the garden spot of Mexico. But in terms of vibrancy it was one of the most interesting places to go.

In addition to the established family-owned businesses you had a *maquiladora* (sub-contracting manufacturing operation) sector that was beginning to grow up. This is the U.S.-owned and Korean-owned and Japanese-owned assembly operations that were run in northern Mexico. Many of them were clustered along the border in their first iterations, but in their second generation moved away from the Rio Grande Valley towards the more stable and developed areas further south. They would center in places like Durango or Monterrey. The textile industry in the state of Coahuila grew up not in Saltillo but further west, because you could get land inexpensively, you could get a reasonable source of electricity, although rates were still high by comparison with the United States, and a labor force that stayed put.

What surprises me, as migratory as the Mexican male labor force is, at the lowest levels, at the upper levels it was not and the female labor force is not migratory at all. When Kodak closed up several of its operations along the border and moved them south to Monterrey and centralized, they offered what I'd say were lower management jobs to a number of the women who had worked assembly and worked their way up. But it would have meant having to relocate from, say, a Laredo to Monterrey and most often they declined, because they did not want to leave their family, their homes or the areas they'd known. Some moved, but for the most part it's not a very migratory labor force.



That was one of the interesting factors pushing change, politically as well as economically, in that northern Mexico corridor. The National Action Party (PAN), the conservative political party that had been around for decades, had held office in the Monterrey area, it had the governorship of the ritzy suburbs and was very much a factor in political life. Several of the old PAN theoreticians were fixtures in Monterrey. At the time the focus for PAN was Baja California, in terms of the contemporary political successes, but the roots of the PAN really were far more Monterrey-centered and Nuevo Leon-centered.

Other things that made the area interesting and a bit different were the large Palestinian and Lebanese communities that had migrated to the area in the early part of the 1900s and gone into business. These family groups, again, were extremely well off. They had almost no ties to the old country. So, it wasn't the sort of thing where you were looking at potential for terrorist or extremist groups here, but what you had was an incredibly well interconnected set of family groups and business ties that went back and forth across the border and back and forth to Mexico City.

We used to joke that there was a different mini-state that extended from San Antonio, Texas down to the old silver mining towns in San Luis Potosi, and that area looked more towards the north than it did towards Mexico City for its influences, its trade ties, and its lifestyle. The upper middle class and upper class in Monterrey went to Padre Island, in Texas, for spring break. You took the kids to Disneyland, either Disney World in Florida or Disneyland in California, when you wanted to take them for a major holiday. Depending on the price points, the young women went shopping for their trousseau in Laredo, if they were working class and San Antonio if they were middle class and in Dallas if they were upper class. They didn't go to Mexico City. They may have bought art in Mexico City, at the upper reaches, but the influence of the family links across that border were huge, because so many of the families did have links across the border and the links had been there for, at the point I was in Monterrey, almost a 100 years. It was nothing to have four uncles in the United States who'd been there since forever, and four uncles on the Mexican side or three other siblings.

*Q: I take it this group is not particularly connected to what we look at today as migrant labor*

GARRISON: Not at all.

*Q: These are well settled Americans.*

GARRISON: Exactly. Mexico has an interesting relationship with Texas, very different from its relationship with California. The family structure of that region, because it had been a feudally structured region on both sides of the border, it wasn't like you chose to be an American or chose to be Mexican. Your particular branch of the family was living closer to San Antonio, so when that part became Texas, you stayed on that side of the border and your branch of the family evolved on that side of the border.

The border crossing card that the United States used for citizenship certification for individuals in that area, was something that you got almost immediately on birth, because you went to visit family for Thanksgiving, or they came to see you for part of the summer. Folks moved back and forth constantly. The border was a physical reality, but mentally it didn't exist.

*Q: I think of some parts of Mexico where they've got oil and all and you've got a very strong union and all that. What about the political, the union, influence in that area?*

GARRISON: In the area around Monterrey, the so-called "white unions," the independent labor unions, some call them house unions, the American Federation of Labor types will call them scab unions, none of those terms really quite accurately identifies what they were. You did have a unionized labor force but not one affiliated with the party in power, the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI)*, that had been in power since the 1920s but, until it was booted out, enjoyed the most longevity of any governing party outside of the old Soviet Union. It was supposed to encompass the mass of the people.

Well, when you got up into the north, there were very few peasants. It wasn't an agricultural area. Southern Nuevo León, as you got more towards the middle of Mexico, where it's still reasonably fertile, yeah. But up north, it's hard to grow much of anything in desert. You had subsistence farmers growing corn and beans, but not a massive rural peasantry. So that took some of the pressure off.

You didn't have an indigenous population to speak of. When you look at northern Mexico, you're not talking about little brown people, you're talking about very European-looking people, because so many of them came from someplace else. The Indian population had been migratory and this wasn't where they lived in large numbers in any event. So, you didn't have quite the mix that the PRI traditionally appealed to so successfully elsewhere to create its political base.

It's pretty homogeneous. Heavily Catholic. The Lebanese were Maronite Christians, for the most part.

Despite the fact that the governor of Nuevo León was a PRI-ista, he was a shrewd enough politician to know that you didn't govern the same way that the dinosaur wing of the PRI hoped to govern elsewhere. It was a technocratic approach, still as corrupt as government was elsewhere in Mexico.

Corruption was a problem from top to bottom, whether you're talking road contracts or bridge contracts or anything else. The biggest difference was the petty corruption was less. The police got paid regularly, which meant they were far less likely to try to pick up bribes by over enforcing petty traffic infractions or similar harassment. They also came around for their "Christmas present" and everybody comfortably off expected them to come for their Christmas tip for maintaining stability and quiet in the neighborhood.

Personalized user fees is the best way I can describe it, since the tax collection system was abysmal to nonexistent.

*Q: How about universities? So many Latin American universities are hotbeds of Marxism, practically no-go areas for American representatives and then of course they all turn around and get conservative when they graduate. How was this in Monterrey?*

GARRISON: You were reading my mind, because one of the things that really did influence, there were the two main universities, the *Tecnológico de Monterrey*, Monterrey Tec, which was a business and economics faculty and hard science. It didn't have a liberal arts program. It didn't teach history. It didn't teach English or it didn't teach Spanish language and literature. It was preparing people for the business community, for graduate degrees in the United States.

And then you had the *Autónoma de Nuevo León*, UANL, which was the offshoot of the Mexican university system. It was much more in the typical mold of Latin universities, but by no means a Marxist hotbed. It was politically far more active in PRI politics than the Tec was, but even so it reflected the culture of the area from which it drew. People went to the university looking to get jobs when they got out. There was an Arts and Literature Faculty, there was a History Faculty, there was a Law Faculty at UANL, but you didn't see the sorts of thing that you saw, for instance, with students in 1968 in Mexico City. It was a quieter university and it played little or no role in the political life of the area.

The biggest Tec-UANL divisions and rivalries were on the soccer field, where the two Mexican college league teams, one was the *Tigres* of UANL and the other was the *Borregos Salvajes* from Tec, and that was the big deal. It was a much more conservative environment. In some ways it felt more like the 1950s or the 1960s in the early 1990s in Monterrey.

*Q: Then let's look at the consulate general. What was it like and where were you and who was doing what?*

GARRISON: We were primarily a visa issuing post, but because you had so much of Mexico's money-making business community located in and immediately around Monterrey, we also had one political officer, one economic officer, a shared junior officer between us, a commercial section of one American and four or five local staff. We also had a huge consular district. In addition to the state of Nuevo León and Monterrey, we went all the way as far west as Durango, which is halfway across Mexico, up to the border. We did not include Nuevo Laredo, but that was the only thing along the border from probably no more than a 100 miles inland that we didn't cover, until you got almost to El Paso. And then we went down as far south as Zacatecas and Aguascalientes, which are weekend destinations from Mexico City, and then all the way over from San Luis Potosi. San Luis state of course was very large in and of itself, so you had the coastal areas.

But the big thing was visa issuance. The bulk of the staff were the junior officers doing visa line work and you had a visa section chief and a consular section chief. I think the total staff would have been nine Americans and I don't remember how many Mexican national staff.

*Q: Who was the consul general?*

GARRISON: When I first arrived down there, the late Jake Dyels was the consul general. He was primarily a labor officer who'd been consul general in one of the Benelux countries before coming to Monterrey. And then Eileen Heaphy, primarily a European hand, came in as consul general shortly after the elections in 1996.

*Q: How were we reporting and what were our economic interests, from your point of view?*

GARRISON: The most immediate interest was the *maquiladora* industries, because of course it was a neuralgic point in negotiations over the U.S.-Mexico-Canada free trade agreement, the role that the *maquiladoras* played, what impact was it having on job shifting, what was the impact on labor relations and here the question of unionization in Monterrey became an important one.

U.S. business was also looking to come into the area, particularly from Texas, in a whole range of other sectors. Walmart opened up in Monterrey while I was there. So did Here Everything's Better (HEB), the grocery chain out of Texas. One of the U.S. chains of multiplex theaters opened a cinema in Monterrey in this period, which created an interesting problem because of its use of a "white union" for its projectionists, as opposed to the longstanding PRI-controlled projectionists' union. Some of the other folks who came in were the guys who make the glass for rearview mirrors, the ones that say, "objects in this mirror are further away than they appear," that assembly work was done in Monterrey. You had General Motors, you had several of the American Telephone & Telegraph (AT&T) Bell Labs operations. You had a host of U.S. and other international hoteliers coming into the area, developing hotel and conference facilities.

You had continuing interest in the steel sector and, of course, you had the existing partnership between the major Garza family players, like Vitro, the glass manufacturers, with Corning and the relationship between the major petrochemical fiber conglomerate Cydsa and the textile operators in the United States. Many of the little cotton and synthetic lap rugs and throws that were becoming popular in the decorating world were made by Mexican operations linked to U.S. operations. So, there was this growing symbiotic relationship between U.S. and Mexican industry. A large chunk of Levis denim manufacture, as well as other denim manufacturers, moved to the area. Sara Lee knitwear had a large operation in the area around Saltillo, the capital of Coahuila.

So, you had all of this activity going on and the treatment of U.S. business in the area, whether we're talking about receipt of the tax breaks that they anticipated from the Mexican government, treaty obligations vis-à-vis equal treatment with domestic business,

was something we kept an eye on. We were looking at expansion opportunities, obviously but growth sectors and also penetration sectors.

Cemex, the cement company, probably had as many workers in the United States as it did in Mexico, because it owned cement distribution operations in Texas, in Louisiana, in California and in several other locations throughout the United States. They were a major player in the U.S. domestic market. So, the way in which Cemex was run, the way in which it viewed its long-term expansion plans, had implications for U.S. business sectors and long-term U.S. interests.

It was such a vibrant economy with so many sectors that were potentially interesting that it could have kept four or five people busy reporting, particularly once you included what was going on beyond Monterrey. Genetically modified seeds and genetically modified plants was one that one of the Garza in-laws got into in a big way and he's now a major player in U.S. genetically modified seeds and just plain seed market. He bought one of the larger U.S. seed companies and has continued to develop it into a worldwide force.

*Q: Were you there during the 1992 election?*

GARRISON: I went down in September of 1992. So, yes.

*Q: I was wondering whether, Ross Perot was making a big thing about*

GARRISON: The giant sucking sound.

*Q: The giant sucking sound, meaning all the jobs would go into Mexico and all that. You were monitoring the sucking. How did it go?*

GARRISON: Very few jobs were moving into Mexico from the United States.

*Q: Did we know that would happen?*

GARRISON: We did and this was something that, there was a lot of political posturing around the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and this was probably, to my mind, the most egregious. What we used as an example was the telecommunications sector. The jobs that moved to Mexico as a result of NAFTA weren't coming from the United States, in the main. They were coming from the Far East, because while Mexico certainly didn't have an advantage in either labor costs or electricity costs over assembly operations in China or in Indonesia or Malaysia, it sure as heck had a huge advantage in terms of timely supply factor. Same thing for the textile industry. You could tell your suppliers that you needed green instead of purple and get it not in six weeks after it made an ocean voyage, but in six days. And that's what made Mexico so much more interesting after NAFTA.

*Q: Was it also a bias, the idea it's probably better to do something in Mexico than someplace else, it will take the heat off us or something?*

GARRISON: There was certainly a perception that Mexico was relatively more stable to operate than a lot of the other places they could operate. But there was also a tremendous amount of unease. The fact that we're still talking about the trucking agreement in 2007, 15 years after the agreement was reached, is absurd. But it goes to a certain amount of, to my mind, racism, as well as protectionism. The idea that Mexican businessmen are not capable of running world class businesses and making sure that their loads get to where they want them to be in one piece because their drivers are awake and their trucks are safe, that this is Juan the peasant from out in the boonies in a rattletrap truck.

The biggest impact in the Monterrey area from NAFTA I think was on the developing middle class. One of the things that was distinctive about the northern part of Mexico was that you did have the beginnings of a middle class. They were looking towards the 1992 elections for a certain amount of reassurance, that the U.S. relationship with Mexico was going to continue, that support was going to continue to be there and that there wouldn't be any backtracking on NAFTA from the new administration. The support for Bush in and around Monterrey was enormous, and there was a palpable sense of disappointment when he was not reelected. The middle class felt the double whammy of potential change in the United States plus the crunch that occurred in the Mexican economy because of the devaluation of the peso that took place with the change of Mexican governments in 1994.

In the aftermath of NAFTA you saw expansion of U.S. banking into the Mexican banking sector and greater availability of credit to nontraditional sectors, which basically meant anybody other than the collectivized farms, which could draw money from the government, or the ultra-rich, who had banking relationships with established banks in Mexico and with international banks. There was no retail banking sector that served the bulk of the population. With pressure from the international banking community, including Banco Santander of Spain, Mexican banks had started expanding the use of credit cards to the middle class and providing longer term mortgage funding to the middle class. This was all premised on the idea that there was a growing economy that would allow for these folks who had stable, steady jobs, either in the *maquiladora* sector, in management and the upper production levels, or in the Mexican industrial sectors that were springing up alongside, that these folks would continue to have a steady stream of income to pay back this lending. It was kind of interesting that McDonalds in Mexico took credit cards before McDonalds in the United States did.

*Q: Maquiladoras, did that sector promote other, local, industries around it?*

GARRISON: Absolutely, because you would find a variety of things, from local trucking through sister industries through supplier relationships, that would spring up around the *maquiladoras*. The development of some of the industrial parks where the *maquilas* were located would create a demand for landscaping operations, for plumbers and electrical workers to do first the construction and then the maintenance for the industrial park. It created a demand for cafeteria workers, because one of the things that you found with the *maquilas*, something that the U.S. unions often ignored when they calculated wage rates and working conditions, was a wide range of fringe benefits. Most of the Monterrey-

based *maquilas* not only provided a cafeteria but they provided subsidized food in the cafeteria.

They provided some transportation, not all but if the local bus depots were a distance away and particularly if they were running on two shifts, they would run jitney transportation from the factory to the bus stop. You didn't want your young workers, particularly young female workers in a very protective society, walking from the factory to the closest bus stop. That just wasn't done.

There were requirements in Mexican law that were adhered to by the U.S. *maquiladoras* for profit sharing plans. There was also health insurance provided and, in many cases, an on-plant clinic system.

*Q: How did sort of the infrastructure for good business [practices] work? You mentioned insurance. The legal system, sort of the infrastructure that supports this, was this in pretty good shape?*

GARRISON: It was. It had its quirks. Each one of the *maquilas* really did have to have an individually tailored negotiated contract with the government of the state in which they were located, in terms of providing benefits. But they did all have to adhere to the letter of Mexican labor law, regardless of whether they had an in-house union or whether they had a PRI union. And some of them did, indeed, have PRI-affiliated unions in their operation. They were required to provide the social benefits that Mexican employers were theoretically required to provide. The difference was that they were examined very regularly as to whether or not they were providing them.

I think you also have to draw a distinction between the industrial *maquilas* that were U.S. and European based and some of the assembly *maquilas*, particularly the Korean based ones, which, unfortunately were noted, not just in Mexico but also in the Caribbean, for less sophisticated management structures in their plants and for some pretty egregious worker abuses, the sorts of things where you had, particularly in the textile sector, ridiculous piecework quotas and abusive shop floor management that limited things like bathroom breaks and other basics. The *maquila* sector certainly had its bad eggs, but my own experience of the American *maquilas* was that was so foreign to not only the U.S. business culture but to the basic interest in running a good shop that these guys had that they simply wouldn't do it.

*Q: Did you find, with the advent of the new American administration, the new NAFTA agreement, that you, [as] the economic officer, were under a certain amount of pressure from the State Department and the political people in Washington, to keep an eye on, to see that everything was on the up and up?*

GARRISON: There was a much more skeptical scrutiny coming from Washington from the political level. Where during the Bush years you felt a sense that the bias was towards making this thing work, or expecting this system to work, you felt the underlying hostility, particularly from those in the Democratic Party with ties to organized labor that

expected the worst out of NAFTA, rather than hope for the best, which meant that we had to be as scrupulously honest in our reporting as we could be, in order to maintain our credibility, while at the same time contrasting the experience of NAFTA and the *maquiladora* sector in particular in different parts of Mexico, because what you saw in the immediate cross-border area was not what you saw when you moved to the *maquilas* in other parts of Mexico, whether you're talking about Volkswagen assembly plants north of Mexico City or the panoply of *maquila* and *maquila*-type operations we saw in our consular district.

*Q: What about the problems of bribes?*

GARRISON: *La mordida (the bite).*

*Q: "The bite." How did that display itself in the sectors that you were looking at?*

GARRISON: It was not particularly visible in the sectors we looked at. You were more likely to see it on a personal level, on the road, for instance, if you were traveling outside of the local area you might be pulled over by a cop or when you were crossing the border you might get a little implied request for some consideration. Certainly, it took place on a much grander scale with the business community. They didn't talk about it and it would be impossible to quantify. However, subsequent events in Mexico with regard to corruption investigations and corruption prosecutions that went up to the level of the Mexican White House confirms that it was there, the "cost of doing business" corruption, that you expect you're going to pay a finder's fee to the guy who gets you the site in the industrial park, or that you're going to be paying for a few extra personnel on your payroll who have ties to the local union chief.

*Q: I can see where that is sort of non-threatening. But I would think there'd be a problem with fire extinguisher inspections. Was this*

GARRISON: We didn't see wildcat strikes. We didn't see union harassment very much. The one time we did see it was with the projectionists union and that was my first encounter with Alberto Gonzales, now embattled. He was then the attorney general for the State of Texas and didn't understand the politics involved, that the PRI governor of Nuevo León was not going to enforce the contract that this U.S. theater company had to move the picketing projectionists from the PRI union who were blocking the opening of the new theater. It just was not going to happen and it didn't matter whether I called on the governor, which I did several times, or whether Alberto Gonzales called him. He was going to let this play out until such time as they had stalled the opening for however long it took to get tempers to cool down. Then he could twist arms within the PRI to get the projectionists to move off the site.

*Q: Alberto Gonzales, at that time, was he a judge or what?*



GARRISON: He was Texas state attorney general. The chain that wanted to open in Monterrey was a Texas company and they didn't seem to think that we were putting enough pressure

*Q: Did he come down?*

GARRISON: No, he made some phone calls to the governor of the state of Nuevo León. There's an institution called the Board of Governors Conference that includes the governor of Texas and the governors of New Mexico, Arizona, California and then the border states in Mexico. It was a very vibrant institution, so that the governor of Nuevo León knew George W. Bush. Then-Governor Bush came to Monterrey at least twice. It was just part of the relationship. The ties were that tight. The business ties were that tight. It was a big deal that this group was trying to open a theater in Mexico only because it was going to be the first. The fact that they'd chosen to go with a non-PRI union really kind of rankled the Mexico City crowd, which jacked up the local PRI labor union to picket.

After a certain period of time, when he could comfortably do so, the governor made a move to allow patrons to move in and out of the theaters and the theaters were quite successful. But he had to be allowed to do it in his own time, to protect his own political interests.

I don't think that any money changed hands on that. I think it was just a question of political timetables being at different speeds.

I think the question of actual bribery, it wasn't that raw. It wasn't the sort of thing that you see in the more rural areas, where you have one *caudillo* (a military or political leader) who can extort from the business sector.

That was a problem that the Garza family group kind of hammered out with the politicians 20 years before, 30 years before, because they couldn't run with constant extortion, either and if that business didn't run, then there was no Monterrey, there was no Nuevo León. As I commented, the cops got paid, because the "12 families," as they were referred to, they're all related in one way or another to the Garza clan, they didn't want to be hassled on daily basis by either the politicians or the police. So, they adopted good business practices and made sure that money flowed to where it needed to flow on a regular basis, so that you didn't have to see the kinds of "user fees" that you see elsewhere in the Third World.

*Q: When was the big election?*

GARRISON: 1994.

*Q: How did you view it at the time, before it happened and then the results, from the optic of Monterrey?*

GARRISON: The assumption, of course, was that in 1988 Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas had in fact won the presidential election and was robbed. He was the candidate of the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD), which was the leftist party, what was referred to as the dinosaur wing of the PRI party. These were the traditional hard left socialist theoreticians in the PRI, who thought that the technocratic reforms, particularly monetary, that the Salinas and the de la Madrid governments had undertaken were too gringo-ized and too much. But as far as Monterrey was concerned, the disaster would have been had Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas actually taken power. The area perceived that, for all that some of the *Autónoma de Nuevo León* (UANL) students might have yearned in that direction, the business community and the bulk of the community perceived that as nightmarish for their long-term survivability. They really were much more willing to have a PRI technocrat.

They also were of the opinion that the election had probably been stolen, which made 1994 all the more interesting. What was going to happen? Were the computers going to go down again and would Mexican society tolerate the computers going down again, or would something that obvious in terms of theft of the election trigger a backlash, a societal eruption?

They would have preferred another technocrat, another Salinas, another de la Madrid. They wanted a continuing moderate foreign policy and a stable monetary policy. One of the things that was of concern in the business community was the question of devaluation.

I mentioned earlier that the middle class got robbed, because the government kept insisting, up until the very end, that, no, there was going to be no devaluation of the peso. Through the elections, no devaluation of the peso. We did some pretty thorough election monitoring, given how few people we had, all over the consular district to observe what actually went on during election day in and around the border areas.

The elections themselves were pretty darn clean and with very heavy turnout in the areas that we saw. One of the interesting problems that cropped up was related to these cross-border families, where you had, particularly from PANistas (National Action Party), allegations that some of the PRI candidates didn't in fact live in Mexico, they were dual nationals who lived in the United States who had family land in the areas so they could claim residence and have their names put on the ballot in Mexico for these positions and would then presumably come back at least for part of the time if they were elected.

The question of voting by Mexicans resident in the United States wasn't much of a factor in that election. It only became a factor in the 2000 election. Something that could potentially have been a powder keg wasn't much of an influence in the 1994 election.

*Q: In Nuevo León, there wasn't as much of a shakeup, was it, in the election?*

GARRISON: There was, but that didn't come until a year later, because the governor was not up for reelection in the same year as the president. The following year was the year

that the governor's job was up for grabs and a PANista was the likely winner. It looked like it was going to be stolen and then Mexico City sorted it out, if I remember correctly.

*Q: And who got it?*

GARRISON: The PAN.

*Q: Now, how was Fox, Vicente Fox, viewed before he was elected and then afterwards?*

GARRISON: Fox's election was in 2000, by which time I'd been away from Mexico for six years. He was a classic *norteño* (*northerner*). The difference between the *chilangos*, the residents of Mexico City and the *regios*, the residents of Monterrey. If you remember from World War II, the Brits and the Yanks, the problem was American G.I.s were overpaid, oversexed and over here, British military personnel were underpaid, undersexed and under Eisenhower, it's the same sort of interplay between Mexico City and Monterrey. The *chilangos* were far too navel gazing, centrist. The *regios* were far too gringo-ized money grubbing and philistine.

That tension is always there but to the *regios* Fox was just fine. He was Catholic, at least nominally and he didn't make any bones about the fact he was churchgoing. He was a businessman, he'd been senior executive of Pepsi de Mexico, which was just fine, since Coca Cola de Mexico was out of Nuevo León and the bottles came from Nuevo León. That was just fine. He was conservative in his values. He was a PANista, fine and dandy with them.

So, my guess would be that they may have preferred a different PAN candidate but they were certainly happy with Fox as *the* PAN candidate. Now I don't know how that's evolved since.

Actually, thinking back to some of my conversations with some of the older PAN strategists, they were looking towards a Fox candidacy as early as 1996.

*Q: Speaking of the Monterrey-Mexico City relationship, how about your embassy-consulate general*

GARRISON: It was extremely frustrating, because from a technical standpoint for much of the time that I was there we had no way to do a classified cable other than to write it out longhand and hand it to the consul general's secretary, who was the only cleared American secretary in the place, to have her type it out. We had no email communication until more than two years into my tour there. We had no computers, basically, until well into my tour there. So, we had word processing capability to do unclassified mail. We did a weekly wrap-up cable that the political officer and I jointly supervised.

Because the junior officers were doing primarily consular work, we had a rotational system where one of them got to do some time in the political/economic section. We had one who did a year in the visa office and then did a year as the third person in the

political/economic operation. Then all of the others got a break for part of the afternoon to do some reporting, working off of newspapers for the most part and doing follow-up pieces for the wrap-up cable. But it had to be unclassified because we simply didn't have the facilities to prepare classified material.

For a period of time I think we felt that Mexico City had no clue why we even needed them.

*Q: Of course, we're talking about a time when the Foreign Service was really being starved for funds and the administration wasn't making any effort to get them and part of the time we had a hostile Congress.*

GARRISON: And we had also made some real mistakes as an institution in how we went about computerizing the building. We had stuck with the Wang computer system for far too long and it wasn't flexible enough or modern enough to do what we needed it to do. That was a particular problem.

We had no regular pouch service with Mexico City, so that any classified material, other than cable traffic, came up erratically. You might get two- or three-months' worth at once, because you depended on travelers to carry the pouch back and forth to Mexico City.

*Q: Even though we were living in the quill pen era in the consulate general, did you see, during this time you were there, a change, the electronic revolution, the fax machine, the cell phone, the computer, the internet, were they having much of an impact?*

GARRISON: They were having a huge impact on the society around us, particularly in the business community. They were not having an impact on the embassy and consulate yet. The only place we were seeing them within the consulate were in the drug enforcement and law enforcement operations.

One of things that was beginning to become a serious issue in Mexico at this point was the drug sector and not in the straight trafficking, which was certainly problematic along the border, but hadn't been in Monterrey or elsewhere away from the border, other than as through routes.

You were seeing an increasing amount at this point of violence in and around Laredo. But what was worrisome for us, from a Monterrey standpoint, is that you were starting to see the narcotraffickers beginning to target the Mexican banking apparatus, not so much in Nuevo Leon, but in the less sophisticated regional capitals, like Saltillo, like Durango, looking to use the banking sector there as a place to transfer money, to take advantage of bankers who were looking to modernize enough to compete in this newly pressurized Mexican banking world with Spanish banks and the American banks but didn't have the sophistication to follow the "know your client" rules that had already been laid down in the United States.

And this was one of the areas that was of interest for me as someone whose economic interest was on the finance side and very much of interest for our law enforcement colleagues.

We had both a Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) presence and a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) presence in Monterrey. The sophistication of the criminal activity in the drug sector, but more broadly, was starting to pick up in northern Mexico at about this time.

You also had an increasing prevalence of Nigerian rip-off schemes, which to this day amazes me. I had not one, not two, but a least four comptrollers of American companies, not just *maquiladora* but normal overseas investment, U.S. companies in Mexico, come to me with these faxes with the classic “I’m So and so, the offspring of General Such and such and I have x amount of money that I want to transfer. Will you help me?” To think that U.S. business comptrollers would seriously, even for half a second, consider that something like this might be real just boggles the mind, but they did.

These were coming in by fax at that point, not by letter but by fax. The business community had embraced technology wholeheartedly: cell phones, faxes, interlinked computer nets. The technology that the *Tecnologico de Monterrey* had available for its student population was amazing. I did a couple of lectures up there for one of my colleagues who was a senior economist for the steel industry, and they were set up so that I could do a lecture sitting at a desk in front of the room, put the wiring diagram for who’s who in the State Department face down on a screen in front of me and then it appeared on screens on every desk in the classroom. We didn’t have that many universities around here at the time with that capability .

Every kid had a cell phone in the upper class and in the middle class. They were ringing constantly. We had to post signs in the consulate saying, “Turn off the cell phones!”

As with credit cards, plastic money was the money of choice, rather than carrying around cash. The consulate staff was totally out of date and behind.

*Q: Speaking of the consulate staff, you’ve been around the block a number of times. How about particularly the new entry officers coming to Monterrey, what was your impression of them and how did they deal with fact that they were going to spend a considerable amount of time on the line? Were they good about it? What was the feeling?*

GARRISON: I was in the main impressed by the dedication of the new officers that we got. They covered a wide range of ages. They tended to be older, in fact, than the political officer there or I had been when we came in, a fair number of folks in their late 20s, early 30s. I think the average age for my entering class was 27 and several of us were just barely 22.

But the group tended to have more experience in the business world and as a result I think had a very hard time adjusting to being in a place that was so like the United States and so not.

It wasn't really foreign enough to make them realize that they were in the Foreign Service, but it wasn't like being in the States and that could create a whole lot of difficult personal situations.

The fact that when you're overseas you represent the U.S. government and you're never offstage is very hard to get across when you're in a little backwater town, in relative terms, you're not in the center of things in Mexico City.

And you're in a city of three million people, so you're an anonymous cog until something like the night on one of our junior officers went to a concert by a Mexican singer who was noted for getting a young man from the audience up on the stage and then partially disrobing him.

Well, we had one cute young man who I suspect did know, but maybe didn't and he was with a group of his young buddies, his Spanish was excellent, he was very personable and he'd gotten in with a group of young Mexicans, unlike some of the others, who didn't integrate into the local situation as easily, but he got up on stage with her and ended up with his picture in the paper.

Caused a certain amount of heartburn to our somewhat more traditional and conservative consul general and our very straight arrow administrative officer. And I don't blame either of them for reacting the way they did. I think they overreacted a bit, but he also got a little lesson that you're not anonymous, even if it's a city of three million, you're always going to be vice consul of the United States.

I think that they all chafed a bit at the monotony and the mind numbingness of the visa process, but what really got to them were the inefficiencies of it and the pressures of deciding on somebody's life and future in under three minutes.

The summer rush in Monterrey was something horrendous to behold. We had no real waiting room space to speak of to handle the crowds that we had. You could put maybe a 100 people into the waiting room and that didn't begin to handle the summer crowds, so that we were using a covered carport for the bulk of the line standers and rather than have lines going on forever, they cut off the line at a certain point, usually before 10:00 in the morning, because that was all they were going to be able to handle and process in the course of the day, between interviewing, which is primarily done in the morning and then physically processing the visas, so that you were talking about same day or next day service.

If you were able to get in the line and get in to be interviewed you got a decision right then and you got a visa not a week later but within 48 hours.

But that kind of day after day pressure across three months, four months, five months, as people are trying to get their kids ready to go to school, people are trying to go shopping for their trousseau, people are trying to go the States for a vacation, going up to Texas to go to family graduations, it's relentless and it wears people out, particularly if you're coming to the end of your tour yourself and you're getting ready to transfer and you're trying to get your family packed out and of course since you're talking about entry level officers who are coming in older, they do come with families and baggage in tow.

*Q: What about consular problems? Did you get involved with that at all?*

GARRISON: We did and they were always there. The criminals are always with us, just like the poor and we all did prison visits. We had a number of American citizen prisoners in various parts of the district.

I did one out along the border to Eagle Pass. We had a problem with stolen cars coming across the border, organized smuggling rings, that was neuralgic, particularly, in a couple of locations.

We also had a large population of pensioners, so we had delivery of Social Security checks and just general welfare operations and a huge passport operation. You had an enormous dual national community in Mexico, particularly in our consular district. The upside of that was that it meant you did have a Mexican-American community that was quite welcoming to the junior officers and to the folks being assigned to the management levels in the *maquiladoras*.

You had an association, an American association, as well as an American chamber of commerce, that helped ease folks into the Monterrey community, if they chose to use the resources that were there, and that made it a little bit easier for the junior officers, because when you're talking about a consulate whose American staff was 30, maybe 35, that's not a very big pool to socialize in or to find your friends in, particularly since about half of that was law enforcement, which kept more to itself, because we also had Customs, in addition to DEA and FBI.

*Q: After leaving there, where'd you go, in 1996?*

GARRISON: In 1996 I came back to Washington and went to work in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) for about three years.

*Q: 1996 to*

GARRISON: 1999.

*Q: What were you doing?*

GARRISON: I was the African economic analyst for INR.

*Q: When you say Africa, do you mean below the Sahara?*

GARRISON: Everything south of the Sahara, yes. INR pretty much follows the same geographic boundaries as the regional bureaus, with regard to its breakout, and North Africa migrated to the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs (NEA) very shortly after the Africa bureau was set up as a separate bureau.

*Q: What was going on economic-wise in Africa?*

GARRISON: Hell in a handbasket. One of the interesting discussion areas here is blood diamonds and that will take a while.

*End of interview*