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

GLENN HALM

Interviewed by: Don Kienzle
Initial interview date: June 19, 1996

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

Q: Today is Wednesday June 19. I'm Don Kienzle and I have the pleasure of interviewing this morning, my good friend Glenn Halm, who has been a long-time employee of the Department of Labor. Glenn, thank you very much for agreeing to participate in the Labor Diplomacy Oral History Project. Can we start with a little bit about your background, your family, where you came from and your education?

HALM: Sure. I was born and raised in Southern California. I went to Sunday school with "Tricky Dick" Nixon. Never voted for him, but I went to Sunday school with him. And then my family moved to Oregon…to a farm in Oregon when I was in high school, so I went to high school and college in Oregon. And I graduated from Oregon State University with a degree in Business and a minor in Forestry.

Q: Is there anything about Richard Nixon that you'd like to put on the record? We can't let that opportunity pass.

HALM: Well…

Q: He was a Quaker, wasn't he? As a small child?

HALM: He was and I went to the East Whittier Friends Church.

Q: I see.

HALM: And that's how I knew him. Of course, I wasn't a chum of his because he is some years older that I am. But he was one of the big guys in Sunday school when I was there. My mother and his mother were very good friends and she was a nice old lady. The father was a little less pleasant. He was bitter because he had looked at property in Santa Fe Springs for the grocery store and service station that they were ultimately running in East Whittier, California. And he chose East Whittier, but they struck oil in Santa Fe Springs and he always felt that he had been robbed of a great wealth. There were several Nixon children. The eldest was Harold Nixon and he died of tuberculosis at a rather early age. Then there was Richard, Donald… "Fat Donald"… who was involved in some scandals…minor scandals…during his brother's presidency and afterwards. And then the

youngest one was Edward, he was about my age and I knew them casually.

Q: So, you then moved to Oregon?

HALM: Yea, right.

Q: And graduated in business from Oregon State University.

HALM: Yes.

Q: About what time was that?

HALM: I graduated in 1951.

Q: 1951?

HALM: I served in the military during World War II in a very undramatic fashion. No combat or anything, but I had served in Guam and Saipan for about nine months. Actually, it was after the war was over before I went overseas. So I went to college basically on the GI Bill.

Q: Which branch of the military were you in?

HALM: It was the Army Air Corp. at that time.

Q: Army Air Corp. Before the Air Force was officially…

HALM: Right. And my brother, my eldest brother, was a B-17 pilot in World War II and distinguished himself in combat in England and stayed with the military and retired as a bird colonel some years later.

Q: Is that right? Then after your graduation from Oregon State what jobs did you take?

HALM: Yea. Although I majored in business, having worked in sawmills and elsewhere after I got out of the army, before I started college and summer time during college I felt less and less sympathy with management and more and more sympathy with the working person. So after a couple of interviews, when I graduated in the business area, I took a job with the Oregon State Employment Service, in Corvallis where the University of Oregon State is located. I worked for the State Employment Service for ten years and ended up as a local office manager in Grand Spas, Oregon.

Q: Had you been active in any trade union movements?

HALM: No.

Q: While you were in the sawmill?

HALM: Yea, I had. Some of the sawmills that I worked in were small "jippo" outfits, they called them. They were non-union. But I worked in at least one big sawmill which was unionized. At that time I paid student fees, I didn't become a full-fledged member but I did pay dues into it. I decided then that it was a hell of a lot better working for an organized sawmill than at one that wasn't organized.

Q: Maybe we should define the word "jippo" sawmill.

HALM: Well, particularly after World War II there was a big demand for lumber. A lot of small operators set up funny little sawmills and made a mint of money producing lumber that the construction industry consumed. "Jippo" simply means a small irregular sort of a lumber mill.

Q: Okay. So you worked then, from 1952 to 1962 roughly with the Employment Service in Oregon.

HALM: From 1951 to 1961.

Q: From 1951 to 1961.

HALM: During that time I was my own best applicant.

Q: Is that right? Do you want to explain that?

HALM: Well, it took me ten years to find a good job. Finally one came across the desk from an inner-state exchange of information from California, saying that the Asia Foundation was looking for an Employment Service Advisor to serve in Afghanistan. I applied for the job and much to my surprise, I was selected and that's how I got started in international labor work.

Q: And you then went to Afghanistan? Do you want to explain how that worked out?

HALM: In the first place, the Asia Foundation, at that time was a cover for the CIA.

Q: Funds were basically coming from the US Government?

HALM: Exactly. And they really were coming…for instance, we flew First Class everywhere we went and the privileges were very good. Probably the finest international flight I ever had was when I flew from San Francisco to Tokyo on the way to Afghanistan on Pan-American. My cousin was a stewardess in the First Class cabin, so I wanted for nothing on that trip.

Q: Oh man. That's interesting. So that was about 1961 or 62?

HALM: 1961. I got to Afghanistan and at that time it was a peaceable kingdom. Nadir

Shaw was the King and lived in Kabul. Afghanistan has a stark beauty to it and the people were very hospitable and friendly. They didn't have any way to find workers, or for workers to find jobs, so the Asia Foundation hired me to set up Afghanistan's first public employment service.

Q: That was quite a responsibility then.

HALM: Well, it sure was and we got one set up and we got it going very well. I don't think it exists today, I'm almost sure it doesn't with all that Afghanistan has gone through since I left. We set up a system using the ILO [International Labor Organization], International Dictionary of Occupational Titles from the industrial system of the ILO. It carried a lot of the occupations that you wouldn't find in the American DOT [Department of Transportation], you know camel driver and…

Q: Mostly agricultural workers at that time?

HALM: No, but a lot of what we think of as rather primitive occupations, hand weaving and stuff like that, were at that time covered by the ILO Dictionary of Occupational Titles that the US one didn't have.

Q: Did the ILO Dictionary add camel driver and other…?

HALM: Add them?

Q: Did they add them to the list?

HALM: No, the one that they were using at that time had jobs like that.

Q: Oh, it did?

HALM: You know, rickshaw, or bicyclists and things like that. That's the reason that we chose it. It fit more closely with the occupations that were in Afghanistan and Kabul.

Q: Was this a country-wide system, or was it largely limited to Kabul and the capitol city?

HALM: It was…only one office was set up at that time and I was assigned to the Ministry of Mines and Industry. Later the ones that were there were trying to facilitate jobs finding workers and workers finding jobs. When I was there, I was there for about two years and we really only got one office open and operating somewhat efficiently in Kabul. There were plans then to expand it elsewhere, but there were so few cities in Afghanistan and so much empty space that expansion wasn't very pressing at that time. And as I said, I doubt if the employment service exists today.

Q: Okay. Any general observations about the effort? Was it continued on by any other technical advisors?

HALM: No, I don't believe any other technical advisors were there, but I had trained several counterparts and they stayed on and my understanding was that they were going to continue it. I never got back to Afghanistan. One time when I was in India I had booked a flight and there was some sort of a hassle between Pakistan and India and the airline, India Airlines, that I was booked on couldn't fly over Pakistan, so I have never been back.

Q: Did you work in English primarily there?

HALM: Yea.

Q: Or did you learn a little Afghan?

HALM: Well, I learned a little bit, but it's Farsi that they were speaking there. My counterparts, I had two of them, were college graduates, young men from Kabul, both of whom spoke very good English, and so they would act as my interpreter and help me with the language and in getting the dictionaries into Farsi, out of the English version that we had. One of the great "it's a small world" stories…

Q: Go right ahead…

HALM: My first counterpart was a young Afghan man named Alrang, and about the middle of my tour, he got a scholarship and went off to college in Colorado, and I sort of lost track of him. When I finished my tour there, I took a job in Berkeley, California and one time we had a guest and my wife and I took him to San Francisco and we were sitting in a sidewalk café in San Francisco and who came up the street but Alrang. He and a couple of his friends had taken Spring Break, or something and come up to see San Francisco from Colorado. He and I were enjoying ourselves immensely, hashing over old times, and I looked down the street and there was a midget, dressed in red sequins and sideburns and patent leather shoes. He was a shill for one of the night clubs or sex clubs down the street. I didn't want my Afghan friend to miss anything, so I poked him in the ribs and said, "Hey get a load of this," gesturing towards the midget. My counterpart jumped up, ran out and embraced the midget saying, "Muhammad, Muhammad, my old friend! How are you?"

Q: Is that right? He knew the…?

HALM: He was an Afghan midget. He ended up settling down in San Francisco and he had gone to high school with my counterpart, Alrang. Now you agree, that's a small world story.

Q: That's a small world story. Did he give his friend the cut rate at the shop?

HALM: I was left out of the conversation pretty largely…

Q: Out of the loop.

HALM: …after those two.

Q: Your wife was there to supervise?

HALM: Yes.

Q: Okay. Then after Afghanistan you returned to the United States, to San Francisco?

HALM: Yea.

Q: What kind of work did you do there?

HALM: Well, I decided not to return to the Oregon State Employment Service and I took my money and ran. But I was covered for ten years of social security, so now for my retirement I'm also drawing a small social security check, which is nice. But, I moved to Berkeley, California where I had a job at the, I think it was then called the Lawrence Radiation Lab, in high energy physics. I worked in the personnel office there and enjoyed the view immensely. My god, we were on a hill and looking out you could see the bridge and Marin Country and the whole Bay Area. But of course, it was sort of an overwhelming thing, the cafeteria was filled with Nobel laureates and I knew nothing about physics.

Q: This was about 1963, then, roughly?

HALM: Yes…1963, when I came home from Afghanistan. Incidentally, I was married in Afghanistan to another American employee of the Asia Foundation. On the way home, we stopped here in Washington where her uncle lived and I applied here at the Labor Department for a job. They had nothing for me at the moment, so I went back and ended up in this job in Berkeley. About a year later, I got a job from the Labor Department offering me a position.

Q: Here in the Department?

HALM: Yea.

Q: And you joined the Labor Department then? In 1964?

HALM: 1964. Yea.

Q: What was your original position here?

HALM: I worked with what is now the ETA, the Employment Training Association. At that time the major administrations in the Labor Department had their own International

Visitor section. So, my first job here was shepherding international visitors around ETA and arranging business for them outside of Washington.

Q: I see.

HALM: Then about that time ILAB organized the DOLITAC. The Department of Labor International Technical Assistance Corp. Jim Taylor was one of the founders of that. I applied to DOLITAC and then I was accepted as a DOLITAC person.

Q: So, this would have been in 1964? 1965?

HALM: Yea, 1965. Something like that. I worked here at the Department until 1967 when I got an assignment to go to Thailand.

Q: Do you want to describe your duties in DOLITAC?

HALM: Well…

Q: I don't think that many of our previous interviewees have said very much about DOLITAC. I thought it might be good to explain what it was and what it did.

HALM: Well, at that time there was a lot of aid money available and there was a lot of demand…quite a lot of demand for labor experts. So, DOLITAC was set up with people with expertise in different areas and these guys simply sat around and waited for an assignment. They were given tasks and duties and loaned out to other parts of the Labor Department when they were sitting here in Washington, but it was a corps of experts who had agreed to accept overseas positions. In my case, I was on loan, technically, to AID, which was a fair enough arrangement, I guess.

Q: On loan from ETA?

HALM: No, from DOLITAC. From the Labor Department to AID. And with the understanding that I would return to DOLITAC when the assignment was over.

Q: This was the assignment to Thailand?

HALM: Yes. It was in 1967.

Q: And how long were you in Thailand?

HALM: I was there six years.

Q: Six years? Okay. Well, lean back and tell us about the experience in Thailand.

HALM: Thailand was, of course, a far cry from the stark beauty of Afghanistan… the lush beauty of Thailand. The sweet nature of the Thai people…the land of smiles they

call it. So it was quite a contrast. At that time, when I first went there, Adrian Roberts, the late Adrian Roberts, was a DOLITACer and he was in charge of the mission to Bangkok. I went to Bangkok as an employment service advisor. Bangkok already had a funny little employment service operating mainly, in fact only, in Bangkok. So, my job was to bring this up to speed and expand it to other cities in Thailand. I spent the first two years doing that sort of thing for Thailand. At that time, Adrian Roberts returned to the States, so they asked me to stay on to be in charge of the whole labor project in Thailand. So, the following four years I was the head of the labor program AID was concerned with in Thailand.

Q: And this was an assistance program to the Ministry of Interior at that time?

HALM: Yea. The Ministry of Interior had the Labor Department. It was called Labor and Welfare at that time, and has subsequently become a cabinet position, but it took many, many years. So, I worked at first, in fact, the whole time I was there, under the leadership, if you will of the Ministry of Interior. They were also head of the police and a very powerful Ministry and not all of them were good fellows.

Q: How did they view labor in Thailand? And labor organizations?

HALM: Well, labor organizations at that time were frowned upon and there were no legal unions or labor organizations at that time. It was a repressive government and they had no use for trade unions. I did my best to encourage a few of the Thai people, the Thai workers that I met and knew, to get together and try to do something, but it was very dangerous and I had to be very careful not to push it too far. One of my accomplishments while I was there was that I introduced AAFLI to the Thai people.

Q: The Asian-American Free Labor Institution.

HALM: Yea. The AFL-CIO Institute, known as the Asian-American Free Labor Institution. Jack Muthe, who is presently a Labor Counselor, was an AAFLI person and I arranged the introduction of him with the Director General of the Department of Labor. He gained permission for AAFLI to begin a small program there.

Q: And this would have been in the early seventies then?

HALM: Yea.

Q: Who was the Director General at that time?

HALM: A great guy. His name was Tien Ashikun. He was a smart guy and he had come to the US on a Harvard Trade Union Fellowship and spent something like, I don't know, a couple months at Harvard going through the course there. He was very thrilled with it and was quite pro-American and was fairly liberal in his views toward labor, including the need for some sort of labor organizations to protect the workers. One of the things that Tien learned at Harvard was one of his professors used to invite them over for

martinis once or twice a month, so Tien learned how to make martinis.

Q: Who was this? Joe O'Donald?

HALM: I don't know who it was. I kept in touch with Tien and he invited me to lunch one time years later when I came back to Thailand and he had been retired for some time. He showed up with his Mercedes, with a driver who was formerly with the Department of Labor and he brought his cocktail shaker and he made martinis for us at the restaurant we were dining at.

Did you know Kun Ti Young?

Q: I'm sure I met him. Yes. The name rings a bell. I'm sure he had already retired by the time I arrived in Thailand.

HALM: Yea.

Q: He was one of the grandfathers, I recall of the Labor Department.

HALM: Yea, that's true. He wasn't the first one, but he was there for a long while and seemed to be more enlightened then what I understood about some of the earlier ones.

Q: Or some of the later ones.

HALM: Yea, or some of the later ones. Kun Ni Coom is a guy that some of you know. He became Director General after Tien left. And Ni Coom had been in the US a number of times, most recently at the…what's the organization over there at the Smithsonian? He was back here to prepare a paper on Thai Labor a couple of years ago.

Kun Tien was also an epicure. The greatest meals I ever had, I guess, were at a Chinese restaurant that Kun Tien would take us to. It was called Hoi Tin Lao, it was down in Chinatown in Bangkok and the meals were tremendous. Kun Tien had known the management there for a long while because he had had his wedding party there. A lot of people showed up that weren't expected and he couldn't pay them. He made a deal with the management to come back and pay them later and they developed a long relationship, so we were treated well there. Besides all of the wonderful Chinese food, the piece de resistance was often a roast suckling pig, which they would serve. The remarkable thing, besides the delicious taste, was that the pig was equipped with electric light bulbs in his eye sockets that would blink when they served it on the table. It was a pretty impressive meal.

Q: What about the Thai Labor system, or system of labor-management relations while you were there? Did they pass any of the legislation at that stage or did that come later after the Democratic…

HALM: That came later, but I had an involvement in that. If we handle this

chronologically, I'll get to it.

Q: Okay. Go right ahead.

HALM: After the first two years, I was managing the whole labor program and AID and the Labor Department cooperated in sending a lot of short-term experts there in testing, counseling, statistics and health and safety. We would program these guys in and out and all the time improving the capability of the Department of Labor staff. One of my major accomplishments there was that I was instrumental in setting up the first workman's compensation system that Thailand had. Previously, under the Buddhist guidelines, an employer was supposed to have a fatherly sort of interest in the employees and take care of them if one of them were killed or injured. Some of them with the best intentions did provide some sort of assistance in those cases, others didn't and others couldn't because they were bankrupt. AID agreed and we brought out an expert from the state of Colorado…and that was because Colorado had its own workman's compensation system. A lot of states now supervise private insurance companies that conduct workman's comp. But Colorado, at that time, ran their own. So we had experts come out from Colorado for fairly long tours, six months or so. We sent at least one Thai back to a university here in the US… majoring in…what's the word I'm thinking of? Life expectancy and death?

Q: Oh, statistical….statistical projections of life expectancy. We'll plug in the word.

HALM: Yea, there's a single word that describes that discipline.

He spent a year or two here at the university and came back and operated the workman's compensation fund and it exists today. Shortly after the fund had been set up, and this involved mandatory contributions from employers into a fund administered by the Labor Department and a rating system based on the number of accidents and death, so it would be possible to lower your tax rate…the employer's tax rate…if you had a good health and safety record. That was the basic structure of the workman's comp. thing. And not long after the Workman's Comp. program was set up, an airplane from a nearby airport, crashed into a little factory where a number of people were working. There were 10 or 20 people killed and others were injured. There was a pay-off for the first time under this new system. As I said, I'm sure it is still operating.

Q: Anyhow, this was the kind of proof that the Thai's needed to believe that the system was functioning.

HALM: Yea. The thinking in Thailand during my time there, under Tien and to some extent Ni Coom's leadership, was that indeed Thai workers did not have enough protection and Worker's Compensation was one idea and the employment service was another idea, but they began feeling sympathetic towards some sort of labor movement. So, before I left we got an agreement and an expert to Thailand to help them formulate a basic labor law. Adrian Roberts, the guy I replaced some four or five years earlier, was selected and he came to Thailand and spent six months or so there, helping the Thais

write the basic labor law. And that's the same labor law…much the same… that is in existence today in Thailand, and in some dispute because the recent military government outlawed the unions with public employees.

Q: This was the law that was passed around 1975 during the democratic experiment and then was the public employees provision that became very contentious over time.

HALM: Yea. Exactly. Right. And to this day that is still a bone of contention in Thailand. The present government has said that it is certainly going to lift the ban on it, but they haven't been able to get around to it. Some of the things that started many years ago are still in contention there.

Q: But it was in general a very liberal piece of legislation, especially for a traditional Buddhist society, wasn't it?

HALM: Yes, exactly. Adrian Roberts was a good trade unionist and was well aquatinted with labor law in this country and in other countries. He had helped them prepare the most liberal law, I suppose, that had the chance of being enacted, and indeed it was. The work there covered a lot of territory.

Q: So, you were there until 1973 roughly?

HALM: Yea.

Q: So the law was being prepared at the time that you had actually left the country.

HALM: Yea. I think Adrian's arrival in Bangkok was shortly after I left. We had made the arrangements for it, but I think he actually came in 1973 after I left.

Q: I see. Are there other aspects of your tour in Thailand that you'd like to put on the record? It was a long, very productive period.

HALM: Yea, it was a great time and I always thought that Thailand would be a perfect place to live if it weren't for the climate and the traffic.

Q: At least Bangkok had traffic.

HALM: Yea. I've always thought, in the East Asian countries, of places that would be ideal to live and Singapore was one of them. Singapore of course is very uptight, very legal, very safe and very clean.

Q: And very Western.

HALM: Very Western.

Q: Thailand is much more exotic. Isn't it?

HALM: Yea, exactly. Singapore is sort of oppressive it's so uptight. Thailand is just the opposite, it's really too relaxed in many ways, including child labor and sex scandals and other areas. So, I've always decided that Kuala Lumpur might be the perfect place to live because it was neither as uptight as Singapore nor as free-wheeling as Bangkok.

Q: You mentioned before that you helped to set-up offices in some of the outlying cities of Thailand. Do you want to mention which ones and how the program was coordinated?

HALM: Oh, I can't remember the names of all the cities and this process continued after I left, so there's quite a network now. But I know that Chiang Mai and Udorn and Ubon all had employment offices and these were staffed mainly by the people who worked in the Bangkok office and who had learned the system and had the training there. They would be assigned to these up-country posts where they would run their own operations. When I was there of course, the Vietnam War was going on and it was all very sad in many ways, including the American soldiers that took their R&R in Thailand and the little Thai troops dressed in American uniforms and riding in American trucks with American weapons being sent off to do battle in Vietnam. The Director General would occasionally make trips to the American bases in Thailand, of which there were several, and he would take me along. During these trips he would exhort the Thai workers to remember that the Americans were on their side and what they were doing was very important and very valuable and that they shouldn't rip-off the Americans any more than was absolutely necessary. He would try to inspire the Thai workers at the American bases to do the right thing. One time I was standing up on the stage and I thought back during World War II, that a Japanese counterpart of mine might have gone with the counterpart of the Director General around the Japanese bases exhorting the Thai workers to do the right thing by the Japanese friends of ours. It was sort of an ironic reflection that I had.

Q: Well, I think the Thai were always very careful to move with the winds and with the currents and be one step ahead of offending foreign powers.

HALM: Exactly. I've always described and thought of the Thai foreign policy as the "reed in the wind" philosophy. Maybe you can't knock it, because they were the only country that was never really colonized and it has a lot going for it. But you can make jokes about it too.

Q: I think that also one of the reasons that there were so few resentments towards foreigners is the fact that there was never a serious colonization of Thailand. A serious effort to colonize them.

HALM: Yea.

Q: Okay, any final comments about your Thai experience that you would like to put on the record?

HALM: Well, one thing about Thai history is that the present king, I don't know whether

you know, was born in Boston and of course he plays a jazz saxophone. After World War II the previous king was childless, so after the end of World War II, King Phumiphon [Bhumibol Adulyadej], and his brother, who was the Crown Prince, returned to Bangkok. They were awaiting the coronation ceremony when a shot rang out in the palace and the older brother ended up with a 45 US army slug between his eyes. The mystery was never completely solved. They exiled a few politicians and they hung a few of the servants, but it remained a mystery. He became king as the result of this tragic death of his older brother. There's a book written about it called "The Devil's Discus". The other sort of finale I guess, regarding my time in Thailand is that we were preparing to go home, I had two children by then, and we had been there six years so we had acquired a lot of stuff. We sent our service shipment off and were staying the last few days in the hotel with our baggage, our luggage. One of the last nights that we were there I got a call asking me to come down to the lobby and there I met with some of the Thai workers whom I had been encouraging and trying to be helpful to in terms of labor organizations. They wanted to thank me for my support and help and in doing so they presented me with this stuffed cobra and mongoose. Which is what you see…

Q: Which has been in your office, right? I've seen it.

HALM: For many, many years. I was thinking about where I was going to throw it out when they said, "Mr. Halm, it symbolizes the struggle between labor and management." So I had to send it home. My wife, who has very poor taste never wanted it on the mantle piece at home.

Q: Does she have…should we give her the opportunity for another point of view on that one?

HALM: No, no. She knows that she doesn't have good taste when it comes to cobras and mon…what's the plural for mongoose?

Q: I'm not sure…mongeese, I think.

HALM: Mongooses, mongeese, I don't know either.

Q: Anyhow, you then returned to the Department of Labor?

HALM: Yea.

Q: In Washington and…?

HALM: And was assigned, of course, to ILAB and…

Q: That's the Bureau of International Labor.

HALM: Exactly. I left the DOLITAC at that time. That was the time of the decline of DOLITAC, with fewer and fewer missions to perform. I did various things for ILAB, the

International Bureau, one of which was working for the Saudi project. Now, we've had a project is Saudi Arabia for 20 years.

Q: I thought DOLITAC was still involved in Saudi Arabia.

HALM: Well it was at that time. Originally the first few experts that went out there were DOLITACers and then DOLITAC went out of the business. They were no longer formally associated with it, but we've had a program there for 20 years teaching the Saudis how to improve their skill training system. I was associated with that for awhile and was in charge of it from this end. I made several trips to Saudi Arabia, but never was posted there. That's a very strange thing anyway. The Saudis welcomed us there because it was some sort of attachment to the US, which they valued, and as I said it's been there for 20 years. For god's sake, if you can't finish a project in that time. They say that a good project, a good advisor is one that works himself out of a job. But that hasn't happened in Saudi Arabia because to this day it is still a very substantial program.

Q: Also, I believe the Saudis paid for most of it?

HALM: Oh yea, lock, stock and barrel.

Q: Was that true of all the DOLITAC activities? Or just Saudi Arabia?

HALM: No. I wouldn't say it was just Saudi Arabia, but in most cases it was supported by AID, the World Bank, ILO, some international organization. A few rich countries, like Taiwan and Saudi Arabia did pay for their own.

Q: Can you describe the scope of the project in Saudi Arabia?

HALM: It's been a long time since I was there.

Q: Just in general terms.

HALM: It was a matter of setting up a skill training system there. It went all the way, experts going out there to train the trainers, a great number of Saudis coming to the US for extended periods of training as vocational educators here in the US. All of the modern techniques that were applicable, the Saudis were glad to pay for and they were employed there, including an attempt to electronically translate English into Arabic. This never worked out too well, but a lot of money was spent on it. I guess, to some extent it's possible with other languages, but they never got that far with Arabic. So it was a big expensive program and there were no…or very few limits to the money spent or the means employed.

Q: Do you recall approximately how many people went through this program in a year?

HALM: You mean how many…

Q: Saudis. That actually learned skills?

HALM: Gee, over 20 years it has been hundreds, I'm sure.

Q: Hundreds?

HALM: Are you talking about Saudis that were trained in Saudi Arabia?

Q: Yes. Yes, through the DOLITAC.

HALM: I think it's about even.

Q: Trained there and trained in the United States?

HALM: I think there's as many Saudi instructors trained as there were workers that were trained.

Q: Oh, I see.

HALM: That's a cynical view and I suppose it's not accurate.

Q: I thought you were going to say as many US Department of Labor employees went there as Saudis were trained. That's a really cynical point of view.

HALM: It wasn't quite that bad. I haven't been associated with the program for some time. When I was there, there was a reluctance for a Saudi male to do technical sort of work. They had cradle to grave security, they had houses provided, education provided, they were nomads, they would rather drive a truck than repair one, and if they couldn't be a professional or a business person, the appeal of being a mechanic or an electrician or other craftsmen was not very great.

Q: So there were cultural prejudices against the type of blue collar work the government wanted to promote.

HALM: Exactly. I don't know whether that has changed any or not over the years but at that time it was pretty important. Of course a lot of the crafts, the semi-skilled and unskilled were foreigners that were brought into Saudi Arabia. I don't think that any of those were eligible for training under the Saudi project.

Q: The main purpose was, I would think, to train Saudi nationals.

HALM: Right. And to make Saudi Arabia self-sufficient so that they wouldn't have to import foreign labor to do particularly the skilled work.

Q: As I recall, the Saudi government was fairly reluctant to allow any of the materials that were developed in the DOLITAC program to be used in other Arab countries. Is that

correct?

HALM: I don't know. I don't believe I have heard that. It may be true.

Q: I think they developed training materials and really wanted to control them rather than spread them around the Middle East.

HALM: Yea, that's quite possible.

Q: How long were you connected then with the DOLITAC, actually ILAB.

HALM: It wasn't a very long time. One or two years, I suppose. I had other duties in the ILAB office, so it wasn't full-time on the Saudi project. Subsequently I was selected to replace Jim Hoover as the area advisor for East Asia-Pacific.

Q: Oh, I see. And that would have been in the mid to late seventies.

HALM: Yea. I continued in that capacity until I retired in September of 1995.

Q: Okay. Can you tell us a little bit about your predecessor, Jim Hoover who is quite well-known in the Department here?

HALM: Jim was a very special guy. He's very bright. He served in Japan as some sort of labor advisor after World War II. He's and intellectual and a writer and a guy with a great sense of humor. I'm one of the few people in the world, I suppose who's job has been satirized in The New Yorker magazine. This was the result of an article that Jim Hoover wrote One Day in the Life of Jim Hoover, I guess it was called and it was patterned after the book about the Russian…

Q: One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich?

HALM: Yea. So he went through a typical day as the Area Advisor for the East Asia-Pacific with the ordinary foul-ups and shores and mistakes that we all encounter in this work and he did it in a humorous and funny way. Humorous and funny enough so that *The New Yorker* accepted and published it. So, I say that I'm one of the few people whose job has been satirized that way. Jim got into some trouble after that because the Labor Department was unhappy. It wasn't exactly flattering. At that time I believe there was a rule, maybe still is, that you have to clear anything that you write about the Labor Department with the Labor Department, which Jim had failed to do. There was some thought about him being fired or discharged or disciplined is some way and finally, I guess cooler heads prevailed in the upper region of the Labor Department, saying that the Department would look sillier protesting that than if we just forget about it and let it go away, so there was never any serious repercussion. It was a very humorous piece. Very interesting and fun to read.

Q: When did he write this piece? Was that shortly before he retired in '75?

HALM: Yea. I suppose it was in the early 1970s sometime. I've got copies of it at home, of course, but I don't recall the date. He used real person's names, first names only, you know "Anna did this" and "George failed to do that" and those were people that I knew here in the Labor Department and to everybody else at least in ILAB.

Q: Were they the ones who failed to see the humor in it?

HALM: No, no. Most of them thought it was very funny and enjoyed it because most of them had similar bureaucratic frustrations that Jim faced. It was the top people and the PR people in the Labor Department who first became alarmed by this.

Q: I see. And who finally decided to let it pass without disciplinary action?

HALM: I don't know exactly who it was. Perhaps the Secretary. I don't know.

Q: Anyhow, turning to your own work as Area Advisor for the East-Asia and the Pacific…was that the official title?

HALM: Yea.

Q: What were your main responsibilities and what were some of the issues that you dealt with?

HALM: Well, the East-Asia Pacific Region begins at Burma and China eastward to cover the Pacific Islands and all the countries in between. The Area Advisor's job is to maintain contact with those countries, to stay abreast of labor affairs in them, in order to keep the upper-echelon policy-makers informed about developments that have an impact on American labor. Of course, early on when I was doing this, there was a great concern about Communism, the spread of Communism and the fact that Communism was supposed to be a worker's paradise. Labor organizations were often infiltrated by Communists or pro-Communist. In the early years particularly, there was a focus on the political, economic orientation of labor organizations.

Q: And which countries got the lion's share of the attention while you were there? Some more important ones?

HALM: China of course has always been a huge object of concern in terms of labor because of its history of the way that labor had been treated and mistreated. Of course other countries of prime importance were Japan, where the trade union movement, has in the past and to a large extent still is very politically influential and has very close relations with the AFL-CIO. So Japan was always an area of great interest. And of course the economic tigers as they developed became of greater interest. Taiwan has always been of interest because of its relations with the mainland. Australia and New Zealand are also in the area and being democracies with strong labor movements were of interest too. Of course, a lot of the little countries, some with very bad reputations and a lot of

abuse such as Burma and Cambodia, for awhile. In Indonesia, to this day we have a lot of problems in Indonesia, certainly in Burma with regard to rights and exploitation of workers and child labor, which is particularly sad and difficult in both Burma and Indonesia.

Q: Did you get involved in the disputes in Malaysia over electronic firms?

HALM: Yea. The Malaysian economy developed very rapidly while I was the Area Advisor and a lot of its wealth and success came in the electronics field. There has always been a problem there because the electrical workers, which are organized, wish to organize the workers in the electronic industry. There is a clause in Malaysian law saying that organization between two different types of industry would not be permitted. They have interpreted this to mean that the electronic industry is enough different from the electrical industry, the electrical manufacturing industry, that the electrical union may not form unions or even assist in the union of the electronic workers. The result is that there has been a lot of conflict over the years. Many of the electronic workers do not have unions. Of course the employers and the government argue, and to some extent it's true, that the pay and the working conditions in the electronics industry are excellent compared with the many others in Malaysia and others in East-Asia, surely, so there is no need for trade unions. That has been a bone of contention that has remained, so the Malaysian government is not very pro-trade union.

Q: How about American firms like Motorola in Malaysia? What role do they play in this dispute?

HALM: Well, one of the reasons Motorola was in Malaysia was to get away from high wages and trade unions. Of course they supported and reinforced the government's contention that it wasn't necessary and that the electrical workers shouldn't be involved with the electronics workers, that all was well in the electronic industry with the American firms that you mentioned. They have not been very helpful in terms of the point of view of the working people, or at least the point of view of people that believe in organized labor. They argue of course that they treat their workers well, pay them well, and they do to a large extent.

Q: Do you want to say a few words about the trade legislation and the worker rights conditionality that has evolved over the period of time that you were advisor? And its impact on Asia?

HALM: The law has evolved in such a way that the US for some time had a provision, I guess they still do, saying that in order to continue to receive trade benefits they must avoid mistreating their workers. There were five elements in their relationship with workers. The first being freedom of association, the second freedom to form unions, to form local unions and to affiliate. The third one was a prohibition on prison labor, the fourth a limit on child labor and the fifth was sort of a catch-all regarding working hours, working conditions, health and safety.

The AFL-CIO and other human rights organizations filed a lot of claims while I was Area Advisor saying that these countries should be no longer eligible for the trade benefits that they were receiving because of their misuse of the way that they treated their workers. In most of these cases it was not found that they should lose their benefits. I think that of the countries that I was concerned with, only Burma lost the trade benefits and of course that's such an extreme case that it was true. In the other cases, it was a charade in many instances where the government would make promises to improve things and the US government would say, "Okay, we'll give you one more year". Although it didn't eliminate the abuse of workers, I think that this process was important in terms of improving working conditions and most of all bringing to the attention of the high level people in the government of the need to consider the working people. If you are going to lose a billion dollars in trade benefits, it gets their attention a lot faster than if you simply tell them sad stories of child labor and stuff like that.

Q: Would you like to go into a little detail on the impact on Thailand which was fairly significant, if I recall?

HALM: There was a number of petitions filed against Thailand. Many of these focused on child labor and on child prostitution. I think as a result of this, a lot of progress has been made in Thailand in those two areas. In the US legislation, the US efforts certainly deserve credit for drawing the attention of the Thai people and the Thai authorities to these matters and, to a certain extent, embarrassing Thailand for their failures in these areas. The ILO, you know issued a "special paragraph" on child labor in Thailand. A "special paragraph" is the atomic bomb of ILO exercises. It's a very strong denouncement of labor affairs in that country. I think that the Thai government and the Thai people who were progressing economically, in education and in so many ways, that this became a source of embarrassment to them. So with the prodding of the ILO, from the trade legislation of the US, progress is being made in terms of those terrible problems that Thailand has faced especially with regard to children.

Q: It certainly got the attention of our mutual friend Kun Seine Chi.

HALM: Yes. That's right.

Q: Who was a long-time official in the Department of Labor who followed ILO affairs. Do you want to say a few words about Kun Seine Chi? He should be remembered.

HALM: Kun Seine Chi was a functionary in the Labor Department while I was there and he spoke excellent English. He was quite a bright guy, very good looking and presentable. And, as Don points out, he was active in ILO affairs, traveled to Geneva every year and was a big man in ILO. One time it occurred to me that the Thai labor law was written only in Thai and that foreign employers, particularly Americans, would have a difficult time understanding those laws. So, AID agreed to pay Kun Seine Chi a fee for translating these into English. Kun Seine Chi sat down and did this, and he certainly did a very good job. The only problem was, that I learned later, that he was selling copies of this. So he had a double take, not only did he have the money AID paid him to translate

it, but he was selling the English translations left and right.

Q: There was probably no prohibition from doing that in the contract. He figured, why not?

HALM: Yea, probably so. It ended at that time because the Director General was a shocked, shocked, shocked to learn this and put a stop to it.

Q: Public exposure tends to get some response from Thais, they really don't like to be embarrassed by international criticism.

HALM: No, of course not. I guess no country likes that and especially a developing country which is trying to live up to international standards. It's more hurtful than it is to some other countries. Seine Chi was a real operator, but there were others in the Labor Department that were too. There were a lot of other people who were very sincere and were very concerned about working people. In Thailand, unlike some East Asian countries, the women's status is quite free and open and they are very active in a lot of ways and they were very active in the Labor Department. We had some very distinguished and very dedicated women officials in the Labor Department whom I appreciated very much and felt they were a great asset to the Department. I have a personal theory that the men in Thailand had so much fun every night they came to work only to rest up for more fun the next night, where as the women didn't have those distractions and were harder working and more dedicated than some of the men. I shouldn't generalize too much.

Q: Well I think also that there were educational opportunities for women in Thailand and the discrimination wasn't as pervasive as in some other developing countries.

HALM: No, among the East-Asian countries I believe that the women's movement in Thailand, I don't mean the organized movement, I should say the freedom of women and the input that women made to society and to government and business was greater than almost any other East Asian country, including Japan.

Q: In many cases they were the backbone of the families in Thailand when men had second wives and minor wives and what have you, the women kept the family together.

HALM: Absolutely. And they usually controlled the money, which put her in a position of power while daddy was out enjoying himself.

Q: Well, were there other issues in ILAB that you handled that you want to put on the record?

HALM: Oh, yea. We did a lot of cooperative work, especially with Japan. We've had a number of international conferences in Japan and in the United States exchanging views and techniques on various aspects of labor administration. The most recent was held in Japan just last year, in 1995, where the problems of youth employment were discussed

and ideas were exchanged. So we've had a series of that sort of thing in Washington and in Tokyo over the years, exchanging ideas. The last one was in 1995 and I attended it with several other Labor Department people, including Director General Taro. When we went there the dollar was at a historic low with regard to the yen. Early on, the American delegation decided to go out to a Japanese restaurant for dinner and I knew that stuff was pretty expensive, so I changed $50.00 worth of American money to pay for my share of the dinner. We got to dinner and ordered and I had the sukiyaki and a single beer and I had to borrow $40.00 to get out of the god-damned restaurant! A $90.00 meal!

We had other serious exchanges; one of them that I was especially pleased with was the exchange of data on toxicity of industrial chemicals. These are tested by organizations in the US and Japan using laboratory animals. It takes a number of years and several generations of these animals to determine the effect of exposure to these things. A program was set up for the Japanese to do certain chemicals and the US to do certain chemicals and to exchange results, leading to a savings in time and money and conceivably even to lives. That program, I thought, was very useful and very successful and was one that was possible only with a highly developed country like Japan.

Q: Was there a formal exchange of Memorandum of Understanding?

HALM: Yea.

Q: So it was really Ministry to Department?

HALM: Actually it was the National Institute of Health And Safety on the American side and a similar Japanese counterpart organization. But it was very useful.

Q: Were there any other formal exchange programs in your area?

HALM: Yes, there were. Another thing that we did with Japan, and are continuing to do is that Japanese bureaucrats in the Labor or Ministry come to the US. They spend several months here in the Labor Department and elsewhere studying the Labor Department functions, trade union functions, labor management relations, a whole variety of labor interests and disciplines. They regularly send persons here for two or three months or more for that sort of study. That's been an important exchange.

Of course, also over the years there have been hundreds, literally hundreds of participants from East Asia and Pacific region that have gone to the BLS. The Bureau of Labor and Statistics has a series of seminars every year training statisticians in various statistical techniques, so there have always been East-Asians that have gone to these BLS seminars. These last two or three months and are very thorough and are done professionally and have been very useful. Most of the countries in my region have sent participants.

We've also had exchanges in the Mine Safety and Health Administration. The Mine Safety and Health Administration at times has been able to provide advisory assistance in terms of mining accidents and have had a number of participants from the East Asian and

Pacific region here for training in the MSHA training organizations.

Q: Which countries in particular?

HALM: Well China has been very strongly participating in this and has sent VIP delegations over here to meet with the MSHA VIP and to arrange to make sure that the Chinese technicians would continue to be received by the MSHA training people. There have been a number of PRC, mainland Chinese, people who have been trained by MSHA.

OSHA [Occupational Safety and Health Administration] also, over the years has provided training for a lot of foreign people. I don't think it has been quite as well-defined as the MSHA program, but there's always, or frequently, considerable interest in occupational safety and health and they have made available resources that they have for helping in those areas.

The Australians and New Zealanders enjoy contacts with the US as Democratic nations with well-developed economies and with strong labor movements. The technical assistance aspects there haven't been important, in fact there haven't been any that I know of, but high-level exchanges and some working level exchanges occur with those countries.

Q: How about Korea? We've done quite a bit with Korea over the years.

HALM: Yes we have. The Koreans have been anxious to cultivate a closer relationship with the Department of Labor. We have sent experts to Korea largely in labor-management relations. The Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service has also participated in training Koreans here and sending experts to Korea for that. Unfortunately, in recent years, funding has become such a problem in the Labor Department and elsewhere that many of these programs, including the one with Korea, are not as active as they once were. We've been very interested in the development of Korea for political reasons, of course North and South political reasons, as well as the economic development that has occurred there which has been rather remarkable. It has been so remarkable, in fact, that the Koreans are off-shoring some of their low-tech industries these days. Shoes and garments that used to be a big money maker in Korea are being sent to other East-Asian countries.

Q: The Koreans have always been very sensitive to criticism to their system of labor management relations which is, on balance been very authoritarian until the last couple of years.

HALM: Yea, and the Ministry of Labor there and the trade union movement, I should say the trade union movement, has often not been truly independent. It has been a step-child of the government and the Ministry of Labor, but things are changing a little bit.

We also, in the last couple of years I've been involved peripherally of course, with some

other source of interesting labor problems. That is the exploitation of workers in American territories in the Pacific Island, Guam and Saipan particularly. There have been several different aspects of that, one of them was that Philippine workers would go to Guam and Saipan and would find themselves badly exploited and this caused a great deal of consternation. The Labor Department got involved because of violations of the wage and hour laws which were in effect.

Q: Now, Saipan is an American territory and Guam was under American occupation?

HALM: Both today are US territories. Guam came to us at the end of the Spanish-American war and was occupied by Japan during World War II. Saipan, I'm not quite so sure, but Saipan was occupied by the Japanese also and bloody battles were fought. But those two are now American possessions.

Q: And our laws are applicable in those areas?

HALM: Yes, with some modification because of their economic status, but in general the American labor laws do apply there. One of the most egregious cases was a Chinese firm that was operating in Saipan and employing workers from mainland China to work in their textile and garment factories in Saipan. Because Saipan is an American territory, of course they had the label "Made in the USA" which was perfectly legitimate. Also they could export or ship their goods to the USA without any tax or tariffs, so they were in a position to make a hell of a lot of money. And they made a hell of a lot of money, but they weren't satisfied with that. They treated their workers terribly, kept them in pens, underpaid them, abused them in every way and weren't satisfied with making millions of dollars rather legitimately, but they had to make millions more by exploiting mostly mainland Chinese workers. The Labor Department got deeply involved in that and filed judgments against the Chinese-American company and recovered millions of dollars in back-wages that were due the Chinese mainland workers. The problem with that is of course, was trying to find the workers. Many of them had gone back to China, back to their villages and homes, and until very recently, and I think until today, the wage and hour people are working with the Embassy in China and with others seeking out these formerly exploited workers and trying to provide them a few hundred or a few thousand dollars, at least in back wages.

Q: How did you as the Area Advisor get involved in the dispute, in trying to find these Chinese workers in China? Or was this because of international flack, or whatever?

HALM: Well, the main way that we got involved was when the Philippine workers were found to be exploited, and this was clearly and international matter. We got involved and this lead to the exploitation of the mainland Chinese workers there and ILAB played mainly an accommodating role, a facilitating role, facilitating messages between various posts and the wage and hour commission, coordinating wage and hour, or helping facilitate wage and hour peoples' trips to the area and arranging meetings with the proper people. It was really a wage and hour commission responsibility and ILAB was mainly a facilitator.

Q: Were the Philippines and Chinese there legally? Or were they illegal?

HALM: Yea, I think that for the most part they were there legally, and again American laws don't apply universally to Guam and Saipan and I think some of the laws dealing with immigration were a bit more relaxed than they were here, and again with our laws we can't control illegal immigration either. So, I'm sure that there was an element of illegal immigration that wasn't the primary issue, I think.

Q: That's the first time that I've heard of that particular problem that's why I wanted to go into some detail on it.

HALM: Well, it was rather shocking and of course it's lead to exploitation like in El Monte, California where these Thai workers were locked up.

Q: Locked up almost as prisoners.

HALM: There seems to be no limit to the greed of some people and I get unhappy with some companies like Nike who are out in Indonesia paying $1.35 to produce a pair of shoes that they sell for $100 or more here in the US. They're making it both ways, they're ripping off the Indonesian workers on the one hand and silly American kids on the other hand, who will pay that kind of money and steal and become violent in order to possess those things. Nike's sitting up there raking in the dough. Michael Jordan, the professional basketball player and Nike flack, who's really a nice guy compared with some of the other American athletes you know, says that he doesn't know anything about this. He assumes that Nike doesn't exploit workers but he has no control over, and sort of washes his hands of the whole matter. It's a sad situation.

The progress that has been made recently in child labor in the carpet industry, now this didn't focus much in East Asia, but in South Asia, in India and Pakistan and Bangladesh and Nepal. I think that pressure had been brought on the carpet industries in these countries through very active DOL participation and other European interests, to offset or reduce the child exploitation which was infamous in the carpet industry. Actually, they now have a program where the label on a rug certifies that the rug was not made with child labor and a few of the rug makers have begun to adopt this. That's a great step forward towards child abuse in the carpet industry.

Q: I think they call that "Rugmark".

HALM: Yeah, "Rugmark". Of course child labor is a frustrating thing because if you positively say, "Sorry, no more kids in the carpet industry. Out you go." Then what becomes of the kids? The little bit of earnings that they were making presumably and usually went somewhat to the family welfare, and without those earnings the family situation is badly or somewhat reduced. The child may turn to less desirable occupations including prostitution, thievery and robbery if they are forced out of a semi-legitimate job. The child labor system is a delicate one that requires very careful planning and

programming.

Q: And coordination.

HALM: The attention has been directed towards child labor and the carpet industry is a result of interests beyond the Labor Department's efforts. In Europe organization and individuals have joined in the effort to reduce child labor. It's an important necessity for non-government organizations and others to be involved in these initiatives.

Q: What about child labor in China? Did you get involved in the discussions about that?

HALM: Yea, you know labor is badly exploited in China…all types of it. But my impression is that outside the rural areas child labor is not as bad as in some countries. In the first place there is an oversupply of adults who will work for very low wages. I think that traditionally the Chinese love their children and make so much over their children. The restriction on the number of children in China makes the child an object of great love and affection. There are limits to this and exceptions to it, but I've noticed that Chinese children are pampered. Even when I was traveling in China and everyone was wearing the ugly blue Mao suits, the children would be in bright colorful clothes and look great. I think that the importance that the Chinese place on their children, because of this restriction and for other reasons and because there is a tradition in parts of China that education is important, I don't think that the child exploitation is as prominent in China as other places. I don't know, I might be wrong on that.

Q: Of particular South Asia where it is pretty rampant.

HALM: Of course, rural children work on the family farm as most rural children, including American's work on the family farm. Hopefully, and presumably, those children are not exploited in the way that industrial employment of children can harm them.

Q: Shall we turn towards the subject of your relationship with the Department of State while you were Advisor? And how you worked with the Labor Attaché corps?

HALM: The job that I was doing as Area Advisor would have been nearly impossible without close relations with State Department, in particular the labor officers, attachés and labor reporting officers in the various posts and Embassies. There was a counterpart to me, there was and still is to my successor, in State Department that we deal with. We work very closely and rely heavily on the labor officers and attachés for information, for assistance in planning trips and exchanges of labor programs that are going on. They are terribly important to us too in terms of any kind of program that we conduct there.

Q: How would you describe the division of labor between the Labor Department Area Advisor and the State Department counterpart? What kinds of issues would you work together on?

HALM: One of the important connections has been the sending of cables. The Labor Department cannot send a cable directly to a mission. The cable has to go from here to my counterpart at the State Department. He must clear the cable. Any others on the various desks and parts of the Labor Department, I had to clear before they could go out. They know what we're doing and we have to get State Department approval for the things that we are planning and initiating. I must say that with the fax machine we have been able make the end-run possible. The exception is with classified which you may not send on fax. But it does eliminate much of the delay. You see, it would take a couple of days to get all the Labor Department clearances on the cable and a couple days to get it from here to the State Department and a couple of more days of time elapsed very quickly. Also, it's not as convenient to telephone East Asia as it is Latin America or even Europe, so the fax machine has been a great help to people like me, sometimes to the consternation of State Department.

Q: So, I guess in recent years your counterpart has been Bruce Malcolm.

HALM: He's a civil servant.

Q: Has the downsizing of the Labor Attaché Corps had any impact in the last few years of your work here?

HALM: Yes indeed. Not so much in my region as in other cases and of plans for downsizing even further. We have never had a Labor Attaché in China for instance, the most populace nation in the world, one with whom we have tremendous political and economical problems. There has never been a Labor Attaché, always Labor Reporting Officers. I guess there's no chance of a Labor Attaché being assigned there now. Of course they're cutting back on labor posts elsewhere. Japan is an interesting case. The Labor Department is sending a Labor Department employee to be the next Labor Attaché or Labor Counselor in Tokyo.

Q: That's Bud Clattenaugh.

HALM: Bud Clattenaugh. A longtime ILAB employee. He will be going there this summer. The salary will be paid for by the Department of Labor. The Labor Attachés have always been different from say the Agriculture Attachés and the Commercial Attachés which are funded by their own agencies. The Labor Attachés have been funded by State all these years. Bud will be the first Attaché that is funded by the Department of Labor. Now, the State Department will provide housing and administrative support, but the wages themselves are going to be paid by the Labor Department. I'm a little bit concerned about the precedent that this is setting.

Q: I think that the guy is very vulnerable because if the Labor Department decides it can't fund the position anymore, what happens? Is the State Department going to pick it up or will the position be abolished?

HALM: And suppose they wanted to abolish the position in Rome. The State Department

would say, “Well if you want a Labor Attaché, go ahead and pay them yourself.”

Q: It could just go on and on and at some point congress could say, “What is the Labor Department doing, funding State Department positions in the Labor Attaché field.”

HALM: And with our dwindling budget, we’re lucky to keep ILAB on the surface, much less taking on new obligations in terms of paying Labor Attachés. It’s an interesting twist in a new direction that we are headed in, for better or for worse.

Q: At whose initiative was this under? Shall we leave the initiative nameless?

HALM: I’m not quite sure where it came from.

Q: What about your working relationship with other Departments? Does ILAB really have much interaction with, say USIA or the CIA or other agencies involved in foreign affairs?

HALM: Certainly with AID. While programs in the rest of the world are being diminished, those in Eastern Europe are quite active. We have programs in Poland and Romania, one in Turkey and we are setting one up in Bosnia. We do get involved with the State Department, with AID, and to some extent the military in terms of Bosnia, particularly and transportation in and out. It’s still pretty active, but in a different direction. Less so in my old region than over there.

Q: Any general observations that you would like to make about the Labor Attaché Corps and where it is heading?

HALM: I think that the future of the Labor Attaché Corps is not very bright. When there was a Communist threat, everybody understood the importance of it and it had the strong political security element that a lot of people could support. Now that the communist activity has diminished, the pressure from the military and the security people and State Department is less intense. Despite the fact that the democratization and the development that has occurred since the collapse of the Soviet Union has lead to tremendous manpower and employment problems that the Labor Department and Labor Attachés should be addressing and taking care of. We have one sort of threatening problem, being replaced by one that is less threatening in terms of the United States. I don’t know, State Department budgets are declining, Labor Department budgets are declining and there are a lot of places that I think State Department would be willing to cut the Labor Attaché Program rather than cut a lot of other ones.

Q: Would the Labor Department be able to perform it’s international functions without the Labor Attaché Corps?

HALM: Without the Labor Attaché Corps, if it were abolished, I guess we could still deal with the Embassy itself, but then they would have to designate someone in the Embassy to cooperate with us. That’s about the same as having a Labor Reporting Officer. I don’t

suppose the Labor Attaché program is going to die clear out, but the importance and emphasis on it is going to be diminished. Sad, but true.

Q: Yea, I guess so. Any final observations you'd like to make? We don't want to end on a totally down note.

HALM: No, everybody should retire. I'm enjoying my retirement.

Q: When did you retire?

HALM: September 1995.

Q: September of '95.

HALM: So, it's coming close to a year. I've been doing a couple of things since I retired that relate to it. Particularly I'm working as a consultant to the Asian Free Labor Institute, AFLI, which we mentioned earlier, an institute of the AFL-CIO. I have been arranging the purchase of books for AFLI for libraries in Cambodia, in the National Assembly in the Ministry of Labor in Cambodia. This is NED money – National Endowment for Democracy – money which AFLI is spending. The Institute budgets are in trouble like all the other Labor stuff, but this was a trunk of NED money that they had left. The other thing that I am doing is teaching the illiterates how to read. That's volunteer work.

Q: Oh really? Where is this?

HALM: Well, there's a literacy council in Montgomery County. They have two different programs there. One for English as a Second Language and the other is for plain old illiterates. I'm helping a lady to learn to read better than she ever has…hopefully it will lead her to read better than she ever has.

Q: Is this an American citizen by birth who doesn't know how to read?

HALM: This woman I would call semi-literate, not illiterate, because there's a lot of site words that she's learned. Such as "street" looks like this, and she's memorized "street". She knows the alphabet and is acquainted with vowels. She's not, as I said, illiterate, but she has a lot to learn about English. Of course, I learn from these things. Working with AFLI buying books, I've learned so much about publishing, libraries and book wholesalers that in this case you have to stop and think about the English language which you use so easily yourself. Analyze it and think more about it. It's a lot of fun.

I guess a story that we could end on was when I was in Bangkok the Director General, Kun Tien used to ask me to write stuff, speeches for him, he loved to deliver juicy speeches. So one time I thought I would do something cute and that was with the "King and I"…the musical play.

Q: Which was on the forbidden list.

HALM: Right, but I said to myself, "I gotta sneak one in there." So I quoted in the Director General's speech the saying, "It's a true and honest thought that if you become a teacher by your pupils, then you will be taught." And that's the sort of sentiment that he loved to say. So I was thinking of enjoying myself from the back of the audience, tittering while I was getting the Director General to say something that was forbidden. Well, that old boy was smarter than I was and braver than I thought he was, because he knew where it came from and he acknowledged where it came from.

Q: Is that right?

HALM: I sat back there with egg on my face!

Q: There are a lot of very knowledgeable and sophisticated people in Thailand.

HALM: Exactly, and I learned a lesson there.

Q: The Western educated ones often live in two different worlds.

HALM: Yea. Tutoring this lady to read made me think of that… "by your pupils you will be taught"… so I'm having to rethink English and the vowels and the rules and spelling and the exceptions…god knows there are so many.

Q: Oh yea. English is not the easiest language to learn, I imagine.

HALM: I can imagine. Yea.

Q: Okay. Any final thoughts?

HALM: No, that was my final thought.

Q: Thank you very much, Glenn for the interview. We appreciate it.

HALM: I've enjoyed it.

Q: It's a great addition to our collective knowledge of Labor Diplomacy.

HALM: I'll probably think of something important or hilarious at midnight tonight…I'll sit bolt upright in bed. I've enjoyed talking with you too, Don.

Q: Well thank you very much.

HALM: I look forward to getting some of the other materials from you guys.

Q: Thank you.

HALM: Thank you.

End of interview