

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

SEAN HOLLY

Interviewed by: James F. Shea and Don R. Kienzle
Initial interview date: August 26, 1999
Copyright 2022 ADST

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Background	
Born in New York, New York	March 1929
Father, Union Organizer and Official	
BS in History, Fordham University	1953–1957
U.S. Air Force Enlistment	1950–1954
Member of American Newspaper Guild	1955–1957
Advertising Checker	
Entered the Foreign Service	June 1957
Washington, DC—Foreign Service Institute	1957
Entered A-100 Class with Roz Ridgeway	
Washington, DC—Foreign Service Institute	1957
A-100 Staff Aide	
Spanish Language Lessons	
Panama City, Panama—U.S. Embassy, Consular Section, Vice Consul	1958–1959
Tales of Office Tensions	
Colon, Panama—American Consulate, Vice Consul	1959
Vera Cruz, Mexico—American Consulate, Vice Consul	1960–1961
Fisheries Issues	
FSN Malfeasance	
Tensions with Consul General	
Mexico City, Mexico—U.S. Embassy, Consular Section, Assistant to Counselor for Consular Affairs	1961–1963

Rotterdam, Netherlands—Assistant Commercial Attaché Housing	1963–1965
Cambridge, Massachusetts—Harvard University, Labor Training Program Praise for Instructors Inadequate Allowances from State	1965
New Delhi, India—U.S. Embassy, Political-Economic Section, Assistant Labor Attaché	1966–1968
Impressions of Murray Weiss as a Mentor Observation of Ambassador Bowles Inadequacy of the Residence/Embassy Portfolio Required Extensive Travel Comments on Indian Unions Relations with AFL-CIO Personalities in the U.S. Labor Union Movement Finance and Labor Attaché Conference Insight into Indian Steel Industry Comments on Communists and Indian Unions	
Guatemala City, Guatemala—U.S. Embassy, Political Section, Labor Attaché	1968–1970
Insurgency and Domestic Politics Assassination of Ambassador Mein [August 28, 1968] Comments on President View of Local and American Labor Personalities Concerns about AIFLD and AFL-CIO Activities Comment that Government Usually Responsible for Union Leaders' Deaths Kidnapped by Marxist Rebels [March 1970] Hard Adjustment and Post-Traumatic Stress Comments on Inadequacy of State Department Reaction to Kidnapping	
Washington, DC—Executive Secretariat, Operations Center	1970–1972
Washington, DC—Bureau of Education and Cultural Affairs, Office of Western Europe, Desk Officer	1972–1975
Washington, DC—Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, Office of Regional Affairs, Labor Advisor	1975–1978
Portfolio: Human Rights, Labor, and Social Affairs Comments on Post and Regional Issues Strikes in Egypt	
Egypt, Sinai Field Mission	1979–1980

Washington, DC—Bureau of Inter-American Affairs, Office of Regional Affairs, Narcotics Coordinator	1980–1981
Washington, DC—Bureau of African Affairs, Office of South Africa Union Negotiation in South Africa AFL-CIO Program Importance of Zulus Observations on Mandela and Botha Peon to Labor Attaché Program	1981–1983
Washington, DC—Department of Defense, International Security Affairs, Inter-American Affairs, Secondment	1983
Washington, DC—Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, Office of Regional Affairs, Labor Advisor	1984–1986
Retirement	1986
Post-Retirement Activities Leesburg, Virginia—Tobacco Store Family and Labor Genealogy Project	

INTERVIEW

Q: Thank you, Sean, for your willingness to participate. Can we begin with a little bit about your background?

HOLLY: Okay, sure. I was born and raised in New York City in Washington Heights. My parents were Irish immigrants and were both involved in the old Irish Republican Army [IRA]. I was raised in New York. I went to school at the Irish Christian Brothers in the Bronx. Much to my amazement, the school is still there. Then I was enrolled for two years at Manhattan College. That was just absurd because I was trying to work forty-eight hours a week and carry full credits. You can't do that. So, then, I went off to the workforce for four years and served in Washington and Japan. Then I came back and went to Fordham University and graduated with a Bachelor of Science [BS] in history, which is a little weird. A BS in history because I refused to take Latin and Greek. In those days, Fordham used the old Jesuit rules. They only gave you a BA if you took Latin and Greek and I refused.

Q: When did you graduate?

HOLLY: In 1957. The day I entered the Foreign Service was the day the class graduated

from Fordham. I was spared listening to his eminence, the Cardinal Archbishop of New York, for an hour and a half.

Q: His last name?

HOLLY: Spellman. Now, my background as far as labor was concerned is that my father was a union organizer. My father was one of the founding members of local 32B of what is now the Serbs Employee International Union. He, among other things, was one of the people involved in putting some real scumbags into jail. They had real problems in the union. I am trying to think of the name of the guy—James J. Bambrick was the president of the local at that time. There was a guy named Scalissi who was also, I think, a member of the union/mafia, one of the two. My father testified against them and they went to Sing Sing. He was almost killed. This is the Depression I am talking about. He was going to find a job and three guys jumped out of a car with monkey wrenches and beat him and damn near killed him. I had a picture of my father in bed at home, which I sent a copy to Jimmy and a copy to John Sweeny with a rather snide remark to John.

My father recruited Dave Sullivan to join the union. As a comment written in my father's thing, which is March of 1955, they did not really want to join the union, but my father talked them into it. He was involved and, of course, it spilled over into the family. He was one of the organizers at the Clock/Treadmill Strike in New Jersey. It was a very bad strike. The company, at one point, drove some trucks through the gates and ran over a couple of gals, that kind of thing. So I grew up with it, with the family tradition of being rebels. Both my grandfathers were imprisoned in Ireland. My paternal grandfather was in Belfast.

So we have a long history of this kind of thing. I grew up with that. I was with United Auto Workers [UAW] at one point, Local 365, Booster Aeronautical, which was a disaster area. I remember going to meetings with him. He was the chairman of the Joint Committee. It was finally taken over by the government because it was so bad. The company was incompetent, and, besides, the airplane was no damn good anyway. It was never used by the U.S. It was just not a good airplane.

Q: Were you a member of the union yourself?

HOLLY: Yes, I was a member of the newspaper guild in New York. I had a job for two and a half years as an advertising checker. Despite the fact that I could barely see without my glasses, I got a job as an advertising checker. I joined the newspaper guild and I had my honorable withdrawal card with them some place. That was an interesting union.

Q: What year?

HOLLY: That would be 1955 through 1957. Because the day I started was the day my father died. I went down there and the guy told me I had to go back and that my father just died of a heart attack. That was March 23, 1955 to June of 1957. Don't forget, also,

my father was an instructor at the Xavier Labor School for Father Kerry and for Father John Corridan. So these men were close family friends also. When my father died, Father Kerry came and said the mass for my father. Then when my mother died in 1977, he came and said the mass out on Long Island. Wonderful man. They were teaching the people how to run a union, transport workers, grievance procedures. My father did a lot of that with Father Kerry. They were also involved with Local 365 of the department store workers. It was a guy by the name of Livingston who was running it. Livingston was a communist. There was a big fight about the communists and they were trying to work with throwing the communists out. My mother worked there part time for Gimbel Brothers, and somebody tried to throw her out of a window one day—nice people!

That is what I grew up with going union to union. I remember enough of it to know that my father was okay. Of course, my mother hated it because he did not have a steady job. He was always getting fired. They started Local 32B. A man and his wife had the charter, two Italians, and my father started it with another guy. He was an elevator operator and was having a smoke break. Some guy, the starter, who was sort of like the one who told you to move up or go down with your elevator. He pointed his finger at one man and said, “You’re fired; get your stuff and get out of here.” The guy said, “What did I do?” The starter said, “Just get your stuff and get out of here.” This was in the Depression. Some other guy got the job by giving twenty dollars to the starter. My father and this other fellow started Local 32B. So, I grew up with all of that. Then I came to the State Department.

Q: Was your academic focus on labor history?

HOLLY: No. I have a degree in history and philosophy because this was the old school of the Jesuits, which was fine. History is really something I took pleasure in. When I was in Fordham, as a matter of fact, at that time, the history department was the only one that required you to take an oral to get your degree. So, even though I was an undergraduate, I was required to take an oral.

Q2: Did you go to school on the G.I. Bill?

HOLLY: Yes. I had been in the air force from October 1950 to September 1954, and I was a sergeant when I got out. A career guidance counselor is what they called me. I had the G.I. Bill, which was not enough to pay tuition by that time. For the World War II vets or the Korean War vets—it was much better. But these people were going to Princeton and Harvard. Supposedly the leaders of the state universities got to the Congress and said that these people are not going to our universities. So they almost forced them, because of the finances, to go to the state universities, which was, of course, unfair. I did not take all the courses because I did not have to. I lived with it, and my father knew all of these people. There was one party in New York—the Liberal Party—Alex Rose. I knew him. I met him through my dad. We knew who all these people were just by conversation. My mother wanted nothing to do with it. She was violently opposed to all of this. This caused a great deal of trouble, as you can imagine.

Anyway, I got into the Foreign Service in 1957; I took the exam on a lark. I was off that Friday, and I saw it up on the bulletin board. I figured, “Well, I’m not working, so I’ll go down and take the exam.” To my amazement, I passed and wound up in the State Department.

Q2: Did you take the oral and the written?

HOLLY: Yes, the written and the oral. I passed and wound up in the A-100 course. That course was an interesting group because only one person was made ambassador and that was Roz Ridgway. I think there were thirty-five; it was a large class, and it had seven women. The women did not get any special deal. One went to work for the CIA, and then five of them resigned because they got married, and all of their husbands had jobs in the Washington area. Roz stayed on and became an ambassador. She was a very bright gal, and is now married to a coast guard guy.

Q2: She was on the Labor Attaché Desk in Ecuador.

HOLLY: Yes, that is how she got her start because she was doing fish. Ambassador Brewster was the ambassador at the time, and no one would touch tuna boats. But it was a real issue.

Q2: I got involved in that right away because they were organized by the International Long Shoremen and Warehouse—

HOLLY: They were always getting arrested for fishing, which is what happened when I was in Vera Cruz, Mexico. The shrimpers were always getting arrested for being in Mexican waters.

Q2: They were illegal all the way.

HOLLY: Oh yeah! Anyway, that is how she got her start, because she picked up something no one would touch with a ten-foot pole. Then she worked the fisheries and became ambassador.

Q: How about yourself?

HOLLY: My first assignment was assistant to the A-100 course, which I never quite figured out. I did that for a year and I took Spanish. There was not a hell of a lot to do because sometimes we had no course at all. I remember there was a man by the name of Harold Hinton who ran the Chinese area studies, so I would go sit in on Hinton’s classes and learn about China. What the hell else was I going to do?

Q2: How come you decided on Mexico, or did they decide for you?

HOLLY: No, they decided for me. In those days you turned out a report, remember? It was called the April Fools' report? It was due on April Fools' Day, and you would get a cable that said that you are going to "X." "X" had nothing to do with what you put down on your report. None of this negotiating where you wanted to go. You either went, or you got fired; you had this choice. I went to Panama as the vice-consul. That was 1958. I spent a year doing that.

Then the vice-consul in Colon left. We had a guy who was the consul; his name escapes me with good reason. He was probably an idiot. He was the guy that had been the desk officer for Colombia and Venezuela at one point. He was a civil servant type who had come in the 1930s as a clerk. He worked his way up. Then, finally, when they had that program that integrated all of these people, they shipped him off as chief of the political section in Venezuela or something like that. Apparently a phone call was made. Remember, if you made phone calls to Latin America, you sent a cable saying, "I'll call you tomorrow at three your time," et cetera. [Consul Bainbridge] Davis said, "If you don't get him out of here, I am going to kill him!" He was one of these "nit pickers" that would drive you crazy. So Davis had a vice-consul and they hated each other. They would write notes to each other, like, "YOU TOOK MY PENCIL!!!" This was the kind of stuff that they did. Then every Wednesday the ambassador would have a staff meeting, and they would take turns going over to the staff meeting. They would go in and talk about how bad the other son of a bitch was—they just went back and forth! Finally they got rid of the staff vice-consul.

Remember that in those days we had staff consuls and staff vice-consuls. You had a staff corps where you could stay in consular work and become the equivalent of an [FS-]03. Anyway, John [Horan], or whatever his name was, left, so I was told I was going to work four days a week in Colon. Then I would take the train overnight Monday in the Old Hotel Washington on Monday night, come back Tuesday night, and work one day in the embassy as the visa officer and go back on Thursday. It was quite an insane operation. The guy who was the head of the section hated being in the Foreign Service. Originally, he had been a lawyer. So he wanted you to write a letter to every visa applicant in Panama, which basically meant the entire population! Incredible! I could have done without him! He is dead now. Anyway, I wound up being transferred over to Colon to work with this guy who was rather strange. His wife used to drive through the streets of Colon at about sixty-five mph. In Colon, you should never drive more than twelve mph. Of course, we were just phasing down.

A lot of the old militaries had gone from there, but you still had residues of construction days. I had a consular case in which this old Irishman died in Colon. He had come over from Ireland and worked on the canal. He was well into his eighties and died. We got the Veterans of Foreign Wars [VFW] to help bury him. I got one of the Catholic missionaries from Philadelphia to come over and we had a nice funeral service. I wrote a letter to the family in Ireland and I got this very nice letter back.

But then there was a rumor that the post was going to be closed. This caused a problem,

because under the 1955 treaty, if the area was not used by the U.S. government [and this would be at Battery Morgan]— These were batteries, things that they had put in when the canal was constructed. They carried 11- or 14-inch “disappearing rifles.” They had all been taken out in 1945; these things went seven stories into the ground, and there was no way that you could get them out. So they had a fear of what to do with the post. Eventually I think the United States Information Agency [USIA] got involved [Dave Simcox, whom you know]. I replaced Dave as the A-100 assistant in 1957.

Anyway, lo and behold, a cable comes in one day and it says that I am transferred. I wound up going to Vera Cruz, Mexico in September of 1960 with Rebecca, my wife, and our two children at that time. She was as pregnant as a house; we were sent off. We got a cable from the consul in Vera Cruz [Bryant C. Buckingham] that there were no adequate medical facilities in Vera Cruz. So, on that, we sent Becky off to New York to Philadelphia where her brother was a resident at the medical school in Philadelphia. He was the resident pediatrician. So he got her an apartment and such. That November, I came and two days later my third child was born. I got to Vera Cruz and found out the guy was crazy.

The first several bosses that I had were very strange people. This guy had been a major in the military in Germany. He had married a German woman whose husband had been a colonel. Since he lost the war, she got rid of him and married this guy. She was a real winner. Her name was Irma. They had been in Iran. I was the vice-consul; the previous guy had been there five years, and the files were up to the roof. I think the safe had been moved in the building just after the U.S. Marines left in 1914! I mean it was just a crazy place!

Of course, we had all of the fish, the shrimpers in Vera Cruz. Anyway the point was that we had all of this work. It was a very interesting place, and was a very traditional Mexican city. It was the principal port of Mexico. All of our seaborne shipments for the embassy came through Vera Cruz.

I got into trouble with the consul because my language was so good. The secretary of the navy came down. Buckingham had at first said that he was not going to give a reception for him. I said, “Buck, he is the secretary of the navy.” He said, “Well, I may be leaving soon.” I said, “That has nothing to do with it; do you want to get yourself shot?” At the reception the Mexican admiral sends over to me. He became the Mexican naval attaché here. The Mexican navy’s headquarters is two blocks from the place where the Mexicans defended the port against the American marines in 1914. We get invited to the entrance and exit of the Americans. I was the only gringo in the place. Anyway, the admiral says to me, “I want you to translate for me and the secretary of the navy.” I said, “You know Mr. Buckingham.” He said, “Yes, but I want you.” I told him straight out that this would cause me a lot of trouble. Buck used to worry about tenses and things. I would just talk like I do now. I go around to the office on a Friday afternoon and here is this procession of shrimp boats. Americans, each with a Mexican marine and a bayonet. I go off to the headquarters and I can hear the admiral screaming at this guy. I got to learn all Mexican

bugle calls because they still use bugles. Then another day he calls me up on the phone on a Saturday and says to come over to his office. Well, Buckingham is standing right there. I said that to him. He said, "I don't want him, I want you." So, I trot off. There are two shrimp boats anchored on Sacrificios Island. There was a publicity campaign against American shrimpers stealing Mexican shrimp. Now how the hell do I know if it is Mexican or American shrimp in America? I don't know. I said, "Hey look, I don't want to arrest these men, and I don't want any problems." The next thing I know I am in a small powerboat with eight Mexican marines armed and off I am going to tell these guys to get the hell out of here. I used to do things like that all the time.

One of our jobs was to clear the shipments through Mexican customs. It was interesting. Customs was not the problem; it was all the unions, because there were several different unions. You had to pay each union for the cargo. So there was a group of guys in one union who took the shipment off the ship and put it on the dock. So the boxes are just sitting on the dock. Another union took the boxes and took them up to a line drawn on the beginning of the dock. Then another union got them and they were the warehouse people who actually took the boxes to the warehouse. So you had three separate bills all for boxes that were two by four. Unfortunately, I had to do all of the billing and checking all of this out with these great registers. It was over time, all kinds of things. The senior local who had the job before had been double billing for years and nobody knew it. This is like the tuna fish—who the hell wants to look at bills for two boxes of books? So he had been double billing; nobody knew it and paid him all the money. Well, of course, they finally caught him. Nobody is going to prosecute a local for stealing a couple hundred bucks per month from the U.S. government. So they canned him and I was stuck with doing that.

Buckingham was nuts; well, he was bad enough. He was a very nervous type and Irma was, well, for one thing, Irma did not like Catholics and we were Catholic. We got along well with a lot of the community, a lot of the Mexicans. The first Christmas that Becky and the children were there, which was the Christmas of 1961, we were invited to a man's house after mass for dinner. This does not happen in very conservative places in Latin America. Mrs. Buckingham would go to a Rotary Club lunch or dinner and she would take her fork and poke at her food! She used to call the Mexicans primitive people!

I found this very strange. Anyway, finally one day, my apartment was right next to the office. Even by Mexican standards, this was terrible housing. We had three kids in this place, and Becky had lost the baby. She came to me and she was crying. She had brought flowers over to Mrs. Buckingham for her birthday. She literally pushed Becky out of the door. Finally, I said, "That's it!" I called Mexico City; a guy named Roger Abraham was the consular administration. There was another guy, Jimmy Keegan. Jim was a great guy. I called and explained what was happening. I walked into Brian Buckingham's office and I said I am taking Becky to Mexico City with the pouch and I will see you Monday. The two local girls loved my children and took care of my kids. I turned to the man at that time who was the counselor for embassy consular affairs and I said I may get fired, but I am not putting up with this. This is unacceptable. He told me okay and to enjoy the weekend and go back to Mexico and I will get back to you. So we did and off we went.

Next thing you know, Monday morning, I got a phone call. He said, “Sean, effective next Monday, you are transferred to Mexico City to be my assistant. Bill Pryce, who was his assistant, is going to be the ambassador’s staff aide.” Then I march into Buckingham and say, “I am out of here!”

Then he tried to screw me on my efficiency report. Unfortunately for him, the inspectors arrived right after I left. He had left by that time. The inspectors failed to understand what the previous consul did during his three years at his post. As soon as he turned fifty, they handed him his papers. The guy in Panama City was a leech. I walked into his office one day and he had his secretary pinned against the wall. I think he thought I was going to tell his wife. You know the first couple of years were not good. If I did not have a wife and three children I probably would have said screw all of you. You see, being a child in the Depression influences you to hang on to a job. If you have a family, you need to go to work, do the right thing, bring your paycheck home, take care of your wife and kids, and go to church on Sunday. That is how we were taught. So, even though I wanted to knock this guy’s brains out, I didn’t. Anyway, he’s dead.

Q: Anyhow, you went to Mexico City—

HOLLY: I went to Mexico City as the assistant to the consul for consular affairs. He was in charge of all of the consulates. We had thirteen at that time. I got all involved in consular conferences; I met a lot of people, and his wife was socially active. This meant that my wife became his wife’s social assistant. They had all of these big parties and had to make sure the servants had everything right, and those kinds of things. We called it hog calling. (laughter)

Q: What?

HOLLY: Hog calling. You know when you go to the residence and you have all of these politicians and politics, you know, “Ladies and Gentleman, this is Ramón such and such.” These are people you never invited to your house except you had to. They would pinch your wife’s bottom and they would steal your silverware. Not that I am cynical, you understand.

What happened was I got a letter saying that I was being transferred to Rotterdam in the Netherlands. I still have the letter. It went to say, “We apologize for not sending you to The Hague, but we are going to be closing Rotterdam soon. So you can go to The Hague. They did not close Rotterdam until about ten years ago. So off I go as the assistant commercial attaché.

Q: How was your Dutch by the way?

HOLLY: It was terrible. In those days; they did not teach you. They just shipped you out. Pete Peterson—he’s dead now. Wonderful guy. We used to take Dutch lessons every morning from eight to nine. I got to be fairly good. But the things that drive you nuts are

that your kids go to kindergarten. The next thing you know, your kids are talking like crazy in Dutch. My oldest girl's teacher said your daughter's Dutch is excellent but, unfortunately, she has a Rotterdam accent. This is apparently like having a Brooklyn accent. But, no, really—you had to take your five-year-old kids to the grocery store because you had to be able to tell the people what you wanted.

We lived on top of the consulate. We were the only ones living there. It had one of those old, open European elevators with no door! I am taking kids up this thing all the time! Then it would get stuck at times. It was too much. We did talk to the department about moving. They said what we could do was after we paid the difference in rent for six months they would come back to us and up our allowance! Anyway, the work was very good, and we did a lot of nice, interesting things. I was there 1963 to 1965. Then, in 1965, I was assigned to the labor training program.

Q2: Were you recruited for that?

HOLLY: No, they put an announcement up for that and I volunteered. Joe Hardman and I. He was a nice guy. Funny guy, heavy set.

Q2: As I recall you then went to Harvard.

HOLLY: We did the first couple of months. Henri Sokolov was the guru. The impression I had was that he thought this was all some kind of a joke. Lasiczheck was the guy who was really more interested. He was very good. I had a real problem with Harold, as you are well aware. He was just basically a self-serving bureaucrat as far as I am concerned. I ran into a lot of trouble with Harold. Then we go to Harvard. Joe O'Donnell was running the course at the time. Among the instructors was John Dunlap. This was not a bunch of half-baked academics! This was the real leadership at that time. He was good because people would go into a long song and dance and he would tell them where they were wrong. He was very good.

Q: He also helped to establish the trade union program.

HOLLY: He was one of the founders of it. There were a couple people involved. There was a man who was from one of the big banking families in Boston. He had something to do with it and invited Joe Hartman and myself to his class retreat, the class of nineteen ought one or something. It was a dream because it had books from the ceiling to the floor. The thing that was sort of sad about it was that we had a number of foreign students. We were there, the three FSOs on half rations, the department was paying us twenty-five dollars a day. They had paid for the room, but not the board. So we were practically cooking beans over our stove. The guys in the labor movement thought this was stupid. The guys from the mine-workers all had their fees paid, plus they were getting a hundred dollars a day! They would take us out to dinner! They felt sorry for the government employee. We only just about made it! It was awful!

Q: What about your family?

HOLLY: They stayed here in Washington. They stayed in Arlington at that time. They moved into a townhouse in Arlington. It was fun in a way, but it was just awful. The department was so parsimonious. It was pathetic. We always felt inferior. We were barely able to eat. Anyway, that was a good course. Then I got assigned as the assistant labor attaché to Morrie Weisz.

Q: Do you want to comment on Joe O'Donnell?

HOLLY: Oh! Joe was great. Do you remember what I said about blowing the whistle? He led his first strike when he was eighteen. He blew the whistle and everybody walked off of the job. Joe was very good. Joe knew everybody. Everybody liked Joe. He had that personality that he could go out and talk a stone to give him blood! He was very nice. Then, Libby, she was from a Boston Brahman family. She was a delight. When you got the two going, it was really funny. We had good people on this program. John Dunlap and a few of the others were really first class. After Joe left, you got some female professor. With all due respect with academics like Murray, he did not have the faintest clue about what the hell goes on in the working class world. This has always been my complaint.

Q: Murray?

HOLLY: Murray Weiss. I mean I like Murray in many ways, but he could drive me nuts because he is a nitpicker. I came across and destroyed it, but it was letters he wrote me from home leave about what I should do about reports. This is 1968. I was assistant labor attaché in New Delhi. We had a big labor program at that time. A lot of the guys there who became ambassadors like Roger Kirk, Dick [Richard] Viets—he came out of the assistant science attaché, but there was no room in the office. So he went upstairs to the political section and never came back! Did he know how to promote himself!

These were all bright people. The only one who was a real pain—I could never get this business of Chet [Chester Bowles] and Stub. Stub was the ambassador's wife's name. Chester would wear the worst clothes that you ever saw. He would wear stuff that you swear he got from the Salvation Army. He did that once to the Marine Corps Ball. He had been sent back to Delhi. The story is that because Bobby Kennedy said, "Get that son of a bitch out of here. I don't ever want to see him again!" At the Cuban crisis, he was all upset that we might upset the Russians and so he was going contrary to what the White House was doing.

Q2: I know him well. He was the governor of Connecticut. He was also the congressman from my hometown.

HOLLY: Who was the guy that was the big wheel—John somebody—in the Democratic Party in Connecticut? I think it was John Bailey. When the senator from Connecticut died suddenly. I don't know who it was.

Q2: It was McMahon.

HOLLY: So he [John Bailey] is head of the Democratic Party. What does Bowles do, but names one of his business partners, Bill Benton, and makes him the senator for five or six months. There is a wonderful story I read somewhere when Chet Bowles thought he was presidential timber. John Bailey cut him right off. He never knew it. He was sent back to Delhi because Bobby Kennedy said to get rid of him. They could not exactly throw him in the street because he had a lot of money and was very big in the Democratic Party. He went back and he refused to live in the new residence, which was built by Edward Dole Stone, as was the embassy.

If you want to read about the residence and how bad it was to live in, John Kenneth Galbraith's book about living in Delhi will tell you all about it. The only private room in the whole place was in the bathroom. They had originally built the place like the Kennedy Center. It was so hot they had to put marble screens around it. At that time, they were depending on Delhi Power and Light for power and basically did not have any back up generators. You would be sitting in your office in 72 degrees, and the next thing you knew you were on your way up to 100 and it was 108 outside. The way it was designed you could not go from my office to your office through a door. I had to go out through a corridor and then into your office. So I am going from 72 to 108, to 72. Everybody in the place had colds all the time. Plus they had a pond. They had a pond with Indian wild flowers. The only problem was there was no drainage system. You had duck turds everywhere. Every once in a while they would drain the pond. You would have all these little Indians running around catching these ducks. They could not fly, so for two days you would have rancid duck doo doo. They would be shoveling it out.

The way you made brownie points with the higher ups in the embassy, that is to say, the ambassador, was two days after you arrived, your wife was wearing an Indian sari. He had a social secretary whose husband was an American. Every time a new person came into a residence, you got new curtains and new covers for the furniture. She sewed the cloth. The guy that came from New York, Keating, I think, finally got rid of her. There was this whole business that your wife was supposed to look like an Indian. What the hell was this? They did have some good things. They would have receptions out in one of these mogul medical schools. It was a wonderful background. It was all okay.

Q2: Can I ask one question? Did you ask for that assignment?

HOLLY: No, they sent me there. Of course, working for Murray was another story.

Q: Tell us about your work there.

HOLLY: When we arrived, we arrived in the middle of the night. All planes in New Delhi arrived in the middle of the night. We were the last ones off. I guess Murray must have thought that we were not on the plane. My older daughter said to me, "Oh, Daddy, smell

the elephants!” That was not elephants that she was smelling, that was India! I think it was DeSilva’s guesthouse on Lancing Road, which is now a big hotel. It was an old ramshackle building and Murray met us with bottled water. I don’t know how the hell my wife Becky put up with it. She was not keen on all of this but the kids did okay. We did okay. I have a picture of myself and the kids getting a haircut from an Indian barber sitting in the middle of a lawn. People had no idea what this place was like. That is why when John went out there, I could never understand, because he was complaining. I guess in those days they were staying in embassy residences while the house was being rebuilt. I never understood what his complaint was because we were really in bad shape.

Working for Murray was an interesting time. I did get to see a lot of India. That was the one thing about the labor attaché job. You always got out of the embassy. Most of the embassy did not give a damn about what you were doing anyway. They had no interest in labor unless of course, God forbid, the whiskey shipment should be delayed or something. I did get around to a lot of places. There was a guy in Central India who had been in the Harbor Trade Union Program. I cannot think of his name. Now, Indian men hold hands. He was also a member of the local state government.

The thing I liked about India was that I met some absolutely fabulous people. Let me go back. Chris Scholls from the United States Information Agency was running a labor program in which we published magazines and all kinds of stuff. Murray thought—felt—that this was his bag and he had the right to tell people what to do, which was where we got into trouble. He was in charge. Chris Scholls went along with it because it is a hell of a lot easier than fighting with Murray. There was an Irish-American guy who died in Thailand. I will think of his name in a minute. I wound up as the guy in-between, being sent to tell him this and that! It was incredible! This Irish-American had a Brazilian wife. She used to ride with the Indian Army on pig sticking. The whole half of the wall was covered with trophies from riding. She was a great rider. When the Indian Army invites you to go pig sticking, you better be damn good!

Q: What is pig sticking?

HOLLY: Hunting a wild boar with a spear. You run alongside it and hopefully jab the spear between the shoulder blades and kill it. A boar can rip the stomach out of a horse. You need tremendous equestrian skills to get along with that kind of thing. Anyway he and Murray hated each other—I still can’t think of his name. Murray was convinced that he was in charge of all the labor programs in India. He and Bowles were old buddies and they talked alike. Every new officer in the embassy was supposed to meet the ambassador within the first month for a private lunch with his boss. Well, I did not get to see Bowles on that level until I was leaving. I am listening to Bowles and Murray and I think nothing has changed! It is the old New Deal guys! That was the feeling that I had. It retrograded thirty years back. Murray would send me these letters when he would go on leave or go off some place. He was great at dealing with the employers. There is a Farsi family in India that is huge. They own all kinds of steel mills and things. Anyway, I went to every steel mill in India at that time, including the ones the Russians built.

Q2: Let me ask you—Murray encouraged you?

HOLLY: Oh, yeah! He did not want to go to these places. He would ship me off. He had a British attaché and a German attaché. We would go off to these places. Or, I would go on my own. Christian and I would go off. The first time I went on a trip in Delhi, I thought that I would die! We were heading south down to Bombay and then to central India. I remember saying to Christian, “I have now just become a vegetarian.” I knew I would die! There is a chain of restaurants in India called Gaylord’s. I never knew they had that many kinds of peas in this world. It was great! Christian was very good although I did annoy him once but that was good.

Going around to these places and conventions for the Textile Labor Association was good. The Textile Labor Association was founded by Gandhi. It was the grandfather of all labor unions in India. I think it was Ben Kara that was secretary general of the Indian Rail Workers Federation. This was one of the biggest unions in the country. She was from a very wealthy textile family. She had become involved with Gandhi in the beginning in 1920. She was as tough as nails. She and I always got along. We always had a great old time. That was fun. India was an interesting country.

Q2: The unions are tied pretty close to the political parties?

HOLLY: Oh, yes. You have the International Nonwovens Technical Conference [INTC] [Association of the Nonwoven Fabrics Industry], which was part of the government. You had different ones tied in. Depending where you were, like in Bengal, there were unions tied in with the Communist Party of India. Some of those guys are still around. Bengal was always a Communist Party state. At one time I think the government of India took over under the Indian constitution. If things get too bad then the central government comes in and takes over. In Calcutta, the port workers union, we had a consulate there where some of the people there got to know these people fairly well.

Q2: In Calcutta at the time, was there a consular officer there by the name of Schimel?

HOLLY: [Ruth] Schimel was doing the labor reporting. She left the Foreign Service and went to become a professor somewhere. She was very good.

Q2: How about this fellow George?

HOLLY: Ah! Now, you ran into another problem, which was that Jay Lovestone’s buddy, Harry Goldberg, would show up every once in a while. I mean I got thrown out of the office one day by Goldberg. He wanted to talk to Murray. I guess we were getting all into the AFL-CIO stuff about whom to talk to and whom not to talk to. Murray was at odds with them, I think.

George was a renegade at the time; he was from Bombay. He is now a minister of defense

in India. Fernandez is the Portuguese name. The Jesuits had a big labor relations center in Delhi. Father Fonseca was his name. The largest community of Jesuits in the world is in India. We got to know them fairly well. I got to know them because we would go to church at Holy Family Convent where they had an English language mass.

We were still in the days of clearing everything with the AFL-CIO. This is where Arnold Steinbach took over to run the labor program. He was an Austrian by birth. He left in 1935. He was Jewish but he was a Unitarian. He knew everything about everybody.

Q: This was the Department of Labor?

HOLLY: He was a Department of Labor man. He could tell you why the *Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund* (German Trade Union Confederation) [DGB] was doing this and doing that. So he would give you all kinds of information. I really do not know where he fit with all these others. His predecessor was at odds, I think, with the AFL-CIO about a lot of things. Jim Taylor was also there.

Q: What about Dick Deveroll?

HOLLY: Deveroll. I know him only from a book he wrote about Japan. I had that book, which I bought in 1953 when I was in Tokyo in the [military] service. There was a real question about what he was up to. He was the AFL's man in Japan.

He and Goldberg were all the same type, although he had a falling out. He had a terrible falling out with the AFL-CIO and sort of disappeared from the scene. Goldberg came out a couple of times. He and Murray would have a real go-round and I was excluded. There was disagreement about policy, about whom to talk to. They were trying to be anti-Communist, but at the same time you had the Indians going closer to the Russians. You had the Chinese crossing the border. The Russians and the unions were getting together, which made the AFL-CIO very nervous. At that time, we still had the remains of the U.S. military mission in India. Against his better will, Kenneth Galbraith had to call in the U.S. military to supply the Indians. They got their pants whipped off of them. So, we still had the remnants of that.

Q: The Chinese?

HOLLY: The Chinese came across the border [October 1962]. It is probably that the Chinese were right, actually, but that is another thing. The Indian soldiers were out there without equipment. The guy who was the minister of defense at that time was Krishna Menon and he hated Americans. There were all kinds of scandals. He was tossed out. You still had the residue of that kind of thing. You got tied up with this kind of stuff. Then you had the AFL-CIO which had its own foreign policy, which was not necessarily in communion with ours, ours being State. So, Goldberg came out and had a big go-around with Murray about what, well I don't really know. You would have to ask Murray about that. Anyway there was that kind of undercurrent there. We had Tom

O'Connor. That is who it was! Tom O'Connor, the [United States] Agency for International Development [USAID] labor officer. Then there was Bernie—I will think of his name in a minute. Bernie was his assistant. We had an awful amount of money at that time going into labor. This was, of course, because we had all the Public Law 480 [PL 480] money. Once a month three officers would go over and count the PL 480 money on the books. You could not spend it fast enough!

Q2: At that time did you have the Finance and Labor Attaché Conference?

HOLLY: That's right. The first one we had; Murray had the first one by the PL 480 money. This was when Willard came out. That was a good conference. That was the best year. This was either 1966 or 1967. It was a good conference. We had a lot of good people. We had all the attachés, and it was good. From then on, it went downhill.

Q: And the years that you were labor advisor?

HOLLY: That would have been in the mid-1970s. I can look it up. My files are all screwed up. I have been trying to correct my files. Then I went over as the Colombia desk officer. Then I went to Sinai for a year. When I came back I was in the Operations Center for two years. The first time we went, I was the Near Eastern Affairs [NEA] [also called Near East Asian affairs] labor advisor. You were there and Becky came with me. No George was. Then you were there. George was there and who was the one they sent to the OPM [Office of Personnel Management], Lenny Sandman. Poor guy arrived and there was an overlap. They shipped him off with some immigrants from Russia to learn Hebrew. George did not speak Hebrew. He, his wife, Becky, and I went to Bethlehem as tourists. There was a lock down, the usual thing. His wife was Irish. George's wife was Irish. In Delhi we did the Labor Attaché Conference. We ran around and I did a report on all of the steel mills in India.

Q2: You did a report on steel mills or on labor/management relations?

HOLLY: On labor management and the steel mills. Most Americans had never been to any of these places. This was a huge establishment. It was the second largest establishment in the world outside of Saigon. When you got down to it, people never really went anywhere. They never ventured out into the boonies, which is what I did. I had also been down into the coal mines, which was a mistake on my part. I was down two hundred feet underground without a helmet and other protective gear and with plastic "flip-flops" on. I finally said to myself, "What am I doing here?" You go down in a rope-pulled elevator. But I said, "Sure, I will go." I did get to see some strange and wonderful places. That has always been the thing about the labor attaché job. You get out of the capitol and you get to see the real people of the country. They are always so pleased. For example, in Guatemala, I was the only non-Guatemalan on the platform at a convention there. I did the same thing to a certain extent in Delhi.

Q: How was your working relationship with Murray?

HOLLY: Well, I put up with Murray. I just realized that I had to live with Murray.

Q2: Let me ask you on the bottom line, how did he do on the Official Efficiency Reports [OERs]?

HOLLY: He was not terribly enthused. The guy who came after me fell in the bathtub, and they pulled him out. They never got another guy. They had to AIRVAC him out of there.

Q: Is that right?

Q2: Were the unions strong?

HOLLY: In some areas, yes. However, they were very much in the pocket of the political parties. So, this is where you got—and this is true of every place—that you have where you cannot tell one from the other. Mrs. Gandhi made a speech one time in which she pointed out that they were among the privileged of India. They may complain about their wages, but considering what the average Indian was making, they were the hell ahead of everybody. She made it very clear that they were not going to get a hell of a lot more.

There was also a lot of connection between the British labor movement, originally, and the unions. Of course, I have always maintained that one of the worst things that ever happened to India, and a lot of other countries [i.e., the former British colonies], was going to the London School of Economics [LSE]. This was because that is where you had all of these state enterprises, which of course were politicized. They had many more people than they could possibly use and they could not make any money because of the political thing. But the LSE said you should have state enterprises and they should be run by the state. The only efficient steel mill in India at that time was Tata Iron and Steel Company [TISCO][now Tata Steel, Ltd], which was run by the Taka family. I think they were the Farsis out of Bombay. There was a lot of trouble because, for instance, in this one place built by the Russians, the tribals [this was a tribal area] were all displaced.

Then you got into the question of who got the jobs. The tribals said that they needed to get the jobs because we were thrown out of our farms. You wound up with all kinds of class and caste problems in these places. Your clerical people would be people from Kerala or from Madras, but particularly Kerala. The highest education level in India was in Kerala. It also had more communists and more Catholics than in any place in India.

There is some kind of correlation; I am not sure what it is. So you would have tremendous riots. Then, you would have to call in the local police who laid clubs on anybody. The local police are totally corrupt. Eventually, when you got down to it, is what the government said you were going to do. They would bargain but when you have state run industries it is difficult. You had constant fear. People had constant fear of losing their job. You could sit down and prove to them that it would all be better if you got rid of

this and that. For instance, they would have all these things called “pin-down strikes” in Calcutta. You would get your bank statement to you written by hand because these people were doing everything by hand and they were terrified of modern appliances. These are the only support for their families. There was not a Social Security System, really. You had to deal with that kind of mentality. We are talking about some poor guy who has two weeks of education and is worried if he is going to get any rice tomorrow.

Q2: What about the communists?

HOLLY: Calcutta was a communist state. They were a strong and big influence. Only in India do you have two communist parties. There was Communist Party India [CPI] Marxist, and then there was the other CPI. They were Chinese types. They had big clashes in Calcutta.

Q: So the other was Chinese oriented? Was it nationalist?

HOLLY: They were all nationalist. When you get down to an Indian, he is basically a nationalist. The balancing act that you have to do because of race, caste, religion, and language, is unbelievable. As a matter of fact, I would get into trouble with the embassy because I always used to use this driver who was a Sikh. The Christian drivers always complained that I was always using him. So I had to get a Christian driver for the next trip that I would make, whenever that would be.

Q2: How long was your assignment there?

HOLLY: Two years. Then from there I went to Guatemala.

Q: We are now turning to Guatemala.

HOLLY: I was assigned as labor attaché to Guatemala after New Delhi. We all went down to Guatemala, my wife and I and, at that time, our five children. The month we arrived, which was August of 1968, the ambassador was assassinated, John Gordon Mein. The January before that the two military and naval attachés were assassinated by the guerrillas. They had attempted to capture the ambassador. He ran one way and they shot him down. They were FAR, which stands for Armed Rebel Forces [*Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes*]. They were Marxist, Castro types. This was during the heyday of Ernesto “Che” Guevara. The whole guerrilla movement at that time was in deep trouble. The government was really after them. They had been down in the mountains, the eastern part of the country on the Sierra something or other. Colonel Havana was in charge of the army and they were basically liquidating these people. There were shoot-outs all the time.

Q: So, the Guatemalan Army was liquidating the rebels?

HOLLY: Yes and vice versa. You had a great deal of stuff going on in terms of guerrilla and counter-guerrilla activity. The ambassador was the first American ambassador as far

as I could figure out. That was a real uproar. They then increased security for the ambassador. Anyway, I took over for John Tipton and I never really did get any kind of briefing on what was going on. At that time you had the AIFLD [American Institute for Free Labor Development, Inc]. They had a guy down there from AIFLD on temporary duty [TDY] who had shown up with a tourist passport. The AID director at that time was a Foreign Service officer. He became ambassador to Chile—it was Dean Hinton. He was not a happy camper. He did not want any part of AIFLD coming in. I got a budget despite Dean for the AIFLD people. They went around doing their thing. They had an office and they were training people. I am not so sure how good it was but, given the fact that the Guatemalan labor movement was in such horrible shape, any kind of encouragement was worthwhile. The labor movement, if you go back into Guatemalan history, the labor movement at that time was huge. One of the reasons the army revolted was because of that.

Q: This is when the CIA—?

HOLLY: —Yes. Well, the government was leftist. Arbens was a leftist. He had a huge labor movement and was asking for guns to arm the workers. Part of the issue, and this never seems to be in the writing, the army was split as to whether or not to support him. This was because one of these henchmen had killed Colonel Arrana, who turned out to be the uncle of the man who later became president. The army was really furious over this. Many armies in Latin America are a very closed society. You enter the academy, you stay in it, and you socialize with army people. It is a real closed society. Guatemala also in those days had almost no NCOs [non-commissioned officers] because there had been a sergeant by the name of Bautista who had kicked out the Cuban government. You had second lieutenants in the Guatemalan Army doing what sergeants would do. You had this antipathy. Plus, you have a mind set that is unbelievable. Guatemala has been in despotism even before the Spanish came in. It was run by some kings and chiefs and they ran it their way. There was a whole series of wars with the Indians over the years. You had some people in Guatemala who had more money than God. There were fabulously rich people. The Indians, until recently, did not count. They were suppressed. One of the reasons why they voted for Colonel Arrana in 1970 was because only the Indians went into the army.

Anyway, going back, I got there and really did not do a hell of a lot. The ambassador took me on a call with the labor minister, and he [the ambassador] was killed a couple weeks later. The number two guy in AIFLD later on became the vice-minister of labor. He was a local Guatemalan; I can't think of his name. He was a good guy. I found myself charging off to all sorts of strange and wonderful places for either AIFLD events, or for union conventions. We went down to the banana worker's convention, and I was the only non-Guatemalan person in the place. I took my wife with me and the Fruit Company put us up, which I thought was pretty nice. I got to know all of these people, and AIFLD had me giving speeches in Spanish. The embassy really did care what I did. The man who was political counselor had left and Larry Pezzullo came in.

When we got into the election campaign for the 1970 election, we divided up the three parties. The government had a party, which was training to take the PRI [*Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (Institutional Revolutionary Party)] in Mexico. These guys were no more revolutionaries than my cat. Their president was Mendez Montenegro. Mendez Montenegro had been a university professor. His brother had been the candidate, but the brother committed suicide. Julio Cesar Mendez Montenegro became the candidate and became the president. I have always maintained this was because of all of the posters that were printed with Mendez Montenegro. They were too cheap to—anyway he was a brilliant man. He was a good friend of our embassy in terms of Pezzullo's predecessor, Matt Smith. It got a little embarrassing after Ambassador John Gordon Mein was killed.

After that Ambassador Davis came down. Matt Smith was being transferred. His tour was up. The president wanted to give a reception for it. I don't think the ambassador had presented his credentials. The president said he was not going to invite the ambassador. This was from my friend Don Mateo. This was really awkward. Anyway they did persuade the president and he invited the ambassador, but not as ambassador. He invited him as a colleague and friend of Matt Smith to the residence. Now the residence in Guatemala is right behind the presidential palace. There was a corridor that went underneath from the front office to the residence. This was finished in 1943 by a guy named Jorge Obico. He was a dictator who used to carry a big whip and whip people. He also had appointed one colonel for every eight soldiers in the Guatemalan Army. Jorge Obico built this place. It looks like Hernan Cortez built it. It has beautiful wooden inlay and all of that. One of the interesting things about it is when you go there for the New Year's reception for the diplomatic and consular corps, there are a whole bunch of sergeants with submachine guns. The president came in and he was a little man about five foot five. He always carried a big forty-five followed by six Guatemalan colonels [who were the biggest Guatemalans I have seen] all trying to hide an uzi submachine gun against their leg. This is, "Welcome to the diplomatic corps in Guatemala."

That was the kind of place you lived in. I would go running around to all these things. Then the AFL-CIO's man in Latin America would show up, Andy McClellan. Andy had a great thing going with the gal who was the head of the clothing workers, except, as far as I could tell, she had no membership. Just a couple of friends. There was all kinds of stuff going on. Leticia Navarro was her name. Andy would come down and he would go over. He sort of ignored me, which was all right. Bill would show up once in a while.

Q: Bill Dougherty?

HOLLY: Yes. Bill offered me a job in Costa Rica when we went to a labor attaché conference in Costa Rica. I told him in front of everybody that the only reason he offered me the job was so that he could fire me the next day. This was because I had persuaded Don Kessler to give me a copy of every report that he wrote to Bill Dougherty. So I knew what Don was telling Bill. Bill did not know that I knew. One of the problems we had was that some people were on the outs. The guy who was the head of Contragua, which was the *Confederación de Trabajadores Guatemaltecos* (Confederation of Guatemalan

Workers), was a cook. I am trying to remember his name. He had the only checkbook for the union in his briefcase, which he had with him at all times. I think he took a bath with that damn thing. He had been the head treasurer of another union tied in with the railroad. When they were going to audit the books of the union, the store, which was run by the union—the store burned down just before the auditors showed up. He was the AFL-CIO's guy, though!

Q: They were tied with them and the alternatives were off the scale?

HOLLY: Oh, yeah! The alternatives were not acceptable. Anyway, one day, I don't know what possessed me! It suddenly dawned on me and I said to the chief of station, "He is on your payroll, isn't he?" No. He had assigned a guy to the agency to be the labor guy who never told me what the hell he was doing. The chief of station was terribly upset with me because I found it out. I said, "Nobody told me; I just guessed it." I did; I knew intuitively that this guy was on the payroll. I said, "Why did you pick him? Everybody knows that he is as crooked as a corkscrew." I never got an answer. The guy who was chief of station was Mr. Sanchez.

Q2: Who was that?

HOLLY: Mr. Sanchez.

Q2: Oh, yeah.

HOLLY: A couple guys were really good. Teresa de Jesus Oriva y Orliva was a campesino leader and married to Honduran. He was a wonderful guy. He was a campesino. They would not touch him with a ten-foot pole. This was because about in the mid-'60s, there had been some movement among some of the unions to talk to the communists, Marxists, and Cubans. I don't quite know what Jesus did that pissed everybody off but he was a friend of mine. He was murdered when I left Guatemala. Almost every union leader was dead in a year or so.

Q: Who murdered them?

HOLLY: Usually the government. Teresa was coming out of his niece's wedding at a church, I am told. Two guys got out of the little VW and blew him away. They were described to me as guerrillas; actually, that would be gorillas, just like the ones that drag their knuckles, the government. Not guerrillas. There were people like that. The guy who ran the banana workers was a good union man.

Q: When you say "they" you mean AIFLD?

HOLLY: AIFLD and AFL-CIO. I think they backed a lot of the wrong people. I can relate this to later on when I was the African labor advisor [AF] in South Africa. They did not share with us in the embassy what they were up to.

Q: You alluded to your own kidnapping. Do you want to go into that?

HOLLY: Well, that was toward the end. I got to know—well, people knew me. I got a call from a guy who was killed afterwards. It was a guy that I had lunch with the day I was kidnapped. Jaime calls me and he is trying to set up a confederation. You have to remember about all these unions, they are all trying to form confederations. The workers do not get to say anything about this. Remember that the Guatemalan oligarchy was violently anti-labor. I got this call from Jaime one day from the office and said that he wanted to talk to me about something. So, I said, “Sure!” We got together for lunch; it was one great place to have lunch. Unfortunately, that is where I got kidnapped from, too. Anyway, great steaks. It was a great steakhouse. Of course, I knew everybody in the labor movement. I will tell you about the minister of labor and railroad seizure, too. That is another thing. Jaime called me and he said, “The PGT [*Partido Guatemalteco del Trabajo*], the Guatemalan Communist Party, the leadership wants to meet with the ambassador.” They wanted to meet with the ambassador at my house. Now, I used to have these receptions, dinners, whatever you call them. I had everybody in the labor movement; guys who would spit at each other on the street would talk in my house. I feel I am not being overly good to myself by saying that I had the trust of all of these people. Needless to say, the agency went through the roof. I had no problem with them coming to the house, but, of course, you got some security problems. What the hell they wanted to see the ambassador for, I do not know. They were illegal.

Q2: The ambassador was—?

HOLLY: Matt Davis. I was supposed to go as his labor attaché to Chile after Guatemala. You had this kind of stuff going on. I said to Jaime, “All I did was relay your message and now I am relaying it back.” As I said my home was considered neutral ground. Anyway we had all kinds of stuff like that going on. It was kind of hairy. Then we had the day the PanAm Union went on strike. They were two years without a contract. I talked to him on the phone and I said to him, “You made a mistake; you should have gone on strike yesterday. They had three airplanes on the ground; today they only have one.” Under Guatemalan law you seal the airplane off and nothing can move.

I got this frantic call that there was going to be a march on the embassy because the minister’s officers had gone down with Guatemalan police. They had broken into one of the warehouses to get our unclassified stuff out of there. My first reaction was [this is typical of me] I went up to the deputy chief of mission [DCM, Max Grebbs] and I said, “Sir, your minister officer is an idiot.” We were about to have a march and someone is going to get killed. That is the way Guatemala worked. The guards would get nervous; the police would get nervous, and somebody would shoot at somebody else. The next thing that you knew someone was shot.

I got this guy calmed down. But I said, “Why didn’t you ask me? I know these guys.” If I had gone to the picket lines and said, “Hey, fellas, can we get our mail and talk,” we

would have gotten our mail. Anyway I was fairly new in the embassy and I got this call. It was the minister of labor. He was a big, chubby, little guy. Now, the International Railways of Central America [IRCA] is the railroad from the port to Guatemala City. It had been subject to all kinds of legal problems and seizures. The guy who bought the stock was a bloodsucker. He was going to do something against the Guatemalans but I do not remember all of the details. They had to straighten out who owned what. This minister of labor was coming to me. He was on his way over to talk to me about this. That was the relationship that I had with these people. Now, I don't know who set me up. Some people think it was my buddy Jaime. I don't know. He and I had lunch at that steak place. I had a very distinctive car. It was a yellow Mercury Comet, which I unfortunately left there. They were going to sell it for me and get some money. Instead someone stole the four new tires off of it. They sold it, but I did not get much money anyway. I had to send a cable to the ambassador to ask him what the hell happened to my car. Coming back to the embassy these guys ran me off of the road. First I thought it was college students because they always try to hold me up for money during a certain time of the year. However, when this guy came up with a submachine gun, I knew that they were not college students. He said to get out of the car. I got out of the car! People had asked me, "Well, why did you do that?" I said, "Because he had a submachine gun in my face, what do you think I am going to do?" James Bond, I am not. So off we go to the boondocks.

Q: When did this occur?

HOLLY: March of 1970. Off we go. They blindfolded me. At one point, we stopped and bought cokes. I offered to buy the coke, but I could not find my money. They thought one of their guys had stolen their money. This became an incident with them. What am I going to do? They fired at one of the PMA [*Policia Militar Ambulante* (Mobile Military Police)] that was nearby. Of course, within two minutes the embassy had been called. Meanwhile you've got the labor attaché from New Delhi; the cable goes out worldwide that I had been kidnapped. Apparently they had heard about it in New Delhi. Off we go to the boonies, and I finally find out what the story is. They had some people kidnapped and held by the government, which is not a good thing. People constantly disappear. I was at a staff meeting one time and the ambassador had asked the station chief about so and so who was a guerrilla leader. He said, "Oh, they killed him yesterday." This was even before we could talk to the guy. I mean, these are not nice people.

Q: This was a communist rebel group?

HOLLY: They were Marxist. Off we go. It turns out that they wanted everybody free in exchange for me. I will not go through all of the details but it was not a good time. They got two of them, and then one guy had disappeared. This usually means that you are dead. They found him up on the Mexican border up in Tapachula. They had beaten him and they found him. The thing was the embassy was reluctant to press the government. The following month they kidnapped the German ambassador and they killed him because they would not negotiate. I came awfully close to being killed. Now my wife, Becky, who knew Spanish, had often claimed that the Irish gift of the gab can work in

Spanish too. I was telling these guys—they were complaining about the fruit companies. I said, “You can complain to the fruit company, but they are the only ones who pay the wage.” They had been selling off land to Guatemalans. As soon as the Guatemalans bought the land, they would cut the wages to a dollar a day, close down the schools, and say, “If you don’t want to work, go someplace else.” As bad as it is, you can’t defend the *Puterra* (whoremonger). At least they pay the wages. They were running the hospitals, and paying for the school, which the government never did. Anyway, I got home and got out of that mess.

Q: So they actually got all three.

HOLLY: —And I got out of it. I was not sure until the last couple of minutes if I was going to make it.

Q: Did they release you?

HOLLY: They took me to a church and turned me over to the parish priest, who has long since left the priesthood. God knows what happened to him. You don’t understand. We used to hold a body count every Monday. We would take the local papers and count up how many people got killed or missing. We would try to figure out whether it was political, or not. It was a very violent society.

Q: When you were released, did you then go back to Washington?

HOLLY: Yes, of course. They took me to the residence and I went back. They put me to bed in the ambassador’s spare bedroom, and I had breakfast. Then Becky came and we went home. They had me out by Tuesday. The thing was they had threatened Becky and the children. I could not, in conscience, take that risk. Off we go to Washington. The kids never got to say goodbye to their friends. As a matter of fact, they refer to them once in a while. The department gave me a job and let me off for two months. Then I went to Lake Tahoe because my brother-in-law was a professor and doctor at the University of Nevada. He got us a place in Tahoe. We stayed up there for two months. The Operations Center was no place I should have been. The stress was too bad, too much.

Q: Any other conclusions to this kidnapping?

HOLLY: We got into the middle of a big uproar. I was the second Foreign Service officer [FSO] ever kidnapped. The first one was Burke Elbrick in Brazil.

Q: You did pretty well.

HOLLY: He was a career ambassador. He never got another embassy. They almost looked upon it as your fault. I came across the other day a study that was done. In the mid-1970s the department paid this corporation to do a study about kidnapping. You have had several since mine. The department’s policy was we will never ransom.

They got the guy—Brian somebody. He became the head of the social services department at that corporation. He had been a green beret, or something like that, Special Forces in Vietnam. They never finished the studies because the department told them what they wanted the findings to be. Brian said that could put it in a footnote. They had never finished the reports. One of them was on hostage reaction.

A year to the day that I was kidnapped we thought that I had a heart attack. Becky drove me off to the Fairfax hospital. When they think you have a heart attack, they dope you to the teeth. I relived the entire kidnapping in Spanish while I was under. It was not good. We now call it post traumatic stress disorder [PTSD]; that is what I had. No one knew about it. Nobody wanted anything to do with you, because it was your fault that you were kidnapped. I remember getting very angry at Harold Davie one day. He was always introducing me as the guy who had been kidnapped. I remember saying, “Harold. Let’s just drop that.” He did.

I stayed in Washington for several years. I was promoted to [FS-]04 in February of 1970. I was kidnapped in March. I stayed in the department as Operations Center/Cultural Affairs for two and a half years. I was a NEA labor advisor for two and a half years. I did a year as the Colombia desk officer. I was promoted in the Sinai in 1980. I am sure that is only because I had gone overseas. Becky would not go overseas and I don’t blame her.

Q2: John Clemens and—

HOLLY: John Clemens and Charlie Miles was the assistant. A year or so after I got kidnapped, I got the superior honor award. This was because Becky called Charlie Myers’ office through his secretary. I mean I was damn near murdered, and they couldn’t give a damn.

Q2: There was a story going, Sean, that when they decided to free you there was one party that wanted to castrate you.

HOLLY: Yes. They wanted to cut me up into little pieces.

Q: Is that true then?

HOLLY: Oh, yeah, and these guys would have done it! The only ones who were worse than the Guatemalans were the Colombians. They will. If they tell you they are going to kill your kids, they will kill your kids. They raped a girl and that is why the woman who was attorney general left the country. They threatened her husband and her children. We were dealing with real bastards.

Frankly our people can be just as bad. There is a whole philosophy behind this. They, originally, in the 1970s, said it [kidnapping] was like it was when women were raped. Nobody wanted to touch you with a ten-foot pole. It was all your fault. What am I

supposed to do? I am a mid-grade officer. I have no superior. I am bopping around on my own. I am not going to argue with some guy with a submachine gun. Well three of them as a matter of fact.

One of the guys was the one who killed John Gordon Mein, the ambassador. In August of 1968 he was killed. I was there when he was killed. He had given me a ride a couple of days before he was killed. I had to call the house and tell Becky to stay home and keep the kids home. We do not know what is going on here. The marines had offered to ride with him and he said no.

Q: Did you ever try to go abroad again after that?

HOLLY: We tried. It would get down to making the decision and Becky would back down. They offered me Israel. The one job I really wanted in Mexico City. I love Mexico. I speak Spanish; I wander; I have a ball. They are wonderful people.

There is a place that translates to heat the water. It has been a spring for a thousand years. The Indians used it. The rocks are all covered with this mineral deposit. So I was down there. The tour group was supposed to go there, but they couldn't go because the road was being fixed up. They canceled the tour. Two ladies who were there said, If you want to go with us, we hired an English speaking driver, and a truck. So, off we go. I said that was okay. Off I go for eight bucks. I was having a ball. They are lovely springs; little houses that you could rent for the weekend. Then we needed the key to the bathrooms. Jose, or whatever the hell his name was, had the key to the bathrooms. I had gotten to know Don whoever is in charge of it really well. He and I were having a hell of a good time. When we left you would have thought I was his lost brother.

Q: Shall we go back to your—have we concluded the kidnapping?

HOLLY: It was not a happy event. The department's reaction was, to put it mildly, poor. It did a lot of damage psychologically to me, and it did an awful lot of damage to my wife. Becky has got her own problems and she and I had terrible problems. However, she is a very fragile woman emotionally, and this is not what we needed.

Q: So, you went to work in Operations? That wasn't quite the right assignment?

HOLLY: No! It was too much pressure. In the middle of the night you would get someone calling you from Peru that there was an airline hijacking going on. Remember the three ones that they had on the ground in Jordan that they blew up? I was the senior watchdog for that day.

Q: Were there any major developments during that period?

HOLLY: Anyway I did the NEA labor job, which I liked. This was in roughly 1975. We had the first human rights reports. That was a big deal. I had people want to come out and

kill me. We also had Pat Derian come in and Falco with the narcotics. There I am as the NEA labor advisor doing human rights and narcotics. I had to explain that we do not do things that way in the State Department. Then, of course, there is Pat Derian who thinks the whole world is Mississippi in 1965. We had all of these reports. My job was to pull all of these reports for NEA. My original answer was why don't we just write that there are no human rights in NEA; forget the whole deal. That did not go over well.

Anyway, I liked doing the NEA labor job. I got to see a lot of places. We are talking about a place where there is no such thing as a labor movement. This second go-around, as labor advisor, was in 1983–85 as NEA. I had been in Israel before. That place was a riot. We had two American women, but they were not watch officers. They had later brought women in as advisors, but they were not at that time. There had been a stink up on the Israeli and Egyptian site. This was more than the Egyptians could deal with.

Then, Anwar Sadat, I think, went to Egypt about that time. Some years ago Sadat was still alive, and there was a transport worker strike. I was in the NEA meeting, which I finally gave up going to the last year I worked there. No one there wanted to talk to me anyway, except the human rights people. I said, screw this, why should I spend an hour of my time sitting against the wall while they have these bilateral staff meetings? You have no idea what is going on and nobody else does. At that time, going on strike was a violation of a military ordinance. You could get shot. My God, is Sadat going to shoot the strikers? The answer was no. Why? Because the guy whose membership card is number one every year is Anwar Sadat. The head of the transport workers union gave Sadat a job when he got kicked out of the Egyptian Army. Sadat was kicked out because he was one of the conspirators. He then got a job as a taxi driver in Cairo. You also have to know that every taxi driver in Cairo who speaks English works for military intelligence. Sadat gets a job from this guy. Nobody else in the embassy knew this.

You have to understand, again, Egypt is like so many countries. I was at the AFL-CIO convention in 1973 when Mr. Meany had Meshal shake hands with the minister of labor in Egypt. He was also head of the Egyptian Federation of Labor. I was the keeper for the Egyptian, which was fine. I am sitting at the table with, what is his name? Kirkman. She is having a conniption fit, so was somebody else, because they were all Jewish. They were just beside themselves.

Q: Were they unhappy about that?

HOLLY: Oh! You better believe it. They are looking at this from their side of the fence. They are not looking at it from the U.S. side of it. So, anyway, I was telling the story about the time in Egypt when the transport workers went on strike. Under Egyptian law at that time, if you went on strike against the government, you could get shot. Everybody was worried about what was going to happen, if Sadat was going to shoot the workers.

I went to the Colombia desk around 1978, 1979. Diego was the ambassador. Diego and I go back a long way. He was the head of the consular services office in Mexico City when

I was in Vera Cruz. Diego was a riot in one way. When I was Colombia desk officer a lot of times I would take care of his kids. His kids would call me and say, “Sean, this is Mary [his daughter Mary]. Sean, would you call Dad and ask him something?”

Q: Did you have big drug problems?

HOLLY: It was just beginning. It was obviously going to get out of control. We were getting into that, and we had a little island that had been a big dispute.

This is when I got into my real conflicts with the Labor Department in my last tour. We had run out of places to go, that is to say we would run out of surplus currency except for poppy stock. The Labor Department was insistent that we go to poppy stock. The ambassador at that time was Dean Hinton. Dean is a character. He and I were the only FSOs there. He would ask for the report on such and such. I would say that it wasn't ready. He would say, “Well, would it be ready tonight?” I would say, “Oh no.” “What about this weekend?” “Well, I am going to Antigua for the weekend.” We had an Irish cop from New York, Pete Costello. He was stage cast, white hair, and everything. He was training, trying to do something with the Guatemalan police force. He got money for a police academy. If you could have seen the look on Dean Hinton's face when Pete announced at the staff meeting that AID had given him money for this two- or three-million-dollar police academy! Dean hated it! As a matter of fact, nobody really knows what happened to all of the money, which is true of a lot of things in AID.

Dean was the ambassador in Pakistan. There was a very smart man who was the consul general. I had spoken with him on my way back to India over in the airport. He said NO. They were going through this “Islamization” business. Of course, they are always going to want a hospitality room filled with liquor. So, he said, “No, we can't do that.” First, there is the security situation. Remember two years ago two Americans were killed? Tremendous violence and corruption for a whole bunch of reasons. Okay, so the senior deputy for NEA was Arnie Raphel. I had known Arnie when he had been a staff aide in the Executive Secretariat [S/S-S]. Arnie said, “Sean, I don't want them either. Your job is to make sure they don't go.” So I am fighting with Harold, and got into a lot of trouble with him. I said, “They don't want it.”

The other thing I would do is go out to Saudi Arabia. Remember they had hired all these people to run the Saudi project? Now if the Saudis ever had a Government Accounting Office [GAO] a lot of people would be in deep trouble. It was poorly run. The Department of Labor had this whole operation going on. They hired these people full time, not for the length of the contract. The guy who was the head of—Ed—can I say what I think? Ed was a total incompetent. They had him doing this Latin American Caribbean thing. When I was in Department of Defense [DOD] for one year, I ran into him. I was the Colombian desk officer. I wound up with Ed, whose first cousin was the governor general of Grenada. These people were incompetents, as far as my standards are concerned. Maybe my standards are different than theirs. For instance, we saw people going to Africa when I was African labor advisor buying textiles to sell in their stores

here. One gal from the Labor Department went out on a trip; I never saw her. She was out buying stuff for her African heritage store. So, anyway, Arnie says, “Don’t do it.” So, I didn’t, and I got into big trouble.

Then I also told Harold that I felt this whole Saudi thing was just beyond repair and that it was a rip-off. Then they had all of these people they had put on the payroll and they were bringing Saudis here to universities here. Our job was to tell them to go and take a bath once in a while. Who bathes in Saudi Arabia? There is no water! As far as I am concerned it was criminal. Not everybody agrees with me, but I really felt that way. Let’s see, as far as the timeline, 1982 was the African bureau.

Q: Can we get the dates for all of these from the Operations Center?

HOLLY: Operations Center was 1970 to ’72. Cultural Affairs up to 1975. Nineteen seventy-five to 1978 would be NEA. Nineteen seventy-nine to ’80 was Sinai. Nineteen eighty to ’82 was African Affairs. Nineteen eighty-three was a year at the Department of Defense’s International Security Affairs/American Republics [DOD/ISA/ARA]. Then NEA again; then I retired in 1986.

Q: Go back to 1982 Africa.

HOLLY: This is when they were trying to work with the South Africans. This was really tricky.

Q: And you were the African labor advisor?

HOLLY: Yes. AALC was another crowd [African American Labor Center]. I went a couple of times to South Africa. It was interesting to watch and be involved in. You had people, like some of the big business people. Some of the ministers wanted trade unions, not necessarily because they believed in trade unions, but because they felt you have to be able to talk to their workers somehow. The conduit to real conversation, of course, is through the union. At the same time, you had the security forces. If you look back at African history in particular, you will find most of the liberation movements were heavily influenced by the trade unions. The trade unions were very much involved in that. They are not stupid. So there was always this balancing thing. Pat was always going off and doing his own thing. Anyway, got money for him.

I found it thoroughly interesting—the AFL-CIO always pitched the wrong guys. So they gave the George Meany award, I think, in 1982 to Lazie. Now I don’t know that they are doing this. They call me up and say, Hey Sean, tell us about this guy? What is this all about? Of course that is the wrong guy to give it to; although if the Zulus ever got going, they would scare the hell out of everybody. They are very smart. They have the rest of the Africans terrified. There is a classic story. Remember that movie called *Zulu*? I think nine soldiers got the Victoria Cross. This was after the massacre of a whole British colony in 18-something. Well they got three thousand extras who were Zulus. In the story in the

book [Caine's bio is one of those things that you read when you are bored out of your mind], they come up over the hill, just like they do in the movie. They all have headdresses and spears. All the other Africans took one look at them and ran the other way. They were getting the hell out of town.

Zulus are very interesting people. It is a terribly complicated social system. For instance, in the labor movement in South Africa in the 1920s a number of labor leaders were executed by the government. There was a major general strike. Needless to say a couple of the white labor leaders that I met were a couple of Boers. They were pro-apartheid. It was really interesting working on that. Of course, Pat was doing his own thing.

Q: How did they ever think that Lazie would be representative to the mainstream of South Africa?

HOLLY: I have no clue! I have no idea! See, everything was tribal there. For instance Nelson Mandela's tribe was chased into the hills by the Zulus in the last century. We forget that these people move around a lot. It is a lot like the American Indians, being driven out by somebody else. I met some guys who afterwards became extremely important in South African politics. I strongly recommend to anyone [if they have not done it yet] to read Nelson Mandela's autobiography. It is super. He has his shortcomings, but the man is a wonderful man. There is no question in my mind about this guy.

The other side of it is Pieter Willem Botha. In his own way, the guy is smart. He knew they were not going anywhere, so he got Mandela out of jail. Really read it. It is worth your time. Anyway, the mine workers were the big union, the transport workers. I was involved in that. It was very fascinating. I went to see the minister of labor who was worried about the ILO. The question he was worried about was if anyone was fired and indicted and vice versa for crookedness. He had sided with the employers and tilted a dispute against the union. I go to call on him. I get up there and this guy has seven-hundred-dollar suits on, a Mercedes in the basement. All these poor people had to come for days, changing buses to get some piece of paper signed. Of course, you have to have it signed in the boondocks! This guy was going to represent in the ILO. These guys are totally without conscience. We keep forgetting that it is all tribal. It is like the American Indians. No American Indian helps another American Indian. If you are not the right tribe, screw you, Jack!

I just spent two weeks down in a Navajo and Hopi area. Those two hate each other. Even Navajos won't help another Navajo because they are the wrong clan. So we are expecting these clowns to get together? They have been slitting each other's throats for generations. The whole business is like the Zulus—they only came in the early 1800s, late 1900s. These guys left thousands of people dead. They would just come through and everybody was dead, period! End of story! The European travelers years after would describe this field of bones. So not only do they dislike them for political reasons; they don't like them because they are Zulus. Zulus used to slit your throat with great joy. How do you get these people to make a nation? I can remember seeing reports from Nigeria in 1982, '83,

'84. The money that was supposed to go to the poor people was all coming back from Switzerland. I mean, Nigeria is a wealthy country, and they had stolen everything in sight. Then you wonder why this general or colonel was running the place.

Q2: You mean Chavez in Venezuela?

HOLLY: Yes. Of course he is running it. They think this is democracy. Somebody was writing an article the other day about Russia. The Russians think what we have done to them is democracy, and they don't want it. All the money has gone into Moscow and gone out again to Swiss banks, or New York banks. That is a very interesting uproar about the bank of New York, as to how much money actually went through there. That is enough of my soap opera.

Q: Have we covered other labor activities?

Q2: Overall what would you consider about the labor attaché function?

HOLLY: I think it is a very useful function. You get to really see what the country and people are really about. However, you do have all these other people doing their own thing, like the AFL-CIO. Most of these outfits have pretty much died out.

Q: I think that they have been consolidated.

HOLLY: AID is not spending that kind of money on them anymore. Well, they always had their own money too.

Q: Were you able to work with Pat O'Farrell?

HOLLY: Yes, a little bit. Once in a while I would get bent out of shape with him. He would get mad at me and I would say, "Well, I am the one that got you the clearance to go to South Africa." If I had not done it, he would not have been there. They were in all these other countries too, like Sierra Leone, which fell apart. I got to Ghana a couple months after they executed the whole damn government. No, that was Liberia. There is nothing in Liberia. They shot the whole bloody lot. That is why all the Liberian colony in Washington is from all the relatives of these clowns who had been stealing everything for years. No, you got the tribe, the clans, again. They all hate each other, and we get all of them together and say, Hey, fellas, let's sit down and talk, and we'll have a government, right? Yeah, sure. They can't even get the bloody Irish to do it.

Q2: We are making progress.

HOLLY: We better be. Now there never has been enough money to go into it. Labor business, that is.

Q: Exchange?

HOLLY: Well, exchange, but the exchange problem should be run by people who know something about labor. There had been too much bureaucratic crap with the Labor Department, AFL-CIO, and the State Department. They don't care about the labor attaché. They really don't. You will get the occasional ambassador who will and the secretary might. It has not been a great career to be a labor attaché.

Q2: I made my own survey and it is pretty appalling. I am doing a paper on it now. There were no women. There was one African American whose last name was Todman.

Q: Was he from Morocco or Tunisia?

Q2: Morocco.

HOLLY: Morocco was wonderful. I went to the annual convention of the Moroccan Labor Federation. I went in the mid-1970s and again in the mid-1980s and gave the same speech.

Q: How about the labor attaché within the embassy. Do you have any suggestions?

HOLLY: Yes! I think the labor attaché should also do political reporting. In most countries, the labor movement is tied in with the political people. For instance, India or DGB in Germany. So the labor attaché should follow the unions as unions, Ministry of Labor, with the political part of it tied in. Many of these guys you can't tell what hat they wear: the political suit or labor suit. So, you need to know. You can meet people as the labor attaché that you won't meet as a political officer. Somebody told me about you and the *Partido Socialista Obrero Espanol* (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party) [PSOE] the other day.

Q2: No. That is the Socialist Party in Spain.

HOLLY: Philippe Gonzalez was just—wasn't he? Who was the ambassador?

Q2: Yes, Philippe Gonzalez. Tom Enders!

HOLLY: Oh, God!

Q2: The DCM was Jack. The political counselor was Bob— We had a meeting one day and the Socialist Party was going to have a convention. This was right after—well, Franco died in 1975 and this was about 1982. The Socialist Party was right at its height at that time. So, Service had a meeting. He was going to the Pasoe, as they call it in Spanish. Basically, he is a good guy. He says, "All these goddamn DECAS [Distributive Education Clubs of America][a Scholarship Exchange Program]. I'm going, Holy Christ!"

HOLLY: Also there was a guy before him, Dave Sincox, who was political chief at one point in Spain. They would not extend him one year so his daughter could graduate high school there. The ambassador was an EUR type [Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs], and David had served in Latin America. As far as they were concerned, you were not a real Foreign Service officer, only EUR. No EUR can find its backside with both hands. Every other crisis, you would sit down to a circus.

Q2: Yeah, Dave Sincox, very good man. We should interview him.

HOLLY: He retired some years ago. He was supposed to go to Mozambique.

Q2: He was my boss in Brazil.

HOLLY: He is a good guy. Anyway, as far as the labor attaché is concerned, I think you have to be joint political labor or joint political/economic/labor. It is too tied in. Then again, the practical thing is you always wind up in a three-man embassy, three-man political section, and they don't want to let you do what you are supposed to do.

Q: They don't want to share contacts. Especially if the Social Democratic Party is the ruling party.

HOLLY: That's right, yeah. If he goes to the DGB they'll look at him and say, Who the hell are you? He doesn't know how to talk to these people. This is where if you are a labor officer, and if you have any kind of labor background, and mine, was of course, my father. I mean, John Sweeny was very nice one time. Were you there when we had this meeting when Sweeny came over?

Q2: No.

HOLLY: He had never met me before. He knew who I was and he made a comment about my father. That's important if you have this background. At the same time, you have to have the—only word I know in Spanish, is *simpatico* [Translates into “nice” in Spanish. Here, in context, it seems to mean “niceness, sympathy.”]. They could spot it a mile away. Standard empathy. The standard political officer is of no use to you with the labor movement. This is because they don't know how to react. They think that they are better than everyone else anyway. That just does not work.

Q2: There are only four who I know, full time labor attachés who made ambassador. That would be John, Sam Berger, Ben Stefansky, and Tom Burns.

HOLLY: In my personal experience, I ran into a lot of personal family problems after the kidnapping. I was not about to go overseas without my family. I did go to Sinai because I got promoted in February of 1970; here I am with five kids, three are going to college, and two in high school. What am I supposed to do? So, I went to Sinai to get the money. It happened, February of 1980, I was made an [FS-]03. Then I never went anywhere after

that. They claimed, Well, he did not go overseas. Well, I could not go overseas. My wife did not have a clearance.

Q: She didn't have a clearance?

HOLLY: No. Plus, we were having real problems, she and I. It just did not work out. Where I get a little annoyed is when I have them tell me that I have to go overseas to get promoted. Especially when I see people up in OPP [Office of Policy Planning] someplace, and they spend their ten or fifteen, twenty years and wind up as ambassadors. I mean life is not fair; we all know that. I enjoy the labor business. Of all the jobs, even my consular work, standard political reporting is a bore. It will put you to sleep. The labor work was the most interesting. Classic example is when embassies are totally blind to what is going on.

Q: You retired then in 1986?

HOLLY: Yes.

Q: Have you done labor related things?

HOLLY: I am the part owner of a very successful tobacco store in Leesburg, VA. I will give you a discount. I don't go there because I don't smoke anymore. I stopped smoking. I had trouble with my throat. It was a pipe and I was always attached to it. That is about all I have done. I worked eight years part time doing information stuff. I am seventy years old now; I have things to do.

Q2: You are seventy. You are young.

HOLLY: Somebody asked me the other day. I owned a couple of thousand dollars worth in stock. I said, "Listen, where I came from, it is a hell of a lot." The guy was asking what I wanted to do with my life. I said, "Enjoy it." My kids are all happy; they are all doing their own thing. They say, Hey Dad, go for it!

Q: Working on any projects at this time?

HOLLY: I am starting to work on the family genealogy. Like most people, when your parents are dead, you think of the questions that you should have asked them. So, I am trying to do something with my father in the labor movement. I had promised Jim that I would give him a copy. My father had a heart attack on Christmas of 1954 and he died in March of 1955. When he was in St. Elizabeth's Hospital in New York, Father Kerry came up and asked him, "Why not write it all down?" So my father started off with 32B, the big carpet strike in New Jersey. He only got so far, but it is kind of fascinating.

What I want to do is go back, and the *New York Times* has a lot of stuff with the committees fighting with Bambrick and Scalissie. The scandal in that union was awful

and it still is. That is why I got mad and sent John Sweeny. There are a couple of items in the *New York Times* about the guy they finally tossed out of the penthouse apartment. He was head of the union. He would not let the cleaners in the building join the union. Who the hell is he? He was a real crook. So, I happened to come across this picture of my father in the hospital with this bandage around his head. He went to his grave with all of these scars. It caused a lot of trouble for me as a child because of my mother's reaction to all of this. I copy two of these articles from *The Time*. I made a blow-up copy of the picture of my father. I sent it to John. It says, "Nothing has changed, has it?" Needless to say, I have not got a response. Come on, the cleaners can't join the union? He wanted to fire all of the organizers of the IOCWU [?] because they all wanted to form an organizers union.

Q: Any observations that you would like to make before we conclude?

HOLLY: No. Just don't send this to Harold Davie. I think one of the problems that you ran into in the labor attaché business was that the Labor Department very much had its own agenda. Having a Labor Department person on the Board of Foreign Service makes no sense. They were not contributing. They were always telling us to give the job to so and so. Once they got out of the labor statistics and training, they had no real place. Unfortunately, they've got some broken down friend to give the job to. They are not in there for the good of the people that they are supposed to be helping. That is not always true. Maybe because I have had such bad experiences.

Q2: Did you ever see this letter that my son wrote to the Washington Post?

HOLLY: (after reading it) Good for him.

Q: Maybe we can follow this and make copies for the eventual transcript?

Q2: Sean, let me ask you now. I was always told when I worked in the department that you did not want to go overseas.

HOLLY: Well, I did, but I didn't. I had a family and Becky would not go. My kids won't go. I wanted to. We would get close to going, and Becky would say no. Like Israel, they had so many drug problems in the American school there. Well, you have it in every school. They had big troubles in the school at one time. When you get a situation when we are both having marital problems, and she says flat out that she is not going to go, I mean I have five kids. I did not really like going to the Sinai, but if I did not go to the Sinai, I was not going to get a raise.

Q2: When I went to Spain, they told me that you were interested in that job, but you couldn't go because of Becky.

HOLLY: Yes, Becky. That is what screwed me every time I would turn around. Becky did not want to go.

Q2: I can tell you this. Anders had a friend or the guy was a staff aide.

HOLLY: Oh, Chuck Bradshaw.

Q2: This guy was a one-time labor reporting officer. Good officer, by the way. Anyway, Anders wanted him to work. So, Enders wanted to bring him into the embassy. John was leaving.

HOLLY: Oh, John! He is a good guy. He is an ambassador.

Q2: No, no. He retired.

HOLLY: Who is the guy who went to Honduras or some place?

Q2: James Creagan.

HOLLY: Oh!

Q2: He heads up the American Academy in Rome.

HOLLY: He is a good fella. He is good.

Q2: Anyway, Enders had this deal to bring in Brayshaw. Enders was going to bring him in as labor attaché then have him work for him. The Labor Department got wind of it. They came around sweet talking. They suggested—listen to this—rank and experience aren't too much. I go to Mexico instead. By this time I said, like hell. I am not going to Spain. I had personal reasons too. My wife was very ill.

HOLLY: Yes, I remember. That is when I saw you there. I came up from Casablanca.

Q2: I got my sister-in-law from Yugoslavia to come, and the other one from London. Anyway, Enders was really putting the heat on. He was asking everyone to cave in to him. I talked to Jim Taylor, and Taylor really raised hell. They sent me there. Of course, when I got there, it was tough.

HOLLY: This whole business telling the ambassador can't deny someone an assignment, yes. However, you get there, and he does not want anything to do with you.

Q2: That was one of the toughest embassies I ever worked in. He died.

HOLLY: He was married to the contessa. The *Post* ran a story when he was in Canada. They ran a story in the style section that was just something. If it was my wife, I would have gone after that guy with a gun.

Q2: Enders was six foot eight. Number one student in his class at Yale. She was about four foot eleven. The Spanish press used to refer to them as Mutt and Jeff. She was a holy terror, this woman. She wanted to get involved in political activities in Spain. When I was in Madrid, you could hear the explosions around the room.

Q: Well, we are running out of tape. Are there any comments you would like to make?

HOLLY: I enjoyed my assignment as labor officer in the two attaché positions. It was really great; I really got a lot out of it. The assignment I would have given my eye teeth for was Mexico City. However, given my family situation at the time, it made no sense. That is it.

Q: Thank you very much, Sean for giving us the interview and for participating.

HOLLY: My pleasure.

Q: You gave a different dimension to our understanding. I like different points of view.

End of interview