

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

**GEORGE LEWIS**

*Interviewed by: John Pielemeier*

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## INTERVIEW

*Q: I am beginning an interview with George Lewis, and George, I'll begin by asking you where you grew up and maybe a little bit about how you got interested in international work.*

LEWIS: I was born in Washington State where I'm living now, near Seattle, in retirement. I spent the initial years of my life, from the mid-1940s to the mid-'50s, in a little town, Montesano, on the Washington coast. "Monte" was 15 miles from the Pacific Ocean, and counted on a logging economy. That economy was often in the doldrums until barges arrived to purchase the milled lumber. There was a logging camp mentality among many of the locals; it was a rough and tumble place. I shouldn't be too hard on the residents. Our family friends were well educated. But people's horizons were limited. There was little ethnic diversity. As a kid in those earliest years, I felt boxed in, confined.

One of the most profound influences in my life's course came in 1957. That year my father, a longtime employee with the U.S. Department of Agriculture, was transferred out to what was then the Territory of Hawaii. Hawaii was on the brink of statehood and Congress had allocated funds to break ground on the USDA's first tropical research program. Dad knew nothing about tropical research, coming from the Northwest, but the USDA asked him to move to Maui to get the research station started.

I was twelve years old at the time, and entered the 8<sup>th</sup> grade in Wailuku, the Maui county seat. I found myself the only *Haole* in class. *Haole* is the Hawaiian term for Caucasian. I was surrounded by kids of Asian, Hawaiian, Filipino, Portuguese, and other origins. I picked up on cultural subtleties, like even though Portuguese were technically white - *Haoles* -- they weren't necessarily referred to as such. The society was stratified along ethnic lines, but the students and families, their cultures, their religions, their food, were all exotic to me. I thrived on it. It was a great adventure, truly a formative time.

In 1962, I graduated from Baldwin High School in Wailuku, Maui. It was about that time -- in 1961 to be precise -- the Peace Corps was founded by John Kennedy and Sargent Shriver. I decided virtually at the moment of its creation that I would apply to Peace Corps once I got through college. I'd committed to that personally, so attended Oberlin College, south of Cleveland, Ohio. It was quite a shock, moving from Maui to the Cleveland area! However, those years at a fine liberal arts school were also formative.

*Q: How did you happen to choose Oberlin?*

LEWIS: Oberlin had its conservatory of music, and Baldwin High School on Maui had a very strong music program. My band instructor and a couple other teachers from Baldwin High encouraged me to apply to Oberlin. Their encouragement and a generous scholarship offer swayed me. There I majored not in music, but in political science. I found that I particularly enjoyed courses that had a global, cross-cultural aspect. Those would be government, sociology, even art; and there was a comparative religions course that was very good. I admit, however, that I took a 5-credit French course in my freshman year and got a D in it! I recovered from that. One of my favorite courses focused on international politics. I wrote a final paper on Singapore and its economic development under Lee Kwan Yew. This was a very engaging piece of work and a thorough experience in academic research in the field of development.

I took a year off from college in 1965-66 between my junior and senior years, and worked and hitchhiked all over Europe. That was somewhat in vogue in those days among students. I lived in France, Switzerland, Belgium and London, then hitchhiked around Europe for three months. I realized that international travel and living - challenging as it was in many respects on that trip and on my budget -- appealed to me enormously.

After fifteen months, I returned to Oberlin and graduated in 1967.

*Q: By the way, you were probably using your good French then, right, ha-ha!*

LEWIS: I definitely tried, but total immersion in a foreign language is hard and often lonely slogging. My last job was one I landed in London. It was so good after nearly a year of trying to cope with foreign languages in one country or another, to get back to my own! But I was seriously planning on the Peace Corps, and in 1967 was accepted for a two-year volunteer assignment in Nepal. Total foreign language immersion again!

*Q: Now had you requested Asia or Nepal?*

LEWIS: Yes, I had requested Nepal specifically. I'd loved the mountains since childhood, camping and hiking in Washington's Olympics and the Cascades. I wanted to see those Himalayas.

*Q: What was your program topic? What area did you work in?*

LEWIS: I was part of one of the earliest groups in Nepal. We were about 25, all involved in rural public works. Basically simple engineering -- water systems, irrigation canals, trail maintenance, constructing and repairing suspension bridges, things of that sort. At that time I was also becoming aware of the U.S. Agency for International Development. USAID had a significant presence and program in Nepal even in the 1960s, so I had a chance to rub shoulders with some of the USAID people.

*Q: Would they come out to your site or how would you do that?*

LEWIS: They did. We can talk more about that, too, when we get into Nepal in more detail, because I was eventually assigned there with USAID.

In the 1960s, the USAID mission had decided to undertake a very ambitious road construction project in the far northwestern part of Nepal through incredibly rugged terrain. It would run from the flat southwest corner of the country up to the northwest foothills of the Himalayas, where I was posted as a Peace Corps Volunteer. I had to walk seven days to get up to my post, or fly in to a perilous short landing strip, risking my life! USAID engineers came out periodically in a little Bell helicopter, landing in my Peace Corps village practically at the door of the house I lived in. They were doing aerial surveys for the road alignment, and couldn't get back to the Kathmandu airport before dark. Then, the Kathmandu airport had no lights, so they would frequently overnight with us. They'd bring treats like chocolate from the commissary!

*Q: What kind of living conditions did they join you in?*

LEWIS: We had a wood frame and stone house. It was two or three stories, ample room for guests, no electricity or running water. We had a cook, 18-year-old Damar Bahadur. As Nepalis are wont to do, he cooked on an open fireplace right in the middle of the ground floor. We ate the Nepalese staple of two meals of rice and lentils a day, garnished with a little spinach or potatoes, and peppers to spice it up. It smoked a lot, and we'd get down close to the floor so we could breathe. We had a good time of it!

*Q: You say you were with other volunteers.*

LEWIS: There were three other volunteers in Silgarhi, Doti when I arrived. One also worked as a rural development advisor in the regional government office where I was situated. And there was a married couple who taught at the school.

I joined the Peace Corps as I was contemplating development work as a career, with AID in mind. I believed the Peace Corps was a way to put that idea to the test, and it certainly was.

Nearing the end of my two years in Nepal, I applied successfully for graduate school at the University of Wisconsin's new development studies program in Madison. The Center for Development was one of the first graduate programs of its kind in the country. Among its attributes was that it enabled me to take courses in the graduate school of economics,. I could mix in courses from other departments. Studying cooperatives and transportation economics were among my interests. Another salient feature about the Center for Development, which was in its first year or two when I was there, was that most of the 25 others in my class were foreign students, mid-career development practitioners from various countries, plus half a dozen of us returned Peace Corps Volunteers. So it was an ideal mix, and I would venture that we were our own most important influences during those two years. We learned a great deal from each other. It was a group rich with ideas and experience, humor and interpersonal relationships, some of which endure to this day.

*Q: What years would those have been, George?*

LEWIS: 1969-71.

*Q: So the Vietnam threat was not on your back at that point?*

LEWIS: No. My local draft board on Maui, which was still my official residence still, was very sympathetic with the Peace Corps and Peace Corps Volunteers. I will say that other Volunteers were drafted immediately upon completion of their Peace Corps service. I wasn't. I completed my masters at the Center for Development in Madison, and toward the end of that I did indeed apply to the International Development Internship program at USAID.

*Q: George before you get to that, did you have to write a thesis or a final paper?*

LEWIS: I did write a thesis on a public administration topic. I wasn't particularly seized with it. My class work and intermingling with my fellow students meant a lot more.

*Q: Any professors that you remember being influential?*

LEWIS: I mentioned a class in cooperatives. I particularly enjoyed that. I had known nothing, really, about co-ops prior to that, but the cooperative concepts of serving members and of democratic management and governance appealed to me. I enjoyed a summer internship with the Wisconsin Department of Transportation.

*Q: Well I must recall that I've never forgotten you telling me what your role was on that job!*

LEWIS: During that summer, the Department of Transportation had either gotten a budget or had the prospect of getting funds for what they called “scenic easements”. Today we would consider these as drive-outs at historic places of interest. “Easements” could also include lanes for slower traffic for a few hundred yards, up a slope. So I got involved researching that out for them, developing plans or proposals, helping them go forward and receive state money for the scenic easement component of their program.

*Q: So you applied to AID while you were still in school, or how did that work?*

LEWIS: It was a relatively simple process, John. There was no Foreign Service exam, no interviews! I got a form from AID, completed it, and sent it in. In short order -- a matter of weeks as I recall -- came the response. I was accepted as an International Development Intern, the IDI program as it was called. Program Officer, backstop 02, for those cognizant of backstop numbers. In April of 1971, I packed up my meager belongings and moved from Madison to Washington D.C.

*Q: At that point did you know where you were going to be assigned?*

LEWIS: I did. In fact, I went straight to the Brazil desk when I got to Washington. (The AID and State Department desks were co-located in the one office.) I had been assigned to Rio de Janeiro. That first three months when I was with the Brazil desk, I tagged along to meetings, but devoting most of my time and energy to intensive Portuguese language training. I should add that I also married my wife, Ann, just two weeks before we departed for Rio.

*Q: How long had you been courting?*

LEWIS: Much of the last year that I was in Madison. I signed up for a big seminar, partly because it was led by a very fine professor, Joe Elder, but also because I wanted to meet girls! In the opening session of the seminar, Professor Elder asked if any of us had ever been to or lived in Asia, the focus of the seminar. I raised my hand and said that I’d spent two years in the Peace Corps in Nepal. Afterward, my wife-to-be came down from the back of the large room and introduced herself. That was the beginning! A couple of years ago, we celebrated our 45<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary.

*Q: Was she a grad student as well or an undergrad?*

LEWIS: She was an undergrad. But she was also just back from some time in Nepal.

*Q: Knowing Ann, I’m sure how smitten you must have been!*

LEWIS: Yep. Thanks!

*Q: So George you packed up to Washington for you said three months, you thought.*

LEWIS: Three months.

*Q: And Ann came along with you?*

LEWIS: She did join me there after she graduated. Ann got a job as a tour guide and we spent the summer together.

*Q: Can you remember anything about your initial training and how useful or not useful it was to you?*

LEWIS: The most valuable part of the training was the Portuguese language training. That was vital in whatever effectiveness I may have had there on the job and in my domestic life. I enjoyed the time on the desk and sitting in as an observer at many of the meetings that the desk organized or attended. I remember Bill Gelibert, the deputy program officer in Rio, had come to Washington for some talks. At one point, he was on a call with the mission program office in Rio. It was shortly before the end of the fiscal year, and Bill was shouting into the phone, "Obligate, obligate, obligate"! I'm not sure I even really knew what the term meant at the time, but I learned quickly how important the budget process was, and the necessity of conforming to deadlines and fiscal commitments.

*Q: So you were working on your Portuguese and you had a date to fly out. Did you know where you'd be living and how you would be received once you arrived in Rio?*

LEWIS: I knew I was posted to Rio. There were two branch offices that the mission maintained then, one in Recife up in the northeast and one in the south at the huge urban complex of São Paulo. There were about half a dozen IDIs, all based in Rio. I encountered an enormous mission; there were about 100 Americans and Brazilians on the staff. It had a program size to match, active in all the basic sectors. I felt rather at sea in the midst of all this. My mentor when I arrived was an assistant program officer. He seemed relatively new himself, and so there was no structured training to speak of. My work was comprised of ad hoc assignments, with no particular management responsibilities.

I did become involved with the PL480 food program. That office was doing a lot of work and distribution in the São Paulo area, and I visited them there. I'm not sure what triggered this, but with my mentor's awareness at least, I did an independent evaluation of the PL480 program, and then presented it to the PL480 office. And this resulted in one of my earliest lessons. Their response after I delivered my evaluation findings was, "Who the hell asked you to do this?!" So some of what I learned was by hard knocks! I had not laid the groundwork for this evaluation with them, and consequently lacked their green light on it.

*Q: So this is your first job in a large bureaucracy.*

LEWIS: Indeed. The next major event in my tenure with the mission occurred in 1972-1973. Over the course of some months, much of the mission relocated to the new capital,

Brasilia. You, John, were among those who moved there. The Brazilian government made it clear to donors and to embassies that to continue to do business they would need to relocate entirely or at least in large part to the new capital Brasilia, which they were endeavoring to strengthen. I believe all the other IDIs relocated to Brasilia. Ann, and I enjoyed Rio a lot, and we elected to stay behind.

By 1973, about two years into my internship without a clear role and responsibilities, I was fairly discouraged and, frankly, on the brink of resigning. I got word of an assistant program officer opening in Swaziland. I don't remember how, but I'd always had a hankering to go to Africa, so applied and got a mid-tour transfer from Rio to Mbabane, Swaziland.

*Q: You say mid tour, was this in your first tour or your second tour?*

LEWIS: This was my initial tour in Rio.

*Q: Oh really! Was that part of the normal bidding process or was that a kind of one-off thing?*

LEWIS: It was not part of the normal bidding process. I don't really remember a discussion with the mission about it, but I had the ok to go ahead and request this transfer. It was pretty much up to me to pursue, and it worked out.

*Q: George one thing I'll just add as I recall, as you and I were there roughly at the same time. A decision had been made to severely downsize the Brazil mission around 1973 and over the next two or three years it was reduced from 100 to maybe 25 direct hires, so I think anyone who had reason to leave was encouraged to do so.*

LEWIS: Exactly. I'm glad you mentioned that because that was likely the impetus in my case.

*Q: Meanwhile your wife was working in Rio as I recall.*

LEWIS: She did work. After very brief introductory Portuguese language training for spouses at the Embassy, she studied with a private tutor throughout our time there. Despite her lack of training or teaching experience, she taught at an English medium Catholic high school for a couple of years and was quite happy. She would be sure to mention that when we arrived in Rio, the officers' Annual Evaluation Report still included a section on how well the "wife" had contributed to official functions. She was aghast and worked in future years to amend State and AID policies on spouses and families. And we did some entertaining, mostly with and among the other interns in Brazil. It was worthwhile to socialize with the very congenial intern group. We had many fruitful conversations, and reinforced each other in those ways.

*Q: Did you have a supervisor who paid attention to you and who mentored you in any way? Were you pretty much on your own?*



LEWIS: I was pretty much on my own, John. I did have, as I mentioned, a supervisory relationship with an assistant program officer in the Rio mission, but it was a very unstructured period.

*Q: So as you moved to Swaziland, you thought you were moving from an IDI position to I guess a regular mission position.*

LEWIS: The office in Swaziland was called “OSARAC”, the Office of Southern Africa Regional Activities Coordination. It was a regional office, administered from Swaziland but encompassing five countries: Swaziland, Lesotho, Botswana, Malawi, and Zambia. There were about 9 direct hires and 15 locals, in great contrast to USAID Brazil. This proved ideal for me. I was the only assistant program officer in Swaziland so had a lot of interaction with the program officer, George Eaton, and ample time with the mission director, the late Charlie Ward. Both were fine mentors who had lasting influence on my career. I appreciated their management styles, which stressed easy accessibility and communication. They did much to restore my commitment to AID and a career with the agency.

I could comment on the OSARAC programs if you like.

*Q: Sure, please.*

LEWIS: OSARAC programs centered on health, education, and particularly agriculture in Swaziland, Lesotho, and Botswana, where we had fairly full programs. OSARAC had a particular drive in participant training, which was our principal form of assistance to Malawi. I don’t remember that we had anything of note going in Zambia. I enjoyed my responsibilities for implementing the participant training program in those four countries, and processed a lot of what we then called PIOPs, project implementation orders for participant training. I drafted implementation orders for technical services to secure advisors for various projects, and wrote my first grant agreement. I got out in the field. So I began to learn the ropes.

I suppose that if I were to recap what I observed and learned there, number one- at the top of my list -- would be the value of good mentoring and exemplary leadership styles. I learned basic program implementation and the documentation involved in that. I had less exposure to strategic planning. That came toward the end of my five-year assignment with OSARAC when I was transferred to Botswana as the AID representative there.

*Q: George, in terms of the context for the reader, this was during the period of apartheid in South Africa, and there was no hint of reconciliation at that point, is that correct?*

LEWIS: No hint of reconciliation. It was very stark. I traveled most frequently to Botswana and Lesotho. To reach those two countries from Swaziland, we would typically drive for hours through South Africa. “The Republic” liked to keep track of foreign diplomats, so unlike tourists, we were required to obtain a Laissez Passé from the

government of South Africa for specific dates and entry/exit points of any transit of South Africa. We had Swazi drivers, however, and every time we approached the border crossings they would be processed separately. Swazis were not considered foreigners and weren't required to obtain visas, but were treated as South African Blacks and subject to Apartheid rules. You would see the signs over the toilets: "whites only", "blacks", "coloreds". We were all stressed as we were processed through those transits.

Another observation I'd add here from my five years in southern Africa is the fundamental importance of good governance and productive collaboration with the host country. In that respect, Swaziland and Botswana were in stark contrast. The Royal Swazi government, a near feudal Monarchy, was barely functional, and not rewarding to work with. And as you know, John, Botswana had a very enlightened government and democratic governance -- responsible, accountable. We knew that development was at the top of their list of priorities. They were well disposed to working with donors.

*Q: Did you get to know Swazis and Batswana while you were living there?*

LEWIS: Yes, I did. We had a number of friends, particularly in Botswana. Amiable folks everywhere we traveled in Botswana, people were cordial, approachable. Maybe the Swazis were a little more reticent, bearing more scars from their semi-Apartheid society and government, but they also enjoyed a good time. Ann had many Swazi colleagues who became friends. The two countries were very different in size and lay of the land. Swaziland was a gem of a country to behold and travel in. Botswana had the vast stretches of the Kalahari Desert and, up north, the Okavango Delta, famous for its bird and animal life. Very different settings.

*Q: Any particular instances of working with either the Swazis or the Batswana that you recall and sort of remember positively or negatively?*

LEWIS: I had virtually open access to the ministers and various branches of government in Botswana, and that was a real highlight. I was still fairly early in my career, so to be able to sit and converse face-to-face with ministers was a privilege. I'd say that, across the board, the Ministry of Agriculture was with us arm-in-arm, working in dryland agriculture, which was applicable to most of the arable land in Botswana. Government staff in Swaziland were always cordial, too, but perhaps less motivated.

*Q: Was Ann working at that point also?*

LEWIS: In Swaziland, Ann taught at a private British primary school, a Catholic Swazi high school and at the University of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland. Most rewarding was her work with Swazi colleagues to establish a national career guidance program in the Ministry of Education. Ann and I were in Botswana just a few months. Our first son was born in Swaziland in 1976, so she had her hands full with young Themba. I should say that until 1972 (while we were in Brazil), Foreign Service officers were also being rated in their annual performance evaluations on their wives' uncompensated performance. Even after that practice terminated, tacit functional expectations of Foreign

Service spouses lingered. So, was Ann employed? Spouses contributed many hours of uncompensated volunteer work, especially preparing for and attending diplomatic functions.

*Q: Did you by chance meet Seretse Khama, the president of Botswana?*

LEWIS: I didn't meet him personally. I did see him speak. He was a most impressive personage.

*Q: As you came to the end of your five years, two tours, what were you thinking about next?*

LEWIS: My wife and I opted for one more assignment overseas, this time to another country that intrigued me, Bolivia.

*Q: Let's talk about that.*

LEWIS: I can be fairly brief. I was recruited there as deputy program officer in an office of three Americans and a couple of Bolivians. It was another large mission. Again, I followed my desire to see parts of the world even though it didn't turn out to be a particularly career-advancing decision. I didn't do my homework, didn't get a sense of the mission beforehand and, maybe as a result, my time there was rather rocky. I wasn't quite a fit in the program office as it was then staffed. The program officer and I didn't communicate well and when we did, were often at odds. My tenure was short. With the mission's encouragement, let us say, I mid-tour transferred to Washington. And that's about it, except for lessons learned. To the extent you have options for onward assignments, research them beforehand and, as you can, the reputations of key staff.

*Q: Well at least you were in the mountains!*

LEWIS: I was in the mountains! I should add that our second son, Zack, was born in Bolivia, a natural childbirth at 11,000 feet. For some reason I got into a course for fathers on natural childbirth, where they teach you to take deep breaths with your wife during the labor process. Well at 11,000 feet you're doing that normally anyway! But that was perhaps the highlight of my time there, plus many fishing expeditions into the Andes Mountains. Bolivia was a fascinating culture and marvelous landscape.

*Q: So you received a mid-tour transfer to Washington to what position?*

LEWIS: That was to the Near East Bureau for what came to be five years, 1978-1983. This was another part of the world for me, both AID/Washington and the Near East. And, John, I did do my advance research this time. While still in Bolivia, I was able to converse by phone with the head of the Near East North Africa office, a very fine, astute woman, Mary Huntington. And I heard encouraging things both in talking with her and others about the Near East Bureau. We came to agreement. The first two years there, 1978 to 1980, I served as the Morocco desk officer representing USAID mission interests

in Washington. Then I advanced to officer-in-charge for the Morocco and Tunisia desks for the ensuing three years.

One program field new to me was housing and urban development. It was a major aspect of the Tunisia program. Then, a very severe earthquake occurred in Italy. For whatever reason, probably closer proximity than in any other bureau to Italy, the Near East North Africa office had a lead role in sparking and overseeing humanitarian response to that calamity. That was my first involvement with that form of American aid, humanitarian response.

*Q: What role did you take? What were you involved with?*

LEWIS: Mainly with getting the basics that one would imagine to affected sites in Italy: medical supplies, blankets, shelter, food aid. As I recall we did not become involved, particularly with humanitarian assistance, in reconstruction of infrastructure in the countryside and cities.

*Q: Did you travel to those two countries?*

LEWIS: I did, yes. Multiple times to Morocco and a couple of times to Tunisia. Morocco had quite a large program. Dryland agriculture was a focus, so that was a carryover in experience from Botswana. Water use was another big issue there: irrigation, water use regulation and conservation. Speaking of dryland farming and water, at one juncture the mission and we back in Washington came under pressure from an American university involved in cloud seeding -- planes literally fly over the top of potential rain clouds and seed them with chemicals that were purported to promote rainfall. The university wanted to do this over Morocco. Well, that was a poor idea, first of all because of doubts about the technology. It had not really been proven. But also for foreign policy reasons, because the geographic areas for cloud seeding were adjacent to Morocco's border with Algeria, and Morocco and Algeria were not on the best of terms. Had cloud seeding in fact occurred and worked, Algeria would have undoubtedly protested, maybe to the United Nations, that the United States was shorting them on rainwater to meet Morocco's needs. So there can be strange twists in the aid business, can't there?

*Q: I understood the king of Morocco was pushing the cloud seeding program, is that right?*

LEWIS: There was considerable interest on Morocco's part. That probably means the king was at least on board, if not behind it. Yes, there was a lot of pressure. We didn't fund cloud seeding, though.

I would mention here that the Near East Bureau had decided that Morocco had become overly reliant on too much PL480 Title II food over too long a time. So in the 1983-85 period, the Bureau pressed a very reluctant USAID mission in Rabat, Morocco to dramatically curtail the program -- to essentially phase it out -- and to produce a strategy and a timetable to do so. Well, the mission resisted, and eventually flatly rejected, what

had become a directive from Washington. I was in the middle of this, trying to fairly represent both sides in what was an increasingly acrimonious exchange. Eventually Title II was phased way down, and the mission director was reassigned. There can also be real drama in the AID business!

*Q: That one sounds like it was a major issue then, my goodness! Was Mary Huntington still your boss in Near East Bureau at that time?*

LEWIS: Yes, Mary Huntington and above her, Jerry Knoll. Jerry Knoll headed the Near East North Africa office. Mary was Jerry's deputy. Both were excellent colleagues. There was not a lot of bureaucratic stratification there. Communication was easy, as was learning. Above all, this five-year term back in Washington gave me real familiarity with the lay of the land there, how Washington is organized and how it operates. And of course I learned that, ultimately, mission authority aligns with AID Washington. For the information of those early in their careers with AID, this rotation back was about eight years into my own, and proved to be very good timing.

*Q: It sounds like it was ideal. I don't know if you agree with this, but it was probably a good idea for your sons to be back in the States for a while.*

LEWIS: One of the driving ideas behind rotation of foreign service officers back to their homeland at intervals, as you know, is to re-establish their roots in their own culture. Another is to avoid their getting too deeply ensconced in one local posting or another. It all makes good sense. It was, however, a challenging time for Ann, as mother of two kids, six months and 2 ½ years old. We'd lost our household help! Moreover, she squeezed in grad school, earning an MA in development studies during this time.

*Q: Wow that's important challenges and difficult times for everyone.*

LEWIS: I was ready to move on after five years in Washington. Perhaps it was longer than one needs to learn those AID Washington ropes, but it was quality time for me. One of the reasons I stretched it out was that I was waiting for a program officer position in Nepal to open up. A former IDI in the same intern class as I, Bill Nance, was in that position. Coincidentally, Bill and I had served together in the Peace Corps in Nepal. He was wrapping up his tour as program officer there in 1988. I applied and got the assignment!

I would note here that although I applied as program officer, it was during this time (around 1990) that the program and project development officer designations were merged. So in Nepal, the program office became the office of program and project support. The mission still had both a program officer, myself, and a project development officer, Don Clark, on board, so was well staffed to do both sorts of work.

*Q: So after Bill left--you moved out during the summer and before school started--who was your mission director?*

LEWIS: Dave Wilson was the director for most of my years there. Janet Ballantyne was deputy director for two or three years. I wouldn't depict it as a large program, but it was fairly diverse. We worked in health and family planning. That was a major thrust. Agriculture was an interesting sector for us because we were very active both in the Himalayan foothills and the southern lowlands. In the foothills, there is a wide array of micro ecosystems being farmed. There are also the lowlands, running east to west about 500 miles across the country. So Nepal presented a multitude of very different agricultural environments, and was an intriguing program for us, a challenging one. Support for agriculture research and extension services was complex, for example. I helped monitor the mission's involvement in community forestry. That project was reminiscent of Peace Corps work in its labor intensity. The USAID program also supported education, and Ann was hired to design a girls' education program. But our largest project was a coordinated combination of several activities. That was the integrated rural development program in a large agricultural region called the Rapti Zone, a little northwest of Kathmandu. There, and in virtually all the mission undertook, we had partners including public sector and non-governmental organizations, and collaborations with other donors and the UN agencies. I'll give you an example, if you like.

*Q: Please.*

LEWIS: One of our collaborators was Japan in mutual efforts to control malaria in the southern plain, the Terai as it is known. Very few people inhabited the Terai because of this scourge. Beginning in the 1960s, as I recall, and culminating in the late 1980s, because of joint Japanese and American efforts, malaria was very substantially reduced. However, to control malaria requires keeping up the good work, conducting periodic insecticide spraying, and keeping people engaged and caring for themselves with bed nets and so on. By the mid-1980s, in the mission's view, severe malaria was at the point where the work could be turned over to and should be sustained by the Government of Nepal. However, we were loosely partnered with Japan, and the Japanese were using DDT insecticide prohibited for the United States. They were not receptive to the idea of phasing down and over to Nepal perhaps hoping they could carry on residual measures themselves, replacing USAID, and continuing to purchase their own DDT for this endeavor.

We couldn't persuade the Japanese, and lost their needed leverage because Nepal would have been happy to have us carrying on, doing all the work and covering the costs. So the Japanese chose to remain full bore in their regions, while USAID pressed Nepal to take a larger role. Ultimately the U.S. did phase out. But this underscores the lesson that donor coordination doesn't always generate the desired outcome.

*Q: Were you involved with the Hatfield trees?*

LEWIS: Oh, yes. I've noted that there are twists and turns in the development profession, and here's another one. Senator Hatfield of Oregon learned that we were working with community forestation with a focus on a particular tree: planting and tending *alnus nepalensis* saplings. That's the Nepalese alder, a variety peculiar to Nepal. Being in the

alder family, it has the desirable effect of disbursing nitrogen via its roots to surrounding soil and thus enriching it. Senator Hatfield had constituents who were also growing alder trees, and may have heard through them about this project. Or perhaps it was from the congressional presentations for budget purposes that USAID did annually. Those submissions included information about our projects. In any event, he proposed to ship a huge number of Oregon alders from Oregon to Nepal for planting by local communities.

Well, you can imagine the fundamental questions that arose about that! We had the saplings we needed, grown locally in Nepal. We were using what land was available to cultivate them. How we would ship and pay for, where store and, ultimately, where would Nepal plant hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Oregon alder saplings? We decided the mission would have to confront the Senator and, as diplomatically as we could, decline. Mission Director Dave Wilson was with his staff all the way on this, and AID/Washington was at least sympathetic. Ultimately, we came out on top. Perhaps we just wore Senator Hatfield down. He no doubt had more important things to do, and advised his constituents it simply wasn't feasible.

*Q: Did you ever meet with him?*

LEWIS: No. Yours is an interesting question, because no one from Oregon ever came to Nepal, that I was aware of, to look at the countryside and see what we were up against and what we were already endeavoring to do!

*Q: What was the Nepalese government like at this point? I know it's had a lot of twists and turns over the years.*

LEWIS: There were some real governance problems during my time in Nepal. The country had long been ruled by a dynasty, the Rana family. The traditional royal family, the Shahs, managed to overthrow the Ranas and recapture authority a couple decades before my time there with USAID. When I arrived in 1983, King Birendra occupied the royal palace. Nepal's rubber stamp Parliament was controlled by the single official political party, and opposition speech and press were suppressed as were dissidents. Nepal endeavored to play off its two giant neighbors, China and India, to its own advantage.

To complete the picture here, John, I'll fast forward to 2001, after I'd moved on. One fateful day, the crown prince turned a gun on both his parents. The queen had determined that the crown prince's Indian girlfriend did not have the status to be his bride, and he was distressed. They say the prince was on drugs. He had access to arms and mowed down the royal family and several uncles in cold blood, then shot himself. I believe "regicide" is the term.

King Birendra's brother, Prince Gyanendra, was crowned, then deposed in about a year. The Nepalese seized the occasion to declare the country a democratic republic. This was a feckless effort for a considerable time. There were disaffections leading to a 10-year armed Maoist insurgency that ultimately resulted in a peace accord. This is beyond the

scope of our interview here, but the accord held and in 2015 a new constitution was promulgated for a federal democratic republic, and elections followed. The communists won handily. Paradoxically, they have been elected to implement and administer a democratic federal republican constitution and country. That's a long answer to your question, John.

*Q: Well no, it's very interesting. Did that process have an impact on the content of the AID program, or the size?*

LEWIS: I'm not familiar with specifics of the Nepal AID program of recent years. During the 80s we were getting ample budget. We had some semblance of policy dialogue going on with particular ministries, particularly agriculture, health and family planning, and the ministry of planning. The royal palace, *per se*, wasn't involved.

*Q: Were there any particular programs that you're particularly proud of USAID being involved with in Nepal?*

LEWIS: One great achievement was the aforementioned success of malaria control. The United States was instrumental in opening a quarter of the land area of the country to habitation. Over two or three decades, about a third of the Nepalese population moved from the hills to the Terai and began farming there. I should add that I haven't seen precise figures on the size of this migration, but it was very substantial. We had an enormous, enduring impact in the form of new opportunity and improved quality of life for millions of people. I was just in Nepal in January, 2018, and I traveled to the Terai. There are settlements and urban concentrations everywhere. Agriculture is widespread, very productive. American assistance sparked an interesting change in land use practice there. When the hill people came down from the Himalayan foothills to invest themselves in the farmland there, they naturally turned to rice production, which had long been their crop of choice. Somebody got the bright idea that we should encourage fish farming. I don't know if it came from USAID, but do know that Peace Corps Volunteers were involved. A rice paddy could fairly easily be converted to a fishpond for tilapia. A few farmers did that, then some more, and the word spread that this was far more profitable than growing rice. I asked one farmer who was growing tilapia, "What about marketing these fish?" He responded, "We don't have to market the fish. The Indians come across the border right to our house, and we sell the fish on the spot!"

Another project I really appreciated and enjoyed was our work with wildlife reserves in the Terai. Chitwan was one in particular, which I visited again on my recent trip. The farmers on the perimeters of those "game parks" were perturbed by the rhinos. Rhinos can wreak havoc on plant and tree life every time they move. They have voracious appetites. Farmers were vocal about rhinos coming into their fields and eating the crops. The Smithsonian Institution was our partner in putting the parks on sound footing and protecting animal life. One of the things they did was tranquilize a few rhinos, put them to sleep, in order to sample of the contents of their intestines. I wasn't on hand to see how they went about that, but they found that in fact the rhinos sampled had no particular evidence of rice or other crops in their intestinal tracts. Poaching rhinos was a serious



problem because there was a lucrative market for their horns and some other parts. Maybe the farmers were looking for an excuse. A key to resolving the conflict between man and animals was to involve villagers living on the perimeters of reserves: patrolling them and operating village home stays for tourists ... activities like that that gave them a stake in tourism and in the wildlife reserves.

*Q: So, you were five years in Nepal.*

LEWIS: Yes. I should mention that we did a bit of strategic planning in Botswana, but I wasn't there long enough to see that through from beginning to end, and then oversee the implementation process. But in Nepal, we produced a multiyear strategic plan and used it as a framework for program development. I found, too, that my experience with evaluation work was very engaging. The five years in Nepal involved a lot of team building and teamwork, and this was very satisfying professionally.

*Q: Did you lead that process?*

LEWIS: Yes, as program officer, I was responsible for taking the mission through its strategy development process.

*Q: And were there any particular approaches that you used, that you would you recommend to others?*

LEWIS: If you can, avoid having to develop a strategic plan in your first few months, like they asked me to do in Bolivia! That was part of the rocky experience there. Better to have a year under your belt to gain a fuller sense of the country context and key actors before you start long-range planning. But timing of a mission's next round of strategic planning is typically Washington's call. Important aspects of the process include team building from the beginning; ensuring broad and steady communication; keeping staff informed of the schedule for drafting and reviewing strategy components; being clear on various office involvements and responsibilities in the exercise; keeping the mission director on board; and making sure that proposed plans are realistic in terms of budgetary and staffing expectations.

I mentioned evaluation. Here, is a personal highlight. Earlier, I said that when I was in the Peace Corps, USAID/Nepal engineers would come out occasionally in a helicopter to do requisite advance surveying work for an ambitious western hills road. When I returned there in the mid-1980s, the road had been completed for several years, and I was asked by the Mission to join a team of two American engineers USAID contracted to evaluate the project. By the way, in the 1970s when the road was built, AID as an agency was no longer involved in physical infrastructure projects of any magnitude. Those were left to the World Bank, the Asian and African Development Banks, and so on.

A lot of Nepali males who went on to college in Nepal wanted to come out as engineers. The problem was that they'd read all the textbooks and passed their exams, but had no dirt under their fingernails; they had no field experience. I wasn't there at the time, but

the Nepal mission developed this road proposal as a \$30 million training project for Nepalese engineers, with construction as the means to that end. And indeed it was. I describe it as forbidding terrain. Those “foothills” of Nepal we would call mountains here in the States. The road evaluation was done at a time when AID was giving increased priority to evaluations and to country programs documenting results. And this was my first in-depth involvement in an evaluation.

We found among other things that where the road was coming under heavy use, there had been erosion. Corrective plantings had to be done, and some structures emplaced called gabions -- rocks contained in wire cages to hold up parts of the road that were vulnerable. Much of this remedial work was performed by voluntary labor from roadside communities that cared enough that they would keep open their stretches of this 100-mile-long, two-lane roadway. Toward the end of the evaluation, I interviewed one old Nepali at the northern end of the road, way up in the hills. I asked him if the road was worth maintaining and what it meant to him. He turned to me and said, “My tongue tells me the road is good.”

John, a little interpretation here: “My tongue tells me the road is good.” What that means is that people were now getting access to more nutritional choices. People in the hills who had been living on a diet of lentils and rice twice a day all their life with the occasional potato and the rare few bites of meat, now had vegetables and meat coming up the road. Their markets were filled with the components of a much better diet, and the makings of real nutritional improvement up there among the hill folk.

His were very good words about what AID does. We don’t hear enough about AID’s successes, do we?

*Q: Right. Well, that’s kind of an ex-post evaluation. They often bring out important lessons.*

LEWIS: Lessons. I’d come back to the integrated rural development program in Nepal’s Rapti Zone. These are really complex programs if they’re truly integrated, involving initiatives in health, education, agriculture, basic services, transportation, market development. They present particular management challenges both in the Mission and in the field.

And there was my reflection on donor coordination. I mentioned that while it’s inherently good, it isn’t always fruitful, and I surely learned in Nepal that donors have their own cultures and their own procurement requirements and other vested interests that may not coincide with ours. So I was well into my career during the Nepal assignment, but still in a learning mode! There’s a lot of on-the-job learning in the development business.

*Q: Well, I hope so!*

LEWIS: Participating in that evaluation and reporting impact-level results, and orchestrating development of USAID/Nepal's strategic plan were such experiences. They remained professional interests even after retirement, when I've done short-term consulting in both areas.

*Q: Good. What happens after Nepal?*

LEWIS: I went to Indonesia. My five years in Nepal ended in 1988, and I applied for a program officer opening in Indonesia. This was another instance where my interest in the assignment wasn't particularly researched beforehand, but the country intrigued me. Lo and behold, like my starting point in Rio, USAID Indonesia was a very large mission, mounting quite a complex program. And like the Brazil mission, it often seemed difficult for me to be heard and to be visible. It was the same for some others, I knew, on the staff. There were difficulties. I categorize it this way: people either felt in or they felt out. There was considerable competition, and vocal dissent even in staff meetings over common shared interests or paths toward mission aims. So who was calling the shots? It seemed to me that the management approach came down to this: one was either on the insider team or was peripheral. As a program officer I had access, by virtue of regular weekly sessions, to both the mission director and deputy director. However, I wouldn't categorize them as particularly constructive or say that we held common views on important matters. Relationships were not strained, but they could have been more productive and communicative.

It was my great good fortune to have two outstanding American assistant program officers, Jim Hradsky and Ned Greeley, and an Indonesian woman, Ing Susanto, as program assistant. Jim and Ned were adept in project design, thus providing an important asset to the Mission. Ing brought valuable insights on program history and the players, and had a refreshing sense of humor and perspective.

I also had some frustrations with the Indonesian culture, especially the Javanese where we lived, and with national politics, frustrations working with the government. The Indonesian language is strange to us. Preference is for use of the passive voice and the indirect article. One rarely refers to oneself in the first person, "I", but rather by given name, for example "Sujanto" or "Sutomo". I'd go to a meeting in the planning ministry and come out two hours later not knowing who agreed to do what! Completing my third year in Indonesia, I'd been eight consecutive years in the field. It was time to return with my family to the States. I contacted a colleague in the African Bureau and was able to arrange a rotation back to headquarters in Washington. Another rescue of sorts!

*Q: So those three years in Indonesia, what were they?*

LEWIS: 1988 to 1991.

*Q: Were there parts to the program that you focused on more than others that you were pleased about? Were you more just handling the program side?*

LEWIS: I found myself preoccupied with program office business. It was routine, day-to-day program office functions -- tracking this and that, supervising my staff, attending meetings as invited or expected. Occasionally, when I would feel I needed to, I'd invite myself. But the individual offices were kind of fiefdoms unto themselves. As I perceived this mission *modus operandi*, I felt confined in the program office. It had neither the breadth nor the extent of responsibility and authority that I would have hoped for at that point in my career. So, back I went to Washington, the Africa Bureau's Office of East African affairs.

*Q: There's one more thing I want to ask, and you don't have to answer this. In terms of lessons learned, when you're in that kind of a situation when maybe leadership isn't listening, are there any sort of management techniques or approaches, negotiation techniques you found were useful in trying to break down those barriers?*

LEWIS: Well I tried, worked hard, was genuinely interested in what other offices were doing. The director was a fairly sensitive fellow. I was in a small session with him for a *post mortem* on an education meeting with other donors he'd attended and addressed. In this follow-up discussion in his office, the director asked our education officer "How did I do?" The officer said, in seriousness, "Well, your clothes were kind of rumpled, Dave." In other words, Dave could have been better dressed for the occasion! The director tilted back sharply in his seat, and shot visual daggers at the education officer. For my part, I tried to be sensitive in interacting in the mission. In a way, this complicated communication because one had to watch what one said and how one said it since the mission seemed polarized on so many matters. In this fractious work environment, I had to figure out which side I was going to try to play in order to have my message heard and make a difference. A lot of personal effort and reflection went into how to operate successfully in such a context.

*Q: Changing the topic a bit, did you travel much across Indonesia?*

LEWIS: Not a great deal. I took intensive language training in Bandung for three months and enjoyed that part of the country very much. Bandung was up in the hills; cooler and without Jakarta's heat and traffic jams. I did make several field trips to have a look at our projects. Getting around in Indonesia is no easy feat because it's comprised of several thousand islands, so most of my travel was in Java and Sumatra, regions where our program was most active.

*Q: Were there any programs you saw thought were particularly successful?*

LEWIS: We were doing really effective work with marine life conservation. USAID was assisting efforts to create marine parks for snorkelers and scuba divers and, in the process, to draw tourists and attract foreign currency. I went out and took a dive at one of these parks. The facilities, diving equipment and instructors were excellent. They asked to see my PADI card that certifies basic scuba diving training. It was safe, supervised, fun.

Health and family planning was another area in which we had dynamic leadership. USAID's major endeavor in agriculture was support for research in pest-resistant crops, and for related extension services. One aim was to reduce farmer use of pesticides. In promoting private investment in the Indonesian economy, we were instrumental in advising the country as it launched its first stock market.

I had a very difficult time promoting planning, any sort of advance visionary work in at least a couple of the offices. The attitude was, we're dealing with the here and now, today, and that was it. "Don't ask questions about anything else. You're not grounded in health and family planning (or other technical areas) so leave it to us." There was little interest in evaluating projects.

*Q: The kids were in high school at that point?*

LEWIS: Our kids were at Jakarta International School, the older son getting up there into high school. We were very pleased with "JIS", a quality school.

*Q: And was Ann working there?*

LEWIS: On a Host Country contract, she worked as Academic Advisor in the Government Ministry of Development Planning, Overseas Training Office, until the job of Director of the Fulbright Commission opened up. She thoroughly enjoyed that. It was a full time involvement for her, and that counted for a lot since I often came home stressed. Around the dinner table, we'd talk about her work and our sons' school activities instead of my day at the office!

*Q: Oh boy! So let's take you back to Washington and then maybe we'll finish this session in a few more minutes. You asked for a mid-tour transfer back to Washington to the Africa Bureau.*

LEWIS: A former colleague, Harry Johnson, had been Lesotho country rep when I was with the southern Africa regional office in Swaziland. Harry was now with the Office of East African Affairs, and suggested I apply for their desk position for Uganda. I got the job, joining the East Africa office in 1991. That office provided field support for missions and for offices in both east and central Africa: Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi, Ethiopia, and Eritrea, and the regional economic development office, called REDSO, in Nairobi. It also covered other AID interests that might arise in the Greater Horn of Africa, which would be Somalia and Djibouti. This was quite a geographic range for a staff of about eight, including secretaries.

Although I was brought back as desk officer for Uganda, I covered Kenya as well. My role was to vet their country strategies and their programs, i.e. program development, and to present and advocate their budget and other needs and interests to the rest of the bureau.

After two years, I was bumped up to deputy director of the East Africa office, and was acting director for an extended period. We had three directors, as I recall, in the years I was there, 1991 to 1996. Happily, I was able to travel extensively. I'd visited all of the country missions at least once. I found this part of Africa very diverse and fascinating.

Just a side note. On one trip to Uganda, I learned one reason why AID had ceased involvement in physical infrastructure projects. A drive through the countryside included a stop at a sprawling two-story school that USAID had constructed. The concrete slabs were crumbling and re-bars were poking out at all angles. The contractor had cut corners. To my distress and dismay, kids were still going to class in what seemed a monumental death trap. Needless to say, that was at the top of my report to the Mission director when I returned to the office in Kampala. With a military escort, I also visited camps for "internally displaced" people in northern Uganda, a troubled region. The Ugandans there had fled their fields because of violence and threats and had been living and raising kids in the camps for years. They were sustained in part by our humanitarian assistance for health care and PL480 food.

We'll move on to my time in Rwanda in the next session of this oral history. So I'll just mention now that while I was in Washington I followed and was involved in Rwanda very intently. The genocide occurred in 1994, and this was a very stressful and emotional time even from a distance. Our office oversaw the arrival of evacuated American USAID families and what they could carry with them. We saw these folks face-to-face, John, and listened to the most harrowing accounts of narrow overland escapes. They carried bottles of whiskey in their vehicles to bribe the guards, or grease the skids, at the many checkpoints along the way. We helped them settle back home and resume work.

*Q: Anything else that you want to mention about your work in the region?*

LEWIS: Yes, and this is of interest to you, too, John. At one point the African Bureau sent me out for several months as *de facto* AID country representative to Eritrea. We supported a modest program there including assistance to the University of Eritrea, help with some transportation at Eritrea's Red Sea port, and food aid. Part of the transportation work that we were doing at the port had to do with all the ships that we would bring in laden with food. Because the port wasn't equipped to handle the general volume of international cargo, we had to pay demurrage while PL480 sat in American vessels for days waiting to offload. On another front, with the embassy we lobbied as deftly as we could for participatory government. Clearly, from the situation there today, we didn't get very far with that.

*Q: This was a new country essentially, a revolutionary success story.*

LEWIS: Through armed struggle, Eritrea did win its independence, a success. But the country has been far from exemplary in governance. From the outset, it could only be characterized as a command economy and a repressive dictatorship.

*Q: And you did a planning exercise there as well?*

LEWIS: We did a little bit of a planning, endeavoring to bring added coherence to the various activities. The office was a humble one. There were two of us, with some secretarial help. The African Bureau was under congressional pressure to refrain from establishing any more missions in Africa. It was a shoestring operation. This concerned me because I thought we might have vulnerabilities in program and fiscal oversight. I was aware that the bureau had done management assessments elsewhere, so I called for and got one. And you came out to lead that, John Pielemeier!

*Q: I was part of the team, part of a fairly large AID team, I think.*

LEWIS: I was so appreciative of it because, among other things, we were counting heavily on other missions for TDY (temporary duty) assistance as necessary, and it was catch as catch can, not always available. I think the management assessment results and recommendations that your team reported back to the bureau strengthened our hand in calling upon other missions to get that vitally needed TDY help, technical and administrative, to lift the office out of its vulnerable state.

The management assessment also may have led to acceleration of Washington's appointment of a full-fledged AID representative to Eritrea. This constituted a longer-term commitment to sound management there, and lent more credibility to our policy overtures on various fronts with the government.

*Q: George, we've been at it for over two hours and I think we probably should stop here.*

LEWIS: To conclude this first session, I'd very much like to acknowledge another person in the Africa Bureau who inspired me, Carol Peasley. Carol was called upon to serve as the Bureau's acting assistant administrator for what became many months. As acting director of the East Africa office for much of that time, I attended the weekly senior staff meetings she so deftly chaired. We all had a voice, not just a place, around the conference table and in her office. She listened. If a topic turned tense, Carol would flash her disarming smile. I saw in Carol someone who rose to the occasion with credibility, intellect and courage. We're in touch to this day.

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*Q: In our last interview George was in Washington in the Office for East African Affairs and about to be assigned to Rwanda not long after the genocide. So George take it from here.*

LEWIS: Thanks, John. Yes I mentioned at one point in our prior session that American staff at USAID/Rwanda were evacuated from the country as the genocide erupted. I'd like to make sure I was thorough on that topic. They had to make their way overland to neighboring Burundi and the airport there to be air evacuated. I believe most, if not all, of those flights came from Burundi back to Washington D.C., where we heard their

harrowing accounts of hours and hours of traveling overland through road blocks and check after check, manned by inebriated attendants. The ticket through checkpoints was often a bottle of Scotch.

Colleagues from headquarters met many of them as they came into Dulles Airport or in their home offices as soon as they could check in. Our principal concerns were, first, with their state of mind and emotions and, second, finding them accommodations at least temporarily. For those who were employees of USAID, we aimed to get them reoccupied with something to do -- a desk and a job, to get them settled in.

*Q: George would they have gone from Kigali Rwanda to Burundi in a convoy or just in individual vehicles?*

LEWIS: Amazingly, the Embassy was able to successfully evacuate all “registered” Americans – over 200 at that point, in a convoy of vehicles. The Consular Office had detailed lists and good communication- a true success story. They endeavored to stay together, not always successfully. I said that some of the stories were really hair-raising. One I remember particularly. One of the cars was somehow diverted or strayed off down a side road that became a dusty dirt track. They may have been looking for an isolated missionary family on the evacuation list. In any event, they were miles out in the middle of nowhere, lost. It was getting late. They were frightened they’d been left behind. Some local Rwandans helped them get their bearings and they managed to relocate the main route. Some Americans had stayed at the Burundi border crossing to make sure they made it across. No one in the convoys was left behind as far as I know. However, and this speaks for itself, I’m not aware that any Rwandan staff were in those evacuation convoys.

*Q: Can you say something about what the AID program was in Rwanda before the genocide?*

LEWIS: Yes. There were a couple principal projects in full implementation when I arrived. Large sections of Rwanda, including the environs of the capital city, Kigali, had been seeded with a huge number of land mines. USAID and the U.S. Department of Defense were conducting a very successful demining project in 1996. Of course, this was critical to resumption of agriculture in large swaths of the country. Rwanda was mostly agrarian.

To pinpoint mines, teams used imported trained dogs on 50-foot leashes. When one of the dogs smelled a mine, they would sit down and mark the spot until the detonation experts and dog handlers, working together, detonated the mine. This was far cheaper and faster than the machines the US had been using in demining elsewhere. Apparently, such machines were too often blown up. So dogs were the way to go. The only costs they incurred were for veterinary care and imported dog food!

The other major project underway on my arrival was Women in Transition (WIT). WIT was funded by the AID/Washington Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI), as it was then called, and managed by the Mission. OTI channeled resources and training to women



who were single heads of households, either because their husbands had been killed or had fled the country. WIT addressed their dual critical needs for housing and some household income. Women learned to make bricks and install sheet metal roofing, and perform animal husbandry. These roles had traditionally been in the male domain. The women frequently made more bricks than they needed to reconstruct their homes, and sold the excess. Tutsi and Hutu women worked together and rotated rebuilding homes in their community, sharing labor and tools. Our Government of Rwanda partner was the Ministry of Women's Affairs, under the very strong and enthused leadership of a woman minister. The project was a real winner with Washington, too, and was able to garner all the funding it could absorb. It targeted and attracted women and showed that an AID project could generate desired results and life-altering impact, even in a highly volatile post conflict setting.

There was also a substantial Title II food aid program. According to my records, it amounted to \$26 million in Fiscal Year 1994 and nearly doubled to \$54 million in FY 1995 right after the genocide. Much of that food was channeled through and administered by the UN World Food Program (WFP). A significant amount was managed directly by the Mission.

LEWIS: How this all came about, my going out to Rwanda that is, might I go back to that point?

*Q: Yes, please.*

LEWIS: Working at my desk in the East Africa Office in Washington in early 1996, I received a momentous phone call from John Hicks, assistant administrator of the Africa Bureau. He asked if I would consider going to Rwanda as director to re-establish a full scale USAID Mission, and launch a post-genocide program beyond those couple of projects I mentioned. John Hicks did comment that there were other possible field assignments, so he was clear that I did have options. I was tempted to say "yes" on the spot, but responded that I'd like to go home and sleep on it -- that is, to consult my wife. Ann was also drawn to Africa and Rwanda's plight. She'd heard about it at the end of every workday. We decided to do it. I was sworn in at a very moving ceremony in Washington where representatives of the Africa Bureau and I spoke of our objectives and aspirations for Rwanda. We arrived in Kigali in July, 1996.

*Q: George, I do recall that when this was occurring, we were aware, at least, that you had other options of other places that were much more peaceful, and we had heard some people say, "Why would you go to such a difficult and still violent post when you had other options?"*

LEWIS: Those were questions that Ann and I were, I suppose, asking ourselves. But you know, there was just an overriding sense on both our parts, that this was what we wanted to do. It wasn't a missionary-like "calling. I'd say the Rwanda assignment had a powerful professional pull for us both.

Perhaps it would be helpful to further set the context if I offer a capsule account of some aspects of Rwandan history.

*Q: That would be great!*

LEWIS: It would be a good scene setter. Again, this is a very condensed account. I'll try to touch on the salient points.

In 1885, the European nations met in Berlin and divided sub-Saharan Africa among themselves. Rwanda and neighboring Burundi were awarded to Germany in 1885 and were German colonies until 1924 when, after WWI, the League of Nations appointed Belgium to oversee this territory. Burundi and Rwanda and, I believe, some of present day Uganda -- that entire region -- was simply referred to as Ruanda-Urundi.

Hutus and Tutsis both occupied the land area of Rwanda and Burundi, and they shared the same language, religious and cultural traditions, as they do today. The Belgians were biased toward the Tutsis, whom they viewed as natural aristocrats. Belgium drew them into its administrative arrangements and favored them for education and in political activities such as there were. However, the Tutsi were only about 20 percent of the population. They were what I think anthropologists call of Nilotic origin -- from the Nile region and were cattle herders. They had sharply defined facial features, and were tall and slim. However, the Hutus were the majority ethnic group, about 80 percent of the population. They tended to be shorter, squatter, rounder in facial features and were landless tenant farmers of the dominant Tutsis. There was a great inclination in Europe in those days to profile people by their physical characteristics. So the 80 percent who were Hutus were left to traditional pursuits, tilling the land, and were essentially deprived of voice and opportunity. Historians claim that until the Belgians introduced identity cards that designated Hutu or Tutsi, the roles were mutable, and defined by the number of cattle owned. A cattle-rich Hutu could become a Tutsi before the groups were divided administratively.

It should have come, and probably did come, as little surprise to many who were observing the scene over the years that ethnic animosity mounted steadily and became acute. As former ambassador to Rwanda and author Robert Gribbin wrote, "Hutu/Tutsi hatred had become a political constant during the Belgian administration." Belgium left abruptly in 1959 and when it did so, it decided the future government would be determined by popular vote which the Hutus, of course, won. Rwanda became independent in 1962 when the United Nations officially ended its protectorate status.

This was a complete and sudden power shift. It was also a power shift driven by that pent-up animosity. As one consequence, many Tutsis fled into exile in neighboring countries, particularly Uganda and what was then Zaire, now the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The next major event was the conflict in 1990. Armed Rwandan Tutsi forces came across the border from Uganda in an unsuccessful and bloody attempt to overthrow the Hutu regime. The country and the government remained in Hutu hands, but skirmishes and fear-mongering propaganda further divided the Rwandans. The economy

was in a tailspin due to collapsed coffee prices, and the President and his family were blatantly greedy and corrupt.

The US and European nations pressed the President to open political participation to opposition parties, allow the return of the Tutsi refugees who had fled when the Belgians left, and enter peace talks with the Tutsi-led army based in Uganda. Habyarimana agreed to Peace Talks in Arusha, angering the Hutu extremists who laid the groundwork for mass killing to begin on signal.

Then, on April 6, 1994, genocide erupted. It began that night when President Habyarimana's plane was returning from Rwanda peace talks in Tanzania and was blown out of the sky by a missile. The plane was hit just short of the Kigali airport. Debris scattered into the presidential compound nearby. Habyarimana and all those aboard including the president of Burundi, whom he'd invited to ride with him, perished. Responsibility for that missile firing has never been established or revealed. There are multiple conjectures and theories. The missile was apparently of European origin, but it was never clear or proven who triggered it from the ground. But that sparked the genocide, immediately, that night. Over the ensuing three months about a million Rwandan Tutsis and moderate and opposition Hutus, were killed by their countrymen. The latter were Hutus in opposition to the governing Hutus and were strongly in favor of peace.

A second invasion by Tutsi forces from Uganda managed to rout the Hutus who were conducting the genocide, thus ending the carnage in July of 1994.

We need to note here the role of the United Nations during these months, particularly in 1993 and 1994. The United Nations was present in the form of an entity called the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR), established in 1993 as an international peace keeping force in Rwanda. Following the unsuccessful first Tutsi invasion of Rwanda in 1990 and until 1994, there were multiple efforts to establish and maintain a peace between the Tutsis and the Hutus. UNAMIR, one of those efforts, was given a very limited mandate. That is to say, it was lightly armed and sparsely manned in its presence there on the ground. UNAMIR had no authority to intervene to make peace. It was just there to oversee, to keep the peace. In fact, it was commonly referred to as the UN peacekeeping force. UNAMIR was led by an astute Canadian general many people may have heard of, Romeo Dallaire. Dallaire wrote his memoirs of his time with UNAMIR, noting that it was immediately evident to him that the Hutus were prepared to commit genocide. At one point a high-level Hutu informant came to Dallaire, told him of the whereabouts of large caches of arms, and existence of a written hit list of priority Tutsi and opposition Hutu targets for assassination.

UNAMIR Force Commander Dallaire quickly dispatched what is known as the "genocide fax" to UN headquarters in New York. The fax landed on the desk of the head of the UN peacekeeping office, Kofi Annan. In it, Dallaire warned of the imminence of mass extermination, pleaded for a stronger mandate that would permit intervention, and for reinforcements. He asked specifically for permission to confront the Government of

Rwanda and to conduct coordinated UNAMIR raids on weapons caches. The United Nations, like the United States and the international community at large, was paralyzed by indecision and reluctance to identify the killings as “genocide” and thereby require intervention in keeping with international law. Belgium, however, was decisive, taking the occasion to withdraw its troop contingent from UNAMIR, weakening it further.

It’s often said, particularly by the Rwandans, that had UNAMIR intervened with a show of strength and resolve, the international community could have stopped the genocide in 45 minutes, before it began. Tragically, alas, we will never know.

Would you like me to talk about what I found upon my arrival? We’ve already mentioned the projects that were underway.

*Q: Sure, OK. So the USAID mission was totally closed after the genocide for a period of time?*

LEWIS: I don’t know that the mission was officially closed. However, it was non-functioning during the height of the genocide. American and Rwandan staff were no longer there. The office had been raided and anything that was portable and of any value had been carted off by the Hutus involved in the killings. They also ransacked Rwandan government offices, and destroyed buildings and other infrastructure.

*Q: Did they raid the U.S. embassy as well?*

LEWIS: The embassy was in somewhat better shape, though there were no Marine guards. Maybe the Hutu forces, called the “Interahamwe”, hoped not to encourage American action to halt the massacres. Or maybe it was that the embassy was adjacent to an oil and gas depot, and the Interahamwe wanted to protect the area for its own use. But that’s conjecture.

My first sight was the exterior of the USAID office. It was a two-story building -- not large, not sprawling -- and the outside walls were riddled with bullet and shrapnel pockmarks. It was located right in the line of fire during the 1994 Tutsi invasion from Uganda. I believe the Hutu Interahamwe were holed up in the parliament building and were exchanging artillery fire across town at the Tutsi-occupied military barracks just above the USAID office. The building took hits, but wasn’t extensively damaged. I noticed bullet holes in the downspout at the front entrance to the office. It sprayed like a shower when it rained. There were bullet holes in our bedroom drapes in the director’s residence just down the road. The streets of Kigali had been cleaned up by 1996, but the town itself still showed considerable destruction: no street lights, shot up street signs, abandoned buildings, little commerce. Across the country, devastation of physical infrastructure was widespread.

As the genocide came to an end in July, 1994, about a million Rwandan Hutus had fled to camps in neighboring Zaire. There were also a few camps in Rwanda, near Zaire. We can talk about those a bit later, John, because how the camps were addressed figured

importantly in the unfolding of post-genocide events. Rwanda's prisons were terribly overcrowded with Hutus who had not managed to reach the camps and were captured. Conditions were abysmal. There was also a troublesome armed Hutu insurrection in northern Rwanda, just across the border from Zaire, near the refugee camps. Rwandan society was in the throes of trauma and shock, insecurity, grief.

Paul Kagame is a name familiar to many. Kagame was vice president at the time, but also the minister of defense, so he was de facto leader of the country. The titular head, Pasteur Bizimungu, a Hutu, occupied the presidency. Paul Kagame is a charismatic and determined leader. I have no qualms in calling him a visionary, and he has certainly proved to be a skilled, sometimes ruthless, politician.

*Q: George, one other thing on the security side if I could. I remember at one point I came out to do some work with you and I remember people saying there were still hit lists and there were actually grenade attacks in Kigali long after the fighting was supposedly over.*

LEWIS: This was not a large or lasting problem. There were three or four explosions. Your question does make me chuckle because the embassy had very good intelligence, and it came to light the Hutus had put prices on the heads of the ambassador and me. When the ambassador mentioned this to me, he said he was piqued. "Ah", he said, "They're not high enough. I'm worth more than that! Besides, the Hutus couldn't afford to pay it!" (The bounty was about \$15,000 on the ambassador and \$10,000 on me.)

Returning to the state of the mission when I arrived: There were two Americans who had been on location at the mission since the genocide ended. One was on contract to manage the food aid program and the other was a direct hire administrative officer. Both had been under enormous stress, many sleepless nights. We knew they needed relief. The direct hire was reassigned and the contractor left soon after I arrived. I want to emphasize, though, that the key staff person was a Rwandan, Bonaventure Niyibizi, "Bona", as he was known. He was our senior local hire, was serving as program officer just prior to the genocide, and was again when I arrived in 1996. Bonaventure deserves enormous credit. I said the mission had been raided, but before it was, he managed to rescue our important records, our files, from the office and walk them to the relative security of the U.S. embassy. He also located former Rwandan staff, and successfully persuaded a number of them to return to work. This was no easy proposition because many, perhaps all of them, were traumatized. They doubtless wanted to hunker down where they were and not venture out, let alone return to USAID and resume work! But Bona convinced about 15 of them to come back. They were there when I arrived. In short order there were 5 of us direct hires there with the 15 Rwandans. Within a few months, the staff had grown to more than 40.

I'd like to relate another poignant episode. My first day on the job, passing the pockmarked walls of the mission and entering into the reception area, I noticed a plaque on the wall above the door. It was a valor award from AID Washington commending 15 or 20 Rwandan employees by name, listing them on the plaque for their bravery and dedication to USAID just prior to and in the aftermath of the genocide. That's almost the

precise wording on the plaque. A number of the names had been scratched out. I hadn't even walked in the door, and here is this defaced plaque intended to honor our local staff. This was my first sense of the exceptional team building challenges that lay ahead for me and for all of us. So at our initial full staff meeting, I asked the Rwandans if the scratched up plaque at our entrance was the first impression we wanted visitors to have of us. They all agreed, "No." So I offered to take it down, they agreed, and I put it in a locked safe in my office. I wonder what became of that plaque.

*Q: Were the scratched out names because those people had been killed or because they were seen as enemies in some way?*

LEWIS: The latter. They were thought by some of their Rwandan colleagues to have been complicit at least, if not participatory, in the genocide. Some were merely family members, relatives, of those who had purportedly committed killings. It seems safe to say, John, that the names scratched out were Hutus and those on the staff who did the defacing were Tutsis.

In portraying the context I entered, I'd also emphasize that USAID had very good relations with the embassy. The embassy was housed in an unimposing two-story building something like ours. It was nearby and readily accessible to USAID staff. Our visits there were frequent, and lines of communication were characteristically open. Relationships were cordial and constructive.

Robert Gribbin was appointed ambassador to Rwanda in 1994, arriving about when I did. He was a career diplomat and had prior ambassadorial experience in Africa. He was steeped in central Africa and in Rwanda, where he'd previously served as, I believe, political affairs officer. I remember that at our first one-on-one meeting, he dismissed formalities and said, "Oh, just call me Bob." Well, Bob knew USAID, and that we would be crucial in accomplishing American objectives in Rwanda.

*Q: George, I know Bob. I believe he'd been an ambassador in the Central African Republic (or Central African Empire), whichever it was at the time. And perhaps a Peace Corps volunteer, I think it was in Kenya.*

LEWIS: Correct on both accounts. I think his country of Peace Corps service was Kenya. I said he was an author, and I would like to credit Bob Gribbin for his thorough and very readable book called "In the Aftermath of Genocide -- the U.S. Role in Rwanda", published in 2005. His engaging narrative tracks Rwanda from colonialism to independence, genocide, refugee camps, the refugee return, and post-conflict nation building. His book was a great help to me in refreshing my memory of circumstances, events, and actors of 25 years ago.

We could turn to what we were there to accomplish, if you like, John.

*Q: Let's!*

LEWIS: In that first conversation he and I had, Ambassador Gribbin articulated three overarching objectives or “tasks”, as he lightly termed them. I think of them as the “3 Rs” -- Refugees, Reconstruction, and Reconciliation. These three, as he points out in his book, are linked, but without return of the refugees, the other two Rs -- reconstruction and reconciliation -- would not, could not, occur. Return of the refugees, daunting as it was to contemplate, had to come first. I should mention that I also received guidance from the Africa Bureau of AID. This became an assignment that would call on everything I had ever learned over 25 years with AID.

We should begin, then, with the refugees, the camps, their return. I said that there were several camps, most right over the Zaire border and others to the east, on the Tanzania border. They were typical of refugee camps everywhere: squalid, crowded, and volatile. Strictly speaking, those in camps on the Rwandan side weren't refugees, because they hadn't crossed an international border. Nowadays, we hear a lot about refugees and asylum seekers, but to be a refugee, one has to cross an international border. Others are internally displaced persons, or IDPs.

There were about a million Hutus in these camps. I think protocols call for refugee camps to be located at least 50 miles from international borders. These were much closer. Communities fled Rwanda for the borders in groups, fearful of incoming Tutsi retaliation. Former village leaders maintained positions of leadership and control inside the camps. Camp inhabitants were being rearmed and trained by their Hutu leaders and Interahamwe militia members. So here were the international donors and NGOs pouring \$1 million a day of humanitarian aid into the camps, to the great consternation and aggravation of the Tutsi dominated Government of Rwanda. The government was operating on a shoestring and was very concerned about illegal militarization in the camps, their proximity to Rwanda, and what they saw as renewed fervor and capacity for picking up where the genocide left off and completing it.

I said the Government of Rwanda was operating on a shoestring. I think our annual budget at that time was running about \$10 million, none of it budget support to Rwanda.

Well, fighting began and escalated outside the camps, around them. The Rwandan military was well trained and skilled, and may have been collaborating with seasoned Ugandan troops. Frustrated by the lack of response from the international community - NGOs and governments -- the Rwandan government informed the US and others that if no one else would end the militarization of the camps, Rwanda would clean them out themselves. With the tacit approval of the US, the Rwanda Army attacked camps in Zaire. Overnight, militant leaders fled deeper into Zaire and their “hostages” discovered they could safely return home. Hutu control in the camps disintegrated, and so did the camps. Ambassador Gribbin recounts in his book that on November 15, 1996 our military attaché called him from the border. “They're coming!” the attaché said. “Who?” asked the ambassador. “All of them”, the attaché replied.

Over the next few weeks a million refugees flooded Rwanda, all on foot. Young kids were tied to parents on long strings so they wouldn't be separated. The roads were

impassable to vehicles. I think of it as an epic event in the history of human movement. By far the large part of it occurred over the course of days, trailing over a few weeks. The population of Rwanda at the time was 8-10 million people, with a million more flooding home. Rwanda is a tiny country, so distance was not a particular obstacle, even on foot.

Well, there we were, deep in the middle of the first R, the first of the tasks -- refugee return. In short order, I received one of those late night calls from Washington that directors sometimes get, at 2 a.m. to be precise. "Oh, what time is it there?" asked the home office. They called to inform me that our budget had just jumped from \$4.5 million to a fiscal year 1997 level of \$125 million. \$125 million was worth getting out of bed for!

I should say that the increase was largely humanitarian assistance. We quickly were able to move \$15 million into what were called rapid response activities. Those funds came from the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, OFDA. OFDA collaborated in writing up rapid response grants to quite a number of NGOs, 15 or more. These were for family reunification, food distribution, seeds, tools, potable water, shelter, medical supplies and care, and communication capability. I mentioned the strings returnees attached to their kids so they wouldn't get separated on the trek back. Well, the strings broke in the press of people, so there was much family reunification and tracing/tracking people to be done. We hired, I think it was, Save the Children UK to do that. Government of Rwanda offices involved in the return complained that they had no means of communicating out in the countryside. We supplied them with their first mobile radios and with communication towers. We also grant-funded Save the Children UK to keep large containers of potable water along the returning refugee routes, and to provide some provisions, energy biscuits and so on. These rapid response grants were written and signed quickly with NGOs and typically had a short and immediate implementation timeframe. There was no shortage of potential grantees, by the way. I was informed that some 200 international NGOs were poised at the border of Rwanda, seeking funding for their involvement.

*Q: You said these were all international NGOs.*

LEWIS: Virtually all of them. The Hutu regime hadn't encouraged formation of Rwandan NGOs, so at that time there were none capable of doing the needful to align with. Cultivating Rwandan civic organizations was an ultimate interest of ours, but came later.

We could dwell more on the refugee return because it does, as Ambassador Gribbin pointed out, feed into the other two overriding objectives, the other two Rs, reconciliation and reconstruction. I want to underscore that despite Rwanda's small population it was one of the world's most densely populated countries. Thus, with the breakup of those camps, the need for food and shelter -- basic human needs -- pitted returned refugees (Hutus) against genocide survivors (Tutsis.) The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and WHO (World Health Organization) were key actors in helping to meet these two top priorities, food and shelter, as was USAID thanks to that infusion of humanitarian assistance.



An important side note is that the Government of Rwanda decreed that the original occupants had rights to their homes and to their land. So in a great many cases, this would have been Hutus who had fled their homes and their land to the camps. However, the decree provided that that particular year's crop belonged to its tiller, the present occupants in other words, typically Tutsis who had moved into houses that the Hutus had vacated. So, it was complex. It's also noteworthy that the overall refugee return went astonishingly smoothly and free of violence. I'd like this interview to record a trenchant quote from the U.S. Committee on Refugees: It reads, "Rarely in human history has a society asked, insisted, that all its people live together again side by side in the aftermath of genocide. The people of Rwanda are attempting to do what few societies in recorded history have ever done."

USAID was very much part of this beginning, and subsequent work, to facilitate refugee return and promote reconciliation.

*Q: We can move into this if you like, George. As you do, George, could you say a few things first about how you attracted staff back to help you carry out these activities, and if there were difficulties in doing so?*

LEWIS: I commented earlier that we moved quite quickly from a nucleus of five direct hires up to double that number, a little more, with no particular problem. I suppose the people who came had had the same discussion with their spouses that I'd had with my wife. Times have changed, but in those days the AID assignment process didn't require an officer to bid on or serve in a volatile or higher risk country. So people did have a full range of choice in their onward assignment bids. I don't remember any so-called "directed assignments" among our people. Another consideration perhaps, is that there were far fewer "restricted" posts, where officers' families couldn't accompany them. Several of our direct hires were accompanied by spouses. And staff evacuations such as had happened in Rwanda were fewer, worldwide. Our security measures in Rwanda were much improved, though the Ambassador declined to request Marine guards. A financial incentive was the substantial "post differential" added to the salaries of foreign service officers there. Last, but not least, the Americans had a nice little outdoor club where folks could eat barbeque, drink at the bar, listen to music, dance and let go.

I think what happened with the local staff was this. As the first group that Bonaventure Niyibizi brought back got to their desks, their inboxes, and had worked for a while, they influenced other former colleagues to return. People needed income. We paid salaries and paid them on time. It was safe, secure, engaging, and remunerative.

You've posed a very good question, though. We wound up with a staff mix of Hutus and Tutsis. Returning to the team building challenge that I mentioned earlier, reconstituting and maintaining those teams and ensuring harmony and equity was a task for all of us.

Shall we return to the broader Rwanda scene and evolution of the mission program?

*Q: Yes, let's do, please go ahead.*

LEWIS: So, let's move into the domain of reconciliation and our purposes and objectives. By the way, when I say "our" I refer to USAID and by extension the embassy's concurrence and support.

Justice was a prerequisite for national reconciliation. Restoration of the justice system was a principal piece of our country program. It combined funding, policy dialogue, embassy backing, donor coordination, and varying degrees of Government of Rwanda collaboration.

I initiated conversations with the minister of justice soon after my arrival in 1996. I sought to learn of his needs and priorities for his ministry and for justice countrywide. Well the justice minister seemed wary of anyone delving into Rwandan justice. He was a bit prickly, so we spent a little money to spruce up his office and generally make the place appear more respectable. His ministry, like all government buildings, had been looted during the genocide. We furnished some training on location, more like counseling and discussion sessions with staff. The mission had a dedicated democracy and governance officer on staff. These modest initial initiatives helped the justice ministry be open for business. My aim, too, given the tenuous rapport with the justice minister, was to keep the ministry informed of and consulted in our activities, keep them on board.

A number of donors with interest in the justice sector wanted to get Rwandan troops off the streets by reconstituting a civilian police force. The Rwandan government, including Vice President and defense minister Paul Kagame, was positive about this. They turned to the Americans.

This did present some problems, but with embassy and AID Washington backing I agreed USAID would spearhead the task, partnering with the U.S. Department of Justice. And we had other donor encouragement in doing so. I knew the U.S. had the capability to do it, but also that there was a hurdle. Congress had prohibited AID funding for police training because of our unfortunate experience in Latin American. We needed to get a Congressional waiver. We did so, and within a year the first police class of dozens of graduates bounced down the steps of the Supreme Court building on bikes we provided them, to celebrate their graduation. What a sight! Yes, we did furnish helmets.

We also pressed the Government of Rwanda hard to deal with the horribly crowded prisons -- "we" being the embassy and USAID and the international community. Over some months, the government took two particularly noteworthy steps.

Rwanda was reluctant to let any of the Hutu presumed perpetrators out of prison confines. None had been tried. The first step was eventually taken, though, to ease that crowding by releasing inmates during the day. That took the form of work details, sent from the jails out into communities, to literally help them rebuild according to the communities' priorities. The prisoners were organized and monitored in supervised work details; they weren't chain gangs. They had pink jumpsuits and stood out in a crowd. This

wasn't exactly food for work, not exactly freedom for work, but freedom for a day, day after day. At night they returned to the jails.

From that successful, encouraging first step evolved the second one. The court capacity that did exist, was minimal, and was so overtaxed that it would have taken years, decades, to try some 100,000 inmates. This caused considerable distress among the international community. Concern might be a more diplomatic term. Knowing that they couldn't string this out for years to come, the Government of Rwanda initiated a traditional community court system called, for those who speak Kinyarwanda, *Gacaca*, pronounced Gachacha. (Transcriber's note: *Gacaca* can be loosely translated to "justice on the grass.") Under *Gacaca*, some inmates accused of lower level offenses would return to the communities where they had been accused of committing their crimes during the genocide. They would testify and be tried by their village peers, who at this point may well have been an interesting mix of Hutus and Tutsis, due to the return of so many Hutu refugees.

To say that these courts were unbiased might have been a stretch, but something had to be done. They could not impose the death penalty, and that was a clear incentive for the accused. Instead they imposed community service and other forms of amends and restitution, in return for an inmate's release from jail to live at home.

I'd like to turn now from the prisons to the University of Rwanda law school. I consider this USAID's main involvement in the justice sector.

*Q: All right.*

LEWIS: The university had been constructed some years earlier by the Canadians -- a beautiful campus and facilities. It was leveled during the genocide. The entire university had to be rebuilt, and Canada was back doing that. In Rwanda, there was remarkable student interest in studying law. The new facilities the Canadians had reconstructed were a real draw. USAID readily agreed to help enable resumption of law school classes. We worked on restoring the library, getting books on the shelves, and focused on textbooks.

There were hurdles in this endeavor, too. Vice President Kagame decreed -- and he was in a position to do this -- that Rwanda was no longer Francophone, but English speaking. Rwanda, having been administered by Belgium since 1924, was French speaking. Kinyarwanda was the native language that all Hutus and Tutsis spoke. But now that flipped. It was to be English speaking. And get this, within six months all school instruction was to be in English, from grade school to the university!

*Q: George, tell me, this was because perhaps many of the Tutsis who came across the border from Uganda were English speaking and not French speaking?*

LEWIS: Essentially, yes, but more than that. I said Paul Kagame was a visionary. He envisioned Rwanda as squarely part of Anglophone Africa, as an English-speaking part of the East African community -- in terms of commerce, in terms of transport, and in

terms of speaking a common language. Those other countries would be Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. Moreover, there was deep-seated dislike and distrust of the French, whom the Tutsi government was convinced had aided and abetted the genocide. Neighboring Burundi, by the way, remained Francophone.

Rwanda's colonial legacy was reflected in its legal structure, modeled on the Napoleonic code, with trial by a tribunal of judges. Influential Tutsi leaders in post-genocide Rwanda included foreign-trained lawyers, many from East Africa where British colonial traditions created Common Law structures, including the use of precedents, lawyers arguing for each side, and trial by jury. Rwanda's laws, and importantly those pertaining specifically to genocide, needed to be written, a process that took about 4 years.

This switch in legal frameworks and in languages created an immediate problem for us in law school, especially with the library and in classroom instruction. All the law books and French textbooks, as well as key references and records in the law school had to be translated from French to English. And there began a fine collaboration with the Canadians, and with scholars from Quebec, Canada, Cameroon and Louisiana, all with similar traditions and experience in Napoleonic and Common Law. USAID's work with the law school found us engaged simultaneously in two of Ambassador Gribbin's "3 Rs": reconciliation, emphasizing justice and the rule of law, and rebuilding, specifically capacity at the law school.

Just consider that the monumental changes I've highlighted were occurring in this tiny, densely populated, war-shattered country! It was, in a word, mindboggling.

USAID also focused on local governance or, as the ambassador called it in his meetings, "cultivating democratic practices." One thing we did at the Government of Rwanda's urging was to help it issue new identity cards to all citizens, without designation of Tutsi, or Hutu. Unlike Americans, Rwandans had long carried national ID cards. In fact, the U.S. congress didn't permit foreign aid funding for ID cards. We were able to obtain a waiver of this prohibition, and furnished the necessary assistance. This was the first time Rwandan ID cards did not cite the holder's ethnic identity. It was an historic first.

We spoke earlier about the state of civil society, and that there wasn't much to say. Under the old regime, the social hierarchy and authoritarian nature of the government discouraged or prohibited the development of small groups, political parties, cooperatives. USAID began some preliminary, intensive work in the field to cultivate groups to organize with their local officials around a specific purpose. USAID would provide modest amounts of money for improvements in basic services in their communities -- potable water, small-scale irrigation, market access. However, to qualify for those little grants, the local group, in its proposal, would have to provide evidence to our satisfaction that their project would serve or be accessible to all people in their settlements, Hutus and Tutsis alike. We showed through these local civic organization projects that equitable rural public works activities could be done successfully in Rwanda's post-conflict context.

Another USAID accomplishment very significant for its demonstration effect occurred when we decided to support the government's first venture into democratic elections for local officials. This was in lieu of appointing them. Rwanda decided to do this the first time on a very limited basis, rather than countrywide, in communities where we were already conducting the equitable rural works projects. The Tutsi-led government was a little reluctant to hold these elections. It was an early test of democracy and power sharing, and the resident majority in these communities was undoubtedly Hutu. I think we helped persuade the government in large measure because it involved a very limited number of locales. The risk of things going really awry was minimal. We observed the elections. I'll just add that we'd like to see this happen at the national level, but even today with Rwanda's widely recognized remarkable progress in rebuilding, power sharing and free electoral politics remains the fundamental issue in the country.

*Q: Given the ethnic imbalances.*

LEWIS: Precisely. That and the fear of what could happen if the Hutus returned to power. All that had gone before, the lingering animosity and suspicion, reared up again and again. Only with time, years and new generations, might that be overcome.

We can move further into that third "R" now, John, rebuilding. In 1996, the minister of planning convened a conference of donors and presented the country's priorities for rebuilding and national development. At the top of his list was education. To my mind, formal education is one of the answers to long-term reconciliation. It can furnish youth with a more enlightened way of viewing life and society and functioning within it.

We talked about the law school, but the mission was also making overtures the ministry of education. I had a very good rapport with the minister, a female by the way. It was interesting to find a growing presence of females in the government. I met with her more several times. She was bright and dedicated. As with the justice ministry, we did what we could to get her ministry operational. When our discussion then turned to what USAID might do to help re-establish the education system itself, neither rebuilding schools nor paying teachers' salaries were the issue. It was curriculum, course content, and textbooks. Math and science were not the problem. It was how social studies, civics, Rwandan history and the account of the genocide would be written up in textbooks, and how they would be taught! Could the story be truthful, balanced? Could teachers be counted upon to be objective in the classroom? Or would they be swayed by their biases and experiences?

The ministry, and I think the government at large, was stymied over this all the while I was there. Many public schools did reopen over time, but education was not comprehensive. Certain subjects were treated shallowly or not at all. It was a continuing source of controversy.

On a lighter note, the donors were remarkably well coordinated in these early post-genocide years, the latter half of the '90s. That is, principally, a credit to the Rwandans themselves. It was the tightest, most effective donor coordination I'd seen in

my career. As the focus moved from humanitarian aid so necessary initially, the Government of Rwanda aimed to keep assistance levels up as close as possible to those early response amounts, and to keep it flowing for development. The government sought to retain control of where donor aid would go, and was successful in that. It partnered with the UNDP, the United Nations Development Program, to jointly convene and chair regular monthly meetings of all donors. In those meetings our priorities were clarified, starting with the government, then extending to the donors. We could question one another, we could address issues, and the government listened and led. The sessions were always well attended, and representative. USAID was there.

Rwanda had established explicit regulations that governed international NGO activities and their presence in the country. The regulations weren't restrictive. Rather, they served to give order and coherence to technical and financial assets that these organizations could mobilize. And the "regs" helped align NGO programs with national aspirations. The NGOs likewise met at least monthly. Donors were welcome, and I attended some of those meetings personally. I would wrap up on this point by saying that Rwanda's lead in coordinating assistance in this rebuilding and development phase was a vital force for efficiency and impact. There was such urgency to rebuilding, a lot of money involved, a multitude of players, that it could have become dysfunctional, with entities overlapping or working at cross purposes. That was largely averted.

I remember before the interviews, you expressed some interest in how I maintain my balance between work and domestic life. Shall I talk about that?

*Q: Yes, please!*

LEWIS: To be sure, John, that's a great question and it ranks right up with the "3 Rs" as a priority. Work was intense, workdays and weeks could get long when we let them. I knew, as we all do in our heads and hearts, that keeping a fair and healthy balance between work and home life is not just restorative, it's essential to the wellbeing of our domestic lives. I will add that I spent many hours counseling individuals on our staff, Americans and Rwandans. When you came to Rwanda, John, you saw a well-worn couch in my office. Lord knows, I had no credentials for mental health counseling or advising folks on their domestic lives. I just wanted them to feel comfortable coming into my office, and that I could be counted on to listen to their concerns and empathize. Frustrations were vented, tears shed. The mix of Hutus and Tutsis on the staff sometimes surfaced anxieties and paranoia that spilled over into my office and out on the couch.

*Q: Was that mostly carried out in English or French?*

LEWIS: English. I was using French occasionally, and I tried to work in French lessons two or three times a week. A few of the staff did much better in French than English, my secretary included, so I often used French with her. But generally as the language of choice in the office we counted on English. All written communications were in English.

Coming back to the work and domestic life issue, I'd like to comment on my own home front. Ann and I often made good use of our weekends. We lined up a sweet little cottage on the shore of beautiful Lake Muhazi, about an hour's drive from our home in Kigali. Paul Kagame chose this lake for a ranch and his home. We watched birds there, I fished a bit, we strolled in the countryside, took naps. We always took a bottle of wine or two for the weekend and, occasionally, hosted office parties there.

Our home in Kigali was usually tranquil. We had a garden, a dog, and a nice terrace with a commanding view of the city and rolling hills beyond. I got into home brewing, and that was mostly a relaxing diversion. Our domestic help was there to clean up the mess when bottles exploded in the fermentation process! Ann and I hosted luncheons for staff of the various offices, and entertained the frequent visitors to post at the house. We had parties, too, with mission staff and other guests. Those often culminated in dancing. We had some very good times at the director's residence. Frequently, Ann and I shared more subdued evenings there with official visitors from the States and with Rwandan colleagues. Dick McCall, USAID chief of staff in Washington, was extremely interested in Rwanda personally and professionally, and came periodically. Dick was sometimes joined at the house by Gayle Smith, or various Rwandan officials, politicians, and intellectuals for evening drinks on the terrace.

*Q: What was Gayle's position at that time?*

LEWIS: I believe Gayle was affiliated with an NGO then. She was professionally grounded in Central African affairs, and had had considerable involvement with Ethiopia and Eritrea in their struggles. She was steeped in post-conflict recovery. As we know, Gayle went on to serve with the National Security Council and then was appointed Administrator of AID.

*Q: Could you talk about any congressional influence on what you were doing or any visits that had an impact on your program?*

LEWIS: Yes. Before we move to that, I think you had mentioned interest in spousal employment.

*Q: Yes, the two-career couple working overseas!*

LEWIS: We hadn't been in Rwanda long when my wife was contracted with the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, OFDA, the source of much of that humanitarian assistance we discussed. OFDA hired Ann to be the OFDA Representative for its humanitarian activities following the departure of OFDA's Disaster Assistance Response Team, or DART. That kept her very busy and fascinated professionally. It was a new field for her, so there was a learning process involved. She thrived on that, and had had leadership and management responsibilities in other posts. I referred earlier to her Fulbright Scholar program directorships in Nepal and Indonesia. My wife was happiest when working. AID and the State Department should do their utmost to ensure that

spouses have foreign language training and are given full consideration for appropriate U.S. government-related work opportunities.

*Q: Great!*

LEWIS: You asked about visitors. I think you were interested in official visits.

*Q: ...and more about Dick McCall and his role.*

LEWIS: The embassy and, often by extension the mission, had a steady flow. The embassy hosted numerous congressional delegations -- both elected officials and congressional staff -- as well as senior military personnel. And there were luminaries from various other walks of life. We were routinely called over to the embassy to brief them and respond to their interests.

At the embassy's suggestion, I took charge of two staff members from the office of the late Republican Senator Jesse Helms of North Carolina. Dick McCall told me he had urged the two staffers to come to Rwanda. Well, John, it was remarkable! I briefed them in the office, then got them in a van for the main feature, firsthand exposure to Rwanda and our work in the field. They had two or three days with me, and were out overnight. It was remarkable how their preconceived notions changed. I took them right to the border with Zaire, where evidence of the misery of those refugee camps and of their inhabitants' return to Rwanda was still fresh. There were piles of old shoes and clothing, food ration cards, and other items the refugees discarded as they left the camps. We also visited encampments on the Rwandan side, where people remained and the staffers could get a firsthand sense of how dire conditions were. As we drove across the country we saw the crowding, the pressure on land and housing.

Some months later, I visited Senator Helms' office in Washington DC. The two gentlemen and I had a cordial conversation, recalling the intensity of their experiences, and they were most appreciative. Whether or not they influenced the senator's thinking about our assistance to Rwanda or foreign aid generally, I can't say.

Dick McCall was supportive across the board, probably our most influential advocate in Washington. I'm sure he was instrumental in spurring that huge increase in the mission's budget. As chief of staff, Dick was crucial in recruitment. I recall a discussion with him about filling a couple key positions one night on the terrace at my house. He clearly was personally engaged. He had established very good relations with Rwandans in his multiple visits as a senior AID official, had access to key ministers, and kept in touch with them. We met with Paul Kagame. He sat in on one or more of the monthly donor coordination meetings that I described earlier. But Dick McCall was not in any way controlling or micro managing. He was constructive, someone we could count on.

In 1996, Secretary of State Madeline Albright came, and wished to make some field visits. Ann, in her capacity as OFDA humanitarian assistance coordinator, was enlisted by the embassy to be her escort. Secretary Albright wanted to pay respects, on behalf of



the U.S., at a genocide site. Ann with a couple others scouted the site in advance and did some cleaning up of bones and such around a spot where Ms. Albright would place flowers. The Secretary of State had to have a mobile phone with her at all times. Ann provided her own, got flowers, and off they went. There was also a gala reception at the ambassador's residence. All the wives were instructed NOT TO WEAR RED because Madeline Albright was going to wear a red dress. This is just an amusing aside, but it shows how thoroughly such VIP visits are choreographed.

*Q: Let me just touch on another topic for a moment, George. Could you talk a little bit about your management style in these circumstances, as you work with people in the mission, both with Americans and Rwandans? What management approach did you use and what worked for you?*

LEWIS: Here is what I know worked: an old cliché, MBWA, management by walking around. I did that in large measure because these were my colleagues and I took interest and pleasure in getting to know virtually all of them. Some were more remote, or perhaps shy of the director. A couple relationships were prickly. I got out of my office at least once nearly every day, but usually had no list to tick off, no agenda. I would just amble out, thinking something like "Well, I'll stretch my legs, go downstairs to the health office, and chat with some of them." As often as not, I would hob knob with the Rwandans. I remember I'd go to the admin. office in an adjacent building and spend a few minutes with the assistant. She was Rwandan, had a great sense of humor. I'd sit down, and we'd roll with the conversation, working in a little business. So it was cordial and fruitful. These strolls also gave me a chance to get out of my office, away from the inbox, and take a deep breath. Simple as it seems, it's an effective -- and pleasant -- aspect of management style.

I also tried to be participatory. We had all-staff meetings, monthly at least. I met weekly with senior staff. Occasionally, those sessions would involve conference calls with AID Washington. We had speaker phones, and would sit at a round table at an hour when the Washington Rwanda desk would sometimes join us via phone. Anyone could speak. I tried to give people that feeling of being informed, on the team, and heard.

And third, I encouraged candor. If someone was on my couch, or if they weren't but needed to be. If I needed to go out and chat with them, or call them to my office. I said what needed to be said, tactfully but clearly, I hope. Sometimes this wasn't easy, of course. There were occasions when tears were shed, even by men. We worked in a high stress, post-genocidal context. Hutus and Tutsis vented lingering animosities and suspicions. Where relationships were twisted, we didn't want them to get permanently contorted. Office harmony, teamwork and productivity were at stake. There were times when the director had to tell those who were getting out of line to shape up or ... face the consequences in their annual performance evaluations.

And, we had some fun together. I mentioned the parties Ann and I organized. There were occasions at the office, TGIF or a birthday to celebrate, when we'd pour some wine and

enjoy savories. These are practical and maybe obvious answers to your question about management style, John. Not always, but most of the time, they worked.

*Q: Remind me, do I recall that you play the banjo?*

LEWIS: The ukulele.

*Q: Did you bring that out at these parties?*

LEWIS: I didn't dare. In fact I didn't take my ukulele to Rwanda. What I did have was a box full of percussion instruments. A lot of those I'd collected on various Africa trips, from an array of music-making contexts. Rwandans love percussion and vigorous dance, so we'd pass those out. Oh, I always had a tambourine around, and I got pretty adept at that. Probably because it was as simple as making noise while setting a beat. Is that not a director's role?

*Q: Well given our time, maybe we should move on. You wanted to mention another visitor, I think.*

LEWIS: Indeed. This was the VIP visit of them all! President Bill Clinton and first lady Hillary Clinton's visit to Kigali in March, 1998. President Clinton was scheduled to attend an African summit meeting in neighboring Uganda at that time. He felt that he had to address the Rwanda genocide during his Africa trip, somehow, somewhere. The President's staff agreed, but they were adamant that for security reasons he had to do that in Uganda.

In fact, early in his tenure Ambassador Robert Gribbin had made a forceful case that President Clinton should come when he could do so safely. Now, in 1998, the embassy reiterated that, with assurances of safety and security. Embassy advocacy got the needed boost when Ambassador Gribbin spoke about this with the president of Rwanda, who insisted that President Clinton speak to the genocide on location, in Rwanda. And so it happened.

The White House agreed to a four-hour presidential stop in Kigali, but stipulated that the Clintons could not leave the airport.

*Q: Really?*

LEWIS: And, even so, they flew in a presidential limousine in case he needed to be transported the short distance from the VIP lounge to the main terminal for his speech. Multiple advance teams began to arrive. All this took a great deal of time, as presidential visits do. (As it turned out, this wouldn't be my only one.) However, when Air Force One finally descended through the clouds hovering low above the airport, I was awestruck. It remains an unforgettable sight.

After the president and first lady disembarked, he was welcomed at the base of the stairs. As the second ranking American official at post, as it turned out, it was my privilege to escort the first lady, Hillary Clinton, along the red carpet to a meeting with the wives of Rwanda's president and vice president while Bill Clinton met the president.

Next on his program, President Clinton joined a number of widowed genocide survivors in the VIP lounge to hear their stories. These visits are typically scheduled down to the minute, and the gathering with the widowed women was scheduled for precisely 20 minutes. It lasted twice that long, and the President emerged visibly moved. I was stationed outside the door to the room in the VIP lounge, glancing periodically at my watch.

President Clinton then crossed to the main terminal where he was to deliver his keynote address. The embassy had assembled about 450 dignitaries, maximum seating capacity of the terminal. Appropriately, most were Rwandans. I made my way to a vantage point near the podium. President Clinton began by reading from a prepared script. He spoke immediately of the genocide, expressing his appreciation and empathy for the moving commentary of the widows with whom he'd just met. He emphasized then, and I quote, "The international community together with nations in Africa must bear its share of the responsibility for this tragedy." He elaborated some on that fundamental point, including American recalcitrance. Then he set his script aside. The next several minutes were pure Clinton, unscripted, at his best. I looked around and people were riveted, tears on their cheeks. I managed to obtain a transcript of his remarks as they were actually delivered then, including what he said that was unscripted. So as we complete this interview, John, I'd like to take a couple of minutes to quote Bill Clinton's concluding extemporaneous words to the Rwandan audience.

*Q: Excellent!*

LEWIS: Here they are: "I know that in the face of all you have endured, optimism cannot come easily for any of you. Yet I have just spoken with several Rwandans who survived the atrocities, and listening to them gave me reason for hope. You see countless stories of courage around you every day as you go about your business here. Men and women who survived and go on. Children who recovered the light in their eyes remind us that, at the dawn of a new millennium, there is only one crucial division among the peoples of the earth. And believe me, after five years of dealing with these problems, I know that it's not a division between Hutu and Tutsi or Serb and Croatian, Muslim and Bosnians, or Arab and Jew, or Catholic and Protestant in Ireland, or black and white. It is really a line between those who embrace the common humanity that we all share and those who reject it. It is a line between those who find meaning in life through respect and cooperation and who therefore embrace peace and those who can only find meaning and life if they have someone to look down on; someone to trample; someone to punish; and therefore it is a line between those who look to the future and those who cling to the past. It is a line between those who put aside their resentment and those who believe that they will absolutely die if they have to release one bit of grievance. It is a line between those who

confront every day with a clenched fist, and those who confront every day with an open hand. That is the only line that really counts when all is said and done.

“To those who believe that God made us in His own image, how could we choose the darker road? When you look at those children who greeted us as we got off that plane today, how could anyone say they did not want those children to have a chance to have their own children, to experience the joy of another morning sunrise, to learn the normal lessons of life, to give something back to their people? And so I say to you, though the road is hard and uncertain, and there are many difficulties ahead, and like every other person that wishes to help, I doubtless will not be able to do everything I would like to do. There are things we can do. And if we set about the business of doing them together, you can overcome the awful burden that you have endured. You can put a smile on the face of every child in this country, and you can make people once again believe that they should live as people were living who were singing to us and dancing for us today. That’s what we have to believe, that is what I came here to say, that is what I wish for you. Thank you, and God bless you.”

*Q: What was the reaction of the crowd?*

LEWIS: A prolonged standing ovation. I could see people near me still weeping. I sensed that the audience welcomed the candor in his elaboration of their plight, and that the world had been remiss, to put it euphemistically, in not coming to Rwanda’s rescue and averting the genocide. The Rwandan government was very appreciative of this visit and of those few hours that the Clintons were there. They told us so.

I’d also note that Kofi Annan subsequently came to Rwanda, essentially to apologize for the United Nations’ feckless response to the crisis and to UNAMIR’s plea for help to avert it. Annan’s effort to convey that message in an address to the Rwandan parliament was nowhere near as well received. It was sparsely attended. But in spite of our errors, we Americans seemed to have something of a special place in the minds and hearts of Rwandans. The other principal national actors in that context would have been Belgium and France. However, the Rwandan government under Paul Kagame wanted little, if anything, to do with either of them. Consequently, when it came to bilateral aid in recovery, the United States was typically their choice. It was fertile ground for our program and related investments of AID resources and staff time.

*Q: Great. George, in the brief time we have remaining, why don’t you explain a bit about how and why you departed Rwanda, and then what happened with the rest of your career.*

LEWIS: I retired while in Rwanda, in 1999. Ann and I did the usual. We packed up. I was aware of some other possible positions around Africa and that I might stay on in a senior management position elsewhere. Including the Peace Corps time, I had accumulated 30 years of government service. A major life change was in order. I had sufficient years to retire, and did. Ann and I came home to the States. All our belongings were in storage temporarily, and we owned a house in Falls Church, Virginia, where

we'd put down roots during 10 of those years. We had, and still have, many friends in the D.C. area, including former colleagues like yourself. But we opted for another new adventure in life, making changes in career and location. We sold the house. We bought a station wagon, packed what we would need and struck out across the country, zig-zagged across it, I should say. We bought a retirement handbook advising us to list the 10 things that we wanted in a retirement locale. The book said when we found a place that offered seven of those, we should slow down and delve deeper. We spent three or four months on the road, stopping for periods along the way, and ultimately wound up in the Pacific Northwest, where this narrative began.

About six months into retirement, I grew restless. Our household effects had arrived by that time and it was either find something else to do, or clean out the garage! My thoughts turned to short-term consulting. Ann was interested in reviving her career, too, in her particular fields: health, education and evaluation. So we formed a business partnership, registered it with the State of Washington, and before long both of us were lining up jobs. I did consult for about three years, mostly in Africa. We were selected for three election observing assignments with the Jimmy Carter Center. Those were *pro bono*, of course, but so rewarding. They were in Sumatra (Indonesia), East Timor upon its independence from Indonesia, and Jamaica.

Eventually I grew weary of long rides in economy class fuselages, crossing and recovering from time zones. I decided on a major change again, and switched my focus from international to local. I hoped I could apply some of my management and strategic planning skills to community service needs at home on Vashon Island, and that proved true.

I should note, however, I even got back into acting USAID directorships after supposedly retiring. First was a call in 2004 asking if I would go to Morocco for three months on a personal services contract (PSC) to fill the director role, to the extent a PSC could, until a direct hire replacement arrived. I'd worked on the Morocco desk in Washington, as we've discussed, so it was fascinating to go back for an extended time in one of my favorite countries. And yes, I did need to dust off my French!

In 2006, I returned to Rwanda, another favorite. As with Morocco, there was a gap between the departing USAID director and a replacement. However, in this case I was brought on for three months as a civil service hire, no less. That required spending a week or two in Washington going through all the paperwork and orientation that green recruits do. This despite my 30 years with the government! I was then cleared to go to Rwanda and, happily, Ann accompanied me.

We enjoyed it enormously. Many of the mission staff were still there, and seeing them, working with them again, was really rewarding. We were deeper into policy dialogue with the Rwandan government than had been the case ten years earlier when the focus was more on reconstruction and basic institutional capacity building. Particularly, this policy involvement concentrated on helping Rwanda improve its investment climate. The World Bank was our partner. By then, money was being repatriated by Rwandans living

overseas who were seeking promising investments. Interest among foreign investors was evident. Rwanda was on the screen, but certain disincentives needed attention. We worked with the government to correct them. USAID also took a lead role in advising Rwanda on its land reform aspirations and related policy and economic implications.

Toward the end of my three months I received one of those fateful phone calls from Washington. George W. Bush was planning a trip to Rwanda to open the newly constructed American embassy, to cut the ribbon. Could I stay three more months? Yes.

So out came the advance teams and limousines. We spent many weeks in intensive preparation and planning for George Bush and the first lady's visit. It transpired without a flaw. In fact, we were over-prepared. We were hoping to show the President some of our field activities, particularly in coffee cultivation. Rwanda was now producing and marketing some of the finest and most highly valued coffee beans in the world thanks to USAID funding and technical advice. We had provided mountain bikes to the farmers to help them transport their beans to the drying facility and enable processing as quickly as possible, because time counts at that stage, before roasting them. Previously they'd had to carry their harvest to the drying plant in backpacks, a slow and arduous trek. So we wanted George Bush to get on one of those mountain bikes, built in Portland, Oregon, and ride it around. We'd also lined up other site visit options. Alas, and again for security reasons, the president of the United States had to stay in Kigali. He met with Paul Kagame, then went directly to the ceremony at our new embassy. There was lively song and dance by the Rwandans, and George Bush spontaneously left his front row seat and joined them. He kicked up his feet, raised his arms, spun around, and did an impressive job of it!

*Q: Well, George, thank you very much for this interview. You've been extremely well prepared, and I think this will be a wonderful piece of information available for researchers and scholars.*

LEWIS: Thank you, John, for all the time you've invested in organizing and conducting this and the other oral history interviews you've done. I'm honored to have been part of them. It's been a pleasure to relive and reflect on the past as we've done.

*End of interview*