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

# AMBASSADOR STEPHEN LOW

*Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy*
*Initial interview date: December 5, 1997*


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## INTERVIEW

*Q: This is the third interview that Steve has done. Steve and I are old friends. We agreed that a more complete interview should be done since the first was done almost 10 years ago.*

LOW: The first was a videotape.

*Q: We tended to be rather short.*

LOW: It was an hour long.

*Q: So, we're going to do a full-blown interview now.*

LOW: Then there is another one we did on the background of FSI [Foreign Service Institute] and the creation of The National Foreign Affairs Training Center.

*Q: So, we're going to concentrate on your Foreign Service career. I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy and this is being done on behalf of The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. Let's start at the beginning. Please tell me when and where you were born and something about your family.*

LOW: I was born in Cincinnati, Ohio on December 2, 1927, the youngest of four children. My father's name had been Lowenberg. He dropped the "enberg" at the time of World War I. He was of German Jewish background. My mother, who was born in Milwaukee, came from the same background. I believe her great grandfather was one of seven brothers who came over after the 1848 revolutions in Europe. My paternal grandfather arrived at the age

of three or four in about 1857 also following the upheavals of 1848 which had taken them to Milan, Italy where he was born, from Germany which they left in the previous century.

*Q: So you're part of the '48ers. My family also came over then.*

LOW: Both sides were in business. My mother's family was in manufacturing in Milwaukee. My father worked for a small chemical manufacturing company that made soda ash which is a major component in both soap and glass manufacture. Procter and Gamble and Pittsburgh Plate Glass were the major users of the product.

*Q: That's why your family was in Cincinnati; Procter and Gamble and Pittsburgh Plate.*

LOW: For some reason I never became closely attached to the city.

*Q: Let's talk about elementary school.*

LOW: I went to a good private elementary school run by a friend of my parents, a legendary teacher by the name of Mrs. Lotspiech. After that I attended a public high school called Walnut Hills. My parents were firm believers in public education. Walnut Hills was excellent, and the leading college preparatory school in Cincinnati. It provided a good education with fine teachers. But I had always had minor health problems brought on by asthma, which I still have. My parents debated sending me to a military school but in the end decided on a school in Colorado

*Q: This was during high school.*
LOW: This was the last year of high school. I actually graduated from both schools.

*Q: During this elementary through high school period, what were your reading habits?*

LOW: I wish I could say they were more serious than they in fact were. Beyond what we read in school the books which made the greatest impression were travel adventures - The Climbing of Everest, Magic Island (Jules Verne), Lure of the Labrador Wild. Those are the kind of books which made an impression on me. But I wasn't an enormous reader, nor more than an average student. I was conscientious, but not brilliant.

*Q: Did your family have any international interests? Were you picking up things? You've got two things going on. You had the Depression and the rise of Hitler in Germany. Were you aware of these?*

LOW: Yes, we followed them in general and there was always discussion around the table of what was happening in world affairs. Mother and Dad spoke German, but they didn't pass it on to us. It was their private language for subjects not meant for children, which provided a sort of challenge to try to understand it for us. Amazingly, I found later in life that I could occasionally understand and even speak some German when I had to. My parents traveled a great deal, mostly to Europe and Latin America. Some years ago I found movies they had taken in Egypt and Morocco (in the midst of a locust swarm) in 1927, I

believe. They went to Machu Picchu, in Peru, only a few years after it was discovered. But I think it was curiosity to see the world that drove them rather than interest in foreign affairs. However, they were regular voters and participated actively in local politics which we discussed around the table.

*Q: Was there anything at school about diplomacy, the world?*

LOW: No, not at all. I was interested in journalism and was offered the editorship of the high school weekly newspaper senior year when I went to Colorado instead. There was always music around our house. All of us children played instruments. We went to concerts. I sang in school, played the piano and clarinet, later a guitar and now the cello.

*Q: Was there sort of a German community there? Music is often associated with that.*

LOW: Cincinnati is a major German town, and was known for its beer, symphony and opera. But it's also a southern city. There was no particular German community that I was aware of.

*Q: Where did you go in Colorado?*

LOW: I went to one of the two residential prep schools west of the Mississippi. At that time there were only two, one in Colorado Springs called the Fountain Valley School, and the other in California. It was an important experience for me. I think it was the first real intellectual challenge I had. Although we had good teachers at the public high, the ones in Colorado were even better. We had a good European history course, for instance, and good literature, music, and acting. I have always thought that a taste for acting is quite common among Foreign Service officers.

*Q: What was the composition of the school?*

LOW: At Fountain Valley, it was white, male. It hadn't yet changed. It's now a very different school.

*Q: Were you getting any more in history or that sort of thing at that point?*

LOW: Yes, I had good history classes at both Walnut Hills and Fountain Valley.

*Q: Of course, you would have been getting out of school just as World War II was well underway.*

LOW: It was the class of 1945. I finished at Walnut Hills in 1944 and Fountain Valley in 1945. The war was just about over by that time, but there was still a draft.

*Q: Many of our interviewees found that their interest in foreign affairs came to them through reading the papers, geography... They found out where Wake Island was, Guadalcanal, Kiev, these battles that were raging. Were you still sort of Midwestern?*

LOW: No, we followed it very closely. I can remember the day and the moment the war was declared on September 3, 1939. My parents and I got lost driving from Cleveland to Cincinnati we were so absorbed in listening to the radio. And I had two brothers in the services. My oldest brother was a pilot stationed at Pearl Harbor Dec. 7. And my next brother was in the Navy. We followed it very closely. But I didn't translate that in those years into an interest in foreign affairs. That didn't come until much later.

*Q: You got out in 1945. The draft was still there.*

LOW: Yes, although I guess I was exempt as long as I was in college. I went right on to Yale, a few weeks after graduating from Fountain Valley. At that point, I became convinced that sooner or later I was going to get drafted and might as well get it over with. So I enlisted after a year and a half at Yale. I did a year and a half in the Army finishing as a "buck" sergeant in the Medical Corps. I was a recruiting sergeant figuring that the more people I recruited, the less likely I would have to stay in the Army - though I enjoyed the experience which was very good for me.

*Q: You were at Yale a year and a half. What were you taking?*

LOW: You don't specialize in those first years at all.

*Q: Did you have anything that was getting to you?*

LOW: No, certainly not in that first period. The aptitude exam I took on entering college indicated I should go into engineering. I liked Chemistry and math and considered majoring in each before my Army service.

*Q: Where did you serve in the Army?*

LOW: My service was all in the United States. I took my basic training at Camp (now Fort) Polk, Louisiana. Then I was transferred to Letterman General Hospital near Indianapolis and when that closed, to Fitzsimmons General Hospital in Denver.

*Q: Did you learn to give injections and all of this?*

LOW: No, I had no medical training at all. My jobs were strictly desk work; personnel and recruiting.

*Q: When you came back to Yale, what did you do?*

LOW: My new class was 1950; the biggest (and best, we used to say) that ever graduated from the college before or since. There were a lot of veterans coming back. It was very impersonal. Not the right place for someone like me. There were some courses that I learned a lot from, the ones which pushed me: English with a fine teacher, European intellectual history, American intellectual history, and U.S. diplomatic history taught by

Samuel Flagg Bemis, the great diplomatic historian. Because of the size of the class, Yale decided to offer a "divisional" major. I chose politics, economics, and history, which simply provided a general education in public policy. You more or less took what you wanted, got your degree and didn't have to write a thesis. It served as good background for graduate study. But it left me in my senior year without a very firm notion of what I wanted to do. I came down to Washington. I can remember, one of Cincinnati's prominent leaders was then Secretary of Commerce, Charles Sawyer. His son had sailed around the world with my brother, Bob. I went to see him on the basis of a letter of introduction which my father wrote. I remember well his enormous office at the end of which was a small desk and a rather small, but very pleasant man. I felt like I was about two feet tall. I walked down and he gave me some nice words of advice and I left.

I went to the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) to ask them about their program. SAIS had recently opened a summer program in New Hampshire. It admitted me on the condition I go to the summer school. I had travel plans that year and didn't want to go to summer school. So, I applied to Fletcher, which admitted me without condition. I entered the following September.

I had begun my own travels with a kind of a world plan in the back of my mind to travel first north, then south, then east, and then west. Without a very firm commitment to that plan, it actually worked out. The first summer after the Army, a couple of my friends and I bought a ambulance from the Army for $400. Goodyear provided us with six brand-new tires and we drove to Alaska, sold it there, and worked for the summer. I think I made more money that summer working for the Alaska Road Commission than I made at any time the rest of my life. They paid extraordinarily high wages. I drove dump trucks and built roads. But with the money that I earned there, I went to Colombia the next summer, deciding to spend the whole time there rather than travel around Latin America. I flew down, went up the Magdalena River on a sternwheeler and when I finally got to Bogota stayed in a "pension" run by four remarkable sisters. I put an ad in the paper advertising myself as a "professor de Ingles de Yale Universidad." I had a number of private students and enjoyed Bogota although it was just a year after the great "Bogotasso" following the murder of the populist leader Gaitan and you could still hear firing in the hills. After a month or so there, I traveled around the country before returning to Yale.

*Q: Had you studied Spanish?*

LOW: Spanish was my language in high school.

*Q: As you were doing this, were you in any contact with the embassy or consulates or anything like that?*

LOW: I don't think I even knew where the embassy was. I guess I knew there was such a thing, but that's about it.

Then I finished Yale and went to Fletcher taking another step in the gradual process of moving towards diplomacy. At first, I confess it was not a passionate attachment, at least

not a conscious one, though a number of things had been pointing in that direction. At that point it was rather a *faute de mieux* kind of thing. No other direction interested me. I didn't want to go into business nor stay in Cincinnati. International relations interested me the most. Even after I entered the Foreign Service, I was not at all certain that this was the way I wanted to spend my life or that I was adequately equipped to do it. It wasn't really until five, six, seven years in the Foreign Service that I became completely convinced that, yes, indeed, this was something that I could do for the rest of my life.

*Q: At Fletcher, what were you taking? Could you describe Fletcher in those days? We're talking about when?*

LOW: 1950-1951. Fletcher was going through a change at that point. It used to offer a one year master's program. During the course of the year I applied for a Fulbright to France, which, to my amazement, I was granted. So, I finished the first-year master's program and went to Sciences Po (the Institute d'Etudes Politiques), part of the University of Paris. It was kind of a finishing year to my general education rather than a scholarly education. But I learned a lot particularly about the artistic world from the interesting American expatriate community living there. Towards the end of the year, I bought a motorcycle and traveled all over Europe and North Africa.

I had taken the Foreign Service Exam in Paris and did not pass. So, I decided that I would continue my education. I was becoming increasingly interested in the substance of international relations. I returned to Fletcher and completed my course work for a Ph.D., gradually focusing my interest on Southeast Asia, particularly the Philippines, where I felt there hadn't been adequate scholarly attention given by the United States to our very close relationship - in contrast with British interest in Malaysia and Indonesia, and the French in Indochina. The academic community of both imperial powers had contributed a great deal of scholarly analytical work in their colonies. U.S. literature, on the other hand, at that point, consisted largely of the autobiographies of our governors. I was going to contribute to the literature. I did my thesis on population distribution, but I'm not so sure that it was a significant addition to scholarly knowledge about the Philippines.

*Q: I want to go back to the University of Paris time. Did you have much contact with French students? Did you see a difference in the way the French approached things or not?*

LOW: Yes. I was at that point beginning to define my thesis interest, which was in population distribution; a rather strange topic suggested by the French approach to population questions. The French view is very different from that of the Anglo Saxons and I was much taken with it. They were concerned less with population limitation, particularly family planning mechanisms, than they were with the sociological background of population control: what policies were followed to influence where people lived, and what impact that had on population characteristics. The work of the French in Indochina, by Pierre Gorou, interested me particularly. I wanted to apply his views to the Philippines. My contacts in Paris were very broad. I got to know the American expatriate community in Paris, which included a gay element. Most of them were artists, writers, painters, and

musicians. They were artistically extremely sensitive and acute. I found them fascinating. They respected my own very different sexual persuasion and didn't impose themselves at all. I found their artistic insights intriguing and learned a lot from my friendships there.

*Q: Looking back on it, did that group in Paris have much influence on the artistic world?*

LOW: I think so. I think it produced a literature in particular which was different from that being produced in the United States; cosmopolitan, sensitive, joyous. It was no more valid than what was being produced at home, but it gave a breadth to American literature. This was, after all, where many of our later authors like James Baldwin came from. Some of my friends were southern writers. I think they contributed importantly to the development of American literature and art after the war.

*Q: What about the French students you knew? Did they seem to have a different mindset or outlook?*

LOW: Oh, yes, very different. I remember taking a trip with a group of French student colleagues. I considered the trip leader, a faculty member, to be quiet, thoughtful, modest and considerate, as well as being very knowledgeable - a very impressive person. But my French colleagues, despised the man because he wasn't adequately assertive and authoritative; he didn't flash his brilliance or put them in their place when they challenged him. I found the American attitude towards scholarship and leadership completely different from that of the Europeans. Americans wanted leaders to be colleagues interested in a dialogue. The Europeans looked for academic authoritarianism. Much later in my life when I directed Johns Hopkins SAIS Bologna Center (1987-92), I found a similar difference. Faculty (and administration) were the enemy to many of the European students rather than guides helping the learning process and sharing their knowledge base and analytical tools.

*Q: Did you find it hard to craft your papers to reflect this?*

LOW: No, I have to say that I didn't write many papers. I was an "auditeur libre," which meant that I was free to attend the classes I wanted. I wasn't inscribed in a degree course of study. My French was adequate to understand the lectures and participate in discussion, but it wouldn't have been good enough to master the voluminous reading assignments or write papers. I had learned French the summer before in a 10 week program at the School of Far Eastern Languages at Yale, which, I believe, was the first experiment in the country in intensive language training. It was developed during the war to teach Far Eastern languages (Chinese and Japanese in particular), but had then spread to use the same methods to teach French. We learned an amazing amount in a short time, but it was a conversation program. We were able to do fairly well, but I wouldn't have been able to do a degree course. My Spanish was in about the same shape at that point.

*Q: When did the Philippines cross your mind? Were you looking around and thumbing through a catalogue or something?*

LOW: I guess I had long had an interest in the Far East. I hadn't been aware of it, but I know that one of the things that I considered while still at Yale was the Yale in China Program. I made some inquiries, but I wasn't ready to commit myself at that stage, and the program was very much up in the air with the Communist regime having just come to power.

*Q: By that time, Yale-in-China had pretty well disappeared.*
LOW: Right. I became interested in Indonesia. I wrote two or three papers at Fletcher about it, and learned about Indochina in France. I became aware that excellent things had been produced by the Dutch, French and British on Indonesia, Indochina, and Malaysia. But there was a void as far as the Philippines were concerned, in part because the library in Manila had been virtually destroyed during the war. There was very little documentation. But there was a great deal in Washington at the Library of Congress and Archives. I began to define a topic. After I finished my course work, I came to Washington and began to rummage through the two sources. It was startling to find thirty year old books which had been checked out once if at all. Some had never been moved from the shelves. Of course, in those days, you had stack privileges. You could just wander through the library. I had a desk in the Library of Congress Reading Room. I was in the process of getting married. Sue was also working on her Ph.D. thesis.

*Q: What was Sue's thesis?*

LOW: We had met at Fletcher and were married in 1954. She was also an ABD (all but dissertation), had finished her course work and was an economist working on foreign investment in India. So, we both had desks at the Library of Congress. It was a fun period. We liked to be able to wander through that magnificent library. The Philippine collection was quite extensive, as it was in the Archives, - more material than in Manila. My topic was a study of what I called "American colonial policy" and its impact on population distribution, so part of the analysis was statistical and part political/historical. Since the material was here in Washington, I never went to the Philippines.

*Q: Did you have a professor who was a mentor who knew anything about it or were you pretty much the man?*

LOW: There was no one mentor, but a Fletcher professor (Leo Gross) oversaw it. A demographer, Dr. Irene Tauber, lived in Washington and was a great help, as was a Princeton demographer, Dudley Kirk. I also had a number of Philippine friends. I knew people who knew something about statistics, population, colonial policy, but nobody who knew a great deal about this particular subject as it related to the Philippines. So, I worked hard for a year and a half. In the process, I had taken the Foreign Service Exam again, in Cincinnati this time. I passed it and the oral exam. That was in 1952, at the time of the reductions in force (RIFs) in the Foreign Service. I asked repeatedly for delays while I finished my dissertation which were fortunately granted since the State Department was just as anxious to delay intake as was I to postpone it. I finally told the Department I would ready by 1956, and entered in January. I still had a little work to do to finish up the thesis. I had submitted it to the readers and they had asked me to make some changes. So it wasn't actually formally submitted until three months after I entered the Foreign Service. I got the

degree in June of 1956 but didn't go up to Boston for the ceremony.

*Q: While you were doing all this, I take it the Foreign Service was not a burning desire. It was a job.*

LOW: No, it was more than that. I had a growing interest in foreign affairs, the policy process and its impact, and I was fascinated by the prospect of becoming involved in it.

*Q: While you were in Washington, had you done some scouting around, talking to Foreign Service officers?*

LOW: No. I came to Washington specifically to work on my thesis. It seemed to me worth doing and I wanted to complete it before going on to anything else. I didn't think much about jobs and a career at that point, although the interest in the Foreign Service was certainly there. It was the only thing that I ever considered. You have to remember that jobs weren't as difficult to find at that moment in history. So I was taking things one step at a time.

*Q: So, your going for a doctorate was not tied to a future career in the academic world?*

LOW: No, not at all. It's hard to go back and figure out why I wanted so badly to finish the thesis. I was interested in the subject, and wanted to pursue it further, right to the end. I thought it wouldn't hurt to have this as a fallback. I think it was a matter of wanting to complete what I was doing before going on to something else. It is a feeling I have had about many things.

*Q: When you took the Foreign Service Exam, could you describe how it seemed to you, some of the questions, people, how it worked?*

LOW: In those days, the written exam lasted three and a half days. They asked about everything from agriculture to zoology in multiple choice questions each morning, then questions and answers each afternoon and on the fourth day, if I remember correctly. You get pretty good at taking exams. I kind of enjoyed it. Being graded on the curve, it was neither hard or easy. Not that you knew all the answers, but you knew that it depended on what you knew in comparison with what everybody else knew more than anything else. Most people had to prepare for it. You had to review everything you had studied. That's a very healthy process. I've always felt that when reviewing subjects, you learn as much as you did the first time. So, I rather enjoyed the process.

The oral was a comfortable process of an hour or maybe an hour and a half interview here in Washington with six or seven examiners. It was rather relaxed. I remember very little of it, except that it was a friendly give and take. I don't remember any terribly difficult questions or any unpleasant encounters. At the end, they called me back and said, "Okay, you passed."

*Q: Was Cromwell Richards the head of it at that time?*

LOW: I really don't remember. It was a fairly distinguished group of people. Joe Green was probably one of them. But beyond that, I don't remember.

*Q: While you were in Washington doing your Ph.D. and courting Sue and getting married-*

LOW: We were married by then. We were married in 1954.

*Q: Were you a part of any Washington young group or something like that?*

LOW: No, not at all. We had our hands full with our theses and work. We had a few friends. Some of them were also doing research at the Library; a Japanese-American and an Iranian. There were also some of our friends from Fletcher. But for the most part, we were pretty busy with our own activities.

*Q: You came into the Foreign Service on January 3, 1956. Could you characterize your Foreign Service class?*

LOW: It was a small class. There were 13 of us. A number went right through the Service with me, but not many. Quite a number dropped out for one reason or another. Some left the service and a couple of them died within a short time. It seems to me that the course was twelve weeks long. Those going overseas took the whole thing, but those of us assigned to the Department only did the first six and then completed the course before going overseas. In those days, the Foreign Service Institute with the A100 course was held on C Street in an old apartment building. I had the Washington job for a year and a half and then returned to the Foreign Service Institute which by that time had moved across the river to Virginia, the garage in Arlington Towers. I recall that George Kennan spoke to us. Whether it's an accurate quote or not, I always remembered a phrase which I have ascribed to him. It was something to the effect, "Never give yourself 100 percent to the Foreign Service; always keep something back." I've always found that to be the most important piece of advice anybody ever gave us in those early years. Much later when I became director of the Foreign Service Institute, I incorporate the thought in my talk to the junior officers. It may be less important today than it was then. In those days, you entered the Foreign Service and that's where you expected to spend your life. There was no question of changing. It was an all-consuming endeavor. Sometimes people lost perspective on their own private lives, their family lives, and their own intellectual development and become convinced that what they're doing is not only the most important but the only important thing to be doing. That is a mistake. I have always been a firm believer in vacations. I thought that the Foreign Service was right in insisting that people come back to this country regularly and spend time outside of Washington. I learned very quickly that that time was important to give you perspective. When you went out into the country, you learned how little concerned people were about what you were doing. That gave you a certain humility. Then when you got back after your vacation, you learned how little you were missed in your job before you went. The two together gave a perspective which is very important to life in the Foreign Service.

*Q: In your class, was it all male?*

LOW: I believe it was, all white male. I think there were a few women at that point, but not in that early class. There may have been in the second half of the class. There were 40 or 50. I never got to know that group as well.

*Q: What was your first job?*

LOW: Unbelievably, my first job was in INR [Intelligence and Research] working on Philippine affairs.

*Q: You did that from when to when?*
LOW: It would have been March, 1956 to July 1957. I was immediately assigned to DRF, the Far East Division, as the Philippine and Malaysia analyst - while I was still finishing up my dissertation on the Philippines.

*Q: Was there any logic to this? Did somebody say, "Do you know anything about the Philippines?"*

LOW: I think so. I think that there definitely was. INR looked at my background and said, "Good, we can use him." It was a great assignment for me from which I learned so much. You learn how reports from the field are used, and how they fit into the system in Washington. A lot of people have trouble understanding that even though the Secretary of State may not read your reports, they form views of the people who are writing the memos which go to the Secretary and can often be very influential. It gave me a great respect for the non-electronic analytical papers called "despatches" which don't exist anymore. They were read by the worker bees in not just the Department of State, but the Departments of Labor, Commerce, Defense, the CIA and elsewhere around the government. It was interesting; I was the analyst for both Malaysia and the Philippines and found the comparison of the reporting from the two places fascinating. We had the most superb reporting from Singapore and Malaysia because the U.S. was not the responsible government there. As observers, some of our officers were brilliant. I remember particularly a fellow by the name of Anderson who wrote the most thoughtful analyses. We really had a feel for what was happening in Malaysia. But we got very little good analysis from Manila because we were so involved with the government of the Philippines. It was quite clear that there were opinions all up and down the line in the embassy but nobody felt free to ruminate, speculate, or analyze. We had some detailed reports of the government in one state or another, but nothing that really gave the kind of insight that we had in Malaysia. So, it was a very interesting experience. I had a wonderful boss, Dick Stewart, responsible for Southeast Asia who really taught me how to write.
*Q: This is so important.*

LOW: He was patient but very demanding. I won't say that I became a brilliant writer, but he certainly pointed me in the right direction. One of the best parts of that job was that I got to know the desk officers in the Department. We were then in the old SA-1 building, the big, tall building overlooking the hole that they were punching in the ground to build new State. It was an interesting period.

*Q: I'm not too familiar with the exact dates, but I would think that you would have two things going on in Malaysia and in the Philippines. This would be insurrections, the Huks and Magsaysay. Also in Malaysia, you were having the insurrection. This was after the Geneva Accords or whatever dealing with Indochina and the division. The Korean War had not been that long ago. I would have thought that there would have been a lot of "whither Southeast Asia" here.*

LOW: Interestingly, these were quite separate. There was no bringing together of Southeast Asia. There was no relationship between the insurrection in Malaysia and what was going on in the Philippines, nor with Indochina that I could see at that level. I did find that we would go into a National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) meeting and there would be 40 people in the room. Not many of those 40 knew a lot about the Philippines. I was doing a great deal of the basic drafting of our Philippine analyses and writing some of the papers. I remember writing a paper on Malaysia which was, I think, fairly critical of Lee Kuan Yew. It was just before he was to make his first visit to the United States. Rufus Smith was the desk officer. He called me on a Sunday morning saying that he had just read my paper and respectfully requested that I withdraw it. I had a lot of respect for Rufus who knew his business very well. So I said, "Sure. Tell me why." He told me why. It made sense to me, so we withdrew it. And he was dead right in the end. That wasn't the last time in my career when I took the advice of persons who I thought knew what they were talking about, and did the right thing. Later as ambassador and negotiator during the Zimbabwe peace settlement I desisted from sending in some hastily thought out ideas on the basis of the tough advice of my staff. The same was true of the decision in 1987 on the best design to be selected for the new Foreign Service Institute when the architects on the selection board steered me away from my interest in the most space for the least money toward what turned to be a wonderfully designed set of buildings.

*Q: This would be stirring up the waters.*

LOW: Yes. I think Lee Kuan Yew was creating problems for the U.S. at that point and my paper was more critical of him than Rufus felt it should be. Talking to him, it made sense. We were right to change it.

*Q: Could you explain who Lee Kuan Yew was at that time?*

LOW: He was prime minister of the government of Singapore. He was considered by us to be too sympathetic to the left and too confrontational. He was a difficult person. I knew the desk people for the Philippines, Dave Cuthell and Bob Foulon, quite well. On one occasion, when both of them were away, I sat in over in State as the Philippine desk officer. So, I really got a wonderful exposure to the way the Department operated.

*Q: Was Magsaysay there?*

LOW: That was the period when Magsaysay was president of the Philippines. He was killed in an air crash. I remember going over to the desk and helping write letters of

condolence. Though I was primarily involved in research analysis in both countries, I was able to get some idea of what the operational side of the Department was doing. It was an a very good first assignment.

*Q: With the Philippines, what was the feeling about, while Magsaysay was there, his leadership? After Magsaysay's death, what was the feeling?*

LOW: He was clearly our golden boy; a very impressive figure. He was an intelligent, non-corrupt, and strong leader who could have developed the Philippines and our relationship with it in a very positive way. So, it was a great tragedy. The old political class was still there and ready to take his place. Some were better than the others, but none had the vigor, leadership quality, or standard of values that Magsaysay had. So, it was a great blow.

*Q: You had studied the Philippines quite closely for your dissertation and then on the desk on the INR side. Did you see a problem of not having been there and not having that finger feel?*

LOW: Yes and no. There is no question that you would know the detail better, you would be able to analyze the day to day happenings better if you had experience on the ground. In the first place, I had the benefit of the reporting, which was not enormously analytical, but it gave you a lot of the factual background of what was happening. So, you weren't entirely without that. The expression "A little knowledge is a dangerous thing" is a fair expression, but I've always felt that a little knowledge is better than no knowledge. Every little bit is helpful. I had somewhat more than I would have had otherwise, but it has to be put in context.

*Q: Did you have to deal with old Philippine hands there with the "little brown brothers," which was the expression of our colonial time? Were they hanging around? I'm thinking particularly of the Department of the Interior or the Army?*

LOW: I didn't. The two desk officers were first-class people who were good analysts with prior service in the Philippines which had given them an understanding of modern Philippine problems. I think they are the ones who had to deal with the old stereotypes. I didn't in INR. Nor did I have enough time on the desk to do so. The desk officers would not have given me responsibility for dealing with the Pentagon. The contact I had with the military through INR was with pretty sophisticated officers who were beyond those stereotypes. I did find it many years later in some of the old timers in the Philippines when I eventually got there, which wasn't until my last assignment in the Foreign Service 30 years later. But I was fascinated going to a conference in the Philippines with some of the old timers. They knew the country well and loved it. But they were the most extraordinarily patronizing people. I am speaking of foundation people and advisors in the mid-1980s. The State Department people, the young people who were running the thing, certainly were not burdened with that kind of attitude. They may have had to deal with it. I didn't.

*Q: From your perspective in INR, what about the role of the CIA?*

LOW: As an analyst, you really didn't have that much involvement. I can't throw any light on it. This was the operational side. I think quite properly, the analyst is kept out of it. You're trying to look at the broader picture, of what the major trends are, what the longer-term picture is. I think that we just weren't involved in the Agency's activities. I think we benefitted from that. So far as the analytical side of the Agency is concerned, my recollection is that they were pretty competent.

*Q: I was wondering about reports that came in.*

LOW: It's interesting. My recollection looking back is that we gave much more weight to the Foreign Service reporting. Even in the Philippines, the despatches that came in and described what was happening were of much more value than the spot reports that came from the CIA. The CIA then as always was preoccupied with the Soviet Union. That wasn't what we were primarily interested in. I don't recall that we had any great disputes with my colleagues when we had our interagency meetings. I don't think they knew a great deal about Philippine political history. They didn't really have the same background. There were no issues of interpretation on which we divided that I remember.

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*Q: Today is the fifth of December. I'm not quite sure how it was picked out, but next Monday, they're having a meeting for the 50th anniversary of INR. What were you doing? Can you describe the role that you saw of INR both on Malaysia and the Philippines as opposed to what the desk was doing?*

LOW: Our effort was to try to analyze what was happening in the direction of events. We had two different functions. One was spot analysis and the other was the National Intelligence Estimates (NIEs) that were much less helpful in my view. They were supposed to be important, but I think by the time all the compromises had been made, the things that everyone could most easily agree on were straight-line projections and not as insightful as the spot things we wrote. We had a free hand to write spot reports on whatever we saw that we thought was of importance and interest. It might be five, six, seven, or eight pages. I think the product was fairly good. Based on the reporting, it was often of a kind that we knew was of some interest to the desk and above, up to the assistant secretary level. We knew they weren't reading every word, but we also knew that they took the reports fairly seriously. Then we had the daily briefing every morning. We would do the papers that would be given to the briefer who would go to the Secretary. The number of times that there was a Philippine or Malaysian item for the Secretary's briefing weren't very many, but there were a few. I think we were filling in an analytical niche that was useful.

*Q: It really is almost the only place in the Foreign Service that institutionally allows somebody to figure out where you're going. The desk officer is filled with writing letters of condolence or answering things.*

LOW: And negotiating with the Interior, the Treasury, and so forth. I enjoyed it. I think it's

a wonderful experience for anybody who is interested in political or economic reporting. I felt very lucky to have been shoved into that.

*Q: We've been talking mainly about the Philippines. Were there any events in Malaysia during this time that particularly engaged our interest?*

LOW: No, it was the ongoing war against the largely Chinese guerillas, fought by the British supported to some degree by the Malaysians, and the beginning of the development of an independent Singapore and Malaysia. It was important to me because another experience was learning how the important decisions are made. I developed my car pool analysis technique. My life was powerfully influenced by car pools. The Philippine desk officer, Bob Foulon, and German desk officer, Peter Hooper, car-pooled to the Department together. One morning Peter announced he was to be assigned to open a post in Kampala, Uganda, and asked Bob whether he knew any young officer who might be willing to go along? That's how my career then moved to Africa: through a car pool decision.

*Q: One of the people I've interviewed said that he learned that if you wanted to get something cleared, find out who was in the car pool and then delay the clearance until just before 5:00 pm or so and you knew that the car pool people were in a hurry, so you could move things through.*

LOW: I think they're more positive than that. It's a shame that car pools practically don't exist anymore. Maybe it's just at a different level they don't exist. We fought the Vietnam War in a car pool day after day. I think a lot of opinion forming occurred in car-pools and certainly a lot of personnel arrangements were made in them. I have a feeling that a lot of telegrams were drafted and cleared in car pools too. It was an important institutional factor in Washington in those days. So, it was arranged that I meet Peter. It was an interesting time. Sue was pregnant with our first child. We had invited friends to dinner but they never showed up. We sat down and ate both dinners. And took the time, which you normally don't have, to talk through whether or not we wanted to go to Kampala, Uganda. When Bob Foulon had mentioned the possibility of Kampala, I had replied, "Where is that?" "It's in the middle of Africa." "Oh." I told Sue about it that evening while we were washing dishes. Her reaction was, "Well?" Taken aback I replied, "Well, I don't know. I never considered it." "Well, maybe we ought to," was her response. She brought back a couple of books, among the few on Uganda in the Library of Congress where she was working. The more we read, the bigger our eyes got. So, when our friends didn't show up for dinner, we had a chance to talk it through. We decided that even though both our parents were getting along and we were about to have a child, if they asked us, we'd go. So when we ran into Peter the next Sunday, at Bob's house, he asked us if we would go and we replied with a positive yes. He was so taken aback with our reply that six months later, we were on our way to Kampala.

It proved to be a wonderful learning experience. Not many people are given the chance to be "DCM" [deputy chief of mission] in their first overseas assignment - this being a two-man post. Peter, the consul, said at the beginning, "I'm going to do the political work and you do all the rest." The young staff and I puzzled through the consular manual and

issued immigrant visas, non-immigrant visas, and protection, economic reporting, and anything else that was needed. I remember one period, when our both our one secretary and Peter were away, Sue, as our interim secretary had to decode the incoming message using the terribly time-consuming one-time-pad system for which she had been specially cleared.

A little over a year after we arrived, the post received its first inspection. I remember being enormously impressed by the inspection process. The chief inspector was Phil Sprouse, an ambassador in Cambodia. His attitude was "Here are people trying to work out how to set up a post as best they can. I'll use my experience to help them." He was great. It was one of the most positive experiences of my career. He and his administrative assistant went through much of what we had done pointing where we were right, sometimes suggesting alternatives, and sometimes showing us where we had made mistakes. Their attitude was positive and constructive. The experience gave us a great boost, and I think we came out of it quite well.

The consul, Peter Hooper, was one of the best people the Foreign Service produced. He was a remarkable man who had the great talent of being able to discover in everybody he met what it was that they were particularly good at, what they particularly knew or understood. People would go in to see him and I'd think, "How can he possibly spend all that time with that person when he has so much else to do?" But when they'd come out, Peter would share with me the most remarkable insights that he gained from that conversation. He was an enormously talented person, a great diplomat. He didn't have his wife with him and he had three children. So, we were very busy helping with family matters.

*Q: You were in Kampala from when to when?*

LOW: 1957-1959.

*Q: Could you give me a little feeling about what you were getting up in the corridors of the State Department in this 1957 period about Africa as a place to go? There was a time when this as really quite exciting.*

LOW: This was before that. When I was in INR, the decision had been taken to open four new posts in 1957; Yaounde, Kampala, Brazzaville, and Abidjan. Bob Foulon, the Philippine desk officer got so much involved in communicating between Peter Hooper, who was going to Kampala, and me that he got interested himself and he went out to open Yaounde. Walt Cutler went out as his deputy. So, we all knew each other. There was an interest, but it was still a kind of hypothetical interest. Joe Palmer was the Acting Assistant Secretary for African Affairs. This was a little before the great excitement over Africa showed itself. That was stimulated in large part by the appearance of the first few African independent countries, starting with Ghana, which began in 1960. So, this was the very, very beginning. One of the interesting moments for me was when Peter went home on home leave and they called a chief of missions conference. So, in my first assignment overseas, I went as (acting) chief of mission to Lourenzo Marques, Mozambique. It was a heady experience for a young Foreign Service officer. Along with each senior

representative to an African country I gave a short presentation on Uganda. It was a fascinating country, distinguished from Tanzania and Kenya by the fact that non-native born persons were not permitted to own land there. As a result, there were fewer racial problems than in the other two countries. On the other hand, in many ways, it was less developed than the other two - wealthier because of coffee, but less developed. For us, it was an absolutely fascinating experience.

The lack of contact or knowledge between the U.S. and Uganda was profound. I remember a seminar on the U.S. which the USIA representative set up in Mbale in eastern Uganda. My wife and I both spoke. Someone in the audience asked how the people in Indiana communicated with the people in Ohio. We realized that they saw the United States as a number of separate tribal "Red Indian" communities ruled over by white governors sent out by Washington. It was just extraordinary how little understanding there was. The man who helped us in the kitchen had to be shown how to use a screwdriver. On the other hand there were some very sophisticated Ugandans. One of our very good friends was the first woman Ugandan to graduate from Oxford. She was a member of the legislature and a very capable person. She became director of the only girls high school in the country. She was married to a Tanzanian from our house.

The diplomatic community was small. The "dean" of the corps was a very bright and able Sudanese from the south of his country. The only other professional diplomat was the Indian. Then the Portuguese and perhaps one other country had honorary consuls. It was very friendly and informal. Relations between us and the British were friendly, but sometimes a little strained. The government and senior officers in London understood why we were there - because we could see independence coming and wanted to begin making contact, understanding the country's dynamics and establishing friendly relations. Some members of the Colonial Service harbored suspicions that we wanted to replace them in Africa. It was not always easy to convince them that we had no desire to assume responsibility there. Good relations between the British and independent Africa were very much in our interest. We might be able to help that but we hoped they would continue to exercise a supportive relationship. At one point, the British Chief Secretary (senior career official, second to the Governor) who was a very tall, gruff man, called me in to his office in Entebbe where the government was and said he had understood that I had been quoted as being in favor of early Ugandan independence. This was something that I certainly never would have said. I have no idea where he got the idea, but I can remember him shaking a bony finger in my face and saying, "Young man, this country is not going to be independent for at least 25 years." Of course, it was independent three years later. Then he added, "We're not going to make any concessions by bringing Ugandans into government until they fully merit it." Of course, the upshot was that at the time of independence there were few Africans in positions of responsibility. But there were many younger officers in the British Colonial Service who were much more forward thinking. We got to know some of them quite well. There was a fair amount of interracial socializing. We used to have square dances at the house which proved quite popular and allowed us to make some good friends among both the African community and many of the British residents.

*Q: During this 1957-1959 period, what was the status of Uganda?*

LOW: Uganda was a British protectorate with a British governor. There were no Africans in senior positions. It's hard for me to remember where the most senior African official would have been. Mostly clerks. There were, however, a number of well-qualified, intelligent, well-educated Africans in the Legislative Council. We got to know many of them. We began our exchange program, sending some of them to the United States. I picked Milton Obote and sent him to the United States on a one of the first "Leader Grants" from Uganda. He subsequently became the first prime minister of Uganda.

*Q: As far as you and Peter Hooper were concerned, at that point, how were you looking at Uganda as a place that really was going to be independent? Were you getting this feeling that Africa was really going to start to change or not?*

LOW: Oh yes. It was clear that the independence movement in Africa was gaining momentum. But I don't think even we thought it would be that rapid. Again, some of my British friends were very suspicious of us and felt we were trying to undermine their authority, which of course was the opposite of our concern. We wanted continuing progress towards greater African representation, involvement, and participation in the government in cooperation with the British government, which had a lot to offer in terms of material help and experience. Our concern was to keep things moving so that they never exploded; so that there was positive progress towards the self government which was inevitable. I think our interest was actually in the British long-term interest. A lot of the younger British people who were there shared that point of view. We worked very easily with them. It was, for the most part, a very positive experience.

*Q: What about the upper echelon of the British Colonial Service? Did they sort of feel their time and come and passed?*

LOW: No, not at all. The previous governor to Uganda, Sir Andrew Cohen, had been a very political Laborite who had had a very important role in moving British thought ahead, but the current governor, Crawford, was a little old-fashioned and seemed to be largely motivated, along with his chief secretary, to slow things down as much as possible. To do him justice, there was merit in seeing that the process toward self-government was as orderly and positive as possible, and that there was time to prepare the Africans properly. But the Colonial Service leaders thought they had even more time than we did, and, as I say even we didn't realize how fast things were moving. They really didn't do nearly enough to prepare the Africans for the responsibilities they were going to have to assume very soon. That was unfortunate.

*Q: What about reverberations from what was happening in Kenya? The Mao Mao thing was going and all that.*

LOW: Very little. The problems in Uganda were really quite different. They were interracial between the Indian population and the Africans. Towards the end of the period we were there, there was an indigenous African revolt against Indian merchants. They were the middlemen in the economy. Nobody I knew really understood what was going on. Who

was behind the violence, how it was organized, or what its real aims were. It seemed to be an emotional reaction rather than a well-organized and planned political movement with a clear cut objective. We had no handle on what the phenomenon was and how to deal with it, any more than the British did. Fortunately, it eventually petered out. But these were the days when Idi Amin was being formed.

*Q: Did he ever cross your radar?*

LOW: No, he was a sergeant at that point. But he was formed out of that anti-Indian revolt.

*Q: And was eventually essentially expelled. Were you able to get around much there?*

LOW: Oh, yes, we traveled a lot. I have always believed that it is terribly important to know the whole countryside, not just the capital city in any country. We visited almost every part of Uganda as well as part of Rwanda-Burundi and the eastern Belgian Congo.

*Q: Did you have any dealings with the Sudan?*

LOW: Only that the dean of the diplomatic corps was a Sudanese. He had arrived a little before us. He was a very impressive gentleman from the southern part of the Sudan where he had been a district commissioner under the British. We had an occasional American wander across the border and we dealt with that, but we were pretty isolated.

*Q: When you reported, did you report to London or back to Washington?*

LOW: To Washington. We would repeat everything to London, but the embassy in London played no role at all in our activities or reporting. It was entirely Washington. There was no bureau of African Affairs in the State Department then. Our "desk" was in the Bureau of Near East and African Affairs. Our people had to struggle to be heard. A Bureau of African Affairs was created toward the end of the time I was in Uganda. Joe Satterthwaite was the first assistant secretary of the bureau. That gave us a voice at a higher level.

*Q: Did you feel at all the hand of Washington on you or were you just sort of reporting?*

LOW: No, we didn't receive a lot of direction from Washington except in one area. Quite unexpectedly, as far as we were concerned, the Brussels headquarters of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) decided to open a training center for African trade unionists in Kampala. It was motivated partly to encourage the principle of collective bargaining and responsible employee – employer relations, but primarily, I believe, to steal a march on the Communist dominated World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) which was focusing on the labor movement to make contact and encourage opposition to the U.S. and former colonial powers. The ICFTU saw the creation of a labor college in Africa as a way to create influence, though how and why Kampala was picked I have no idea. But International Labor Affairs in the Department of Labor was very interested in the development, as was the State Department to a lesser degree. We received instructions to follow developments and report as much as we could. I knew very little about international

labor affairs. But the consul, Peter Hooper, told me, "You do it." I suddenly discovered that I was spending half of my time on international labor affairs. I got to know the labor movement in Uganda, which of course was in its infancy. The Ugandan Trade Union Council (TUC) had a delightful man as its president. I got to know him well and introduced him widely. I think the British were a little uncomfortable with our close contact with him, but there was no real problem. It was a very rudimentary labor union. I can remember the time he came to my house with a long face. I said, "What's the matter?" He said, "We're wiped out." I said, "What happened?" He said, "We paid for the Volkswagen that the company had given us for transportation. We paid for its upkeep from the product of my fish pond. A python got in and ate all the fish, so we have no income for the Trade Union Council of Uganda and no way to maintain our vehicle anymore." We sympathized with him, but there wasn't much we could do. The Uganda TUC was a very small organization in those days.

I had little understanding of the politics of the ICFTU's efforts to set up a school. At that point, I wrote to the African Bureau, "Look, I don't know anything about international trade union politics. Is there a one or two week course I could take to learn a little more?" Then to my utter amazement, we got a letter saying I was assigned to the first year of the newly created State Department "Labor Rotation Training Course," run largely by International Labor Affairs in the Labor Department. My query had arrived in the Department just as it was gearing up a program to train Foreign Service officers to be labor attachés. The first class was made up of four Foreign Service officers who would take a one year course in labor affairs including both the U.S. and international trade union movement. Besides me there was Ernie Nagy, Harold Aisley, and Sam Janney. It was quite an intense experience. We got to know each other well. We were all very different, but we got to know each other well. Each contributed to our joint learning process. The department assigned a very bright, mid-career officer, Parke Massey to lead the course. As someone with experience in labor affairs and a wide knowledge base he was a great help. So, I went back to Washington for my next assignment, which again, I found most interesting. It was there that I first met many of the people whom I know to this day: Morris Weisz, Phil Kaiser, and others. The course was administered by a Foreign Service officer, but Morris Weisz and Phil Kaiser did the teaching. It was part academic (Phil was then at American University), part labor movement, part Labor Department (Murray Weisz was an assistant secretary). I worked in the Labor Department for a few months; went to New York with the IBEW [International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers] for a couple of weeks; worked with the labor relations office of Sherwin Williams Paint Co. in Cleveland for another two weeks, and spent the last few weeks before our next assignment working with Oliver Peterson, labor advisor to the African Bureau. During the year I had became increasingly interested in the subject of African labor and its role in the independence movement. That resulted in writing a chapter on African labor for a book that a colleague of Phil's was getting together on national labor movements. It was an interesting year, which I thoroughly enjoyed.

*Q: That would have been 1959-1960.*

LOW: Right. And it led to my assignment as labor officer in Dakar, Senegal with responsibility for all of French speaking West Africa except Guinea.

*Q: When you came back to Washington and were taking this labor assignment, what was the attitude of people you knew in the Foreign Service about a labor assignment?*

LOW: I don't recall any institutional feeling about the subject. This was, after all, a period in which labor had become a very influential factor in world politics. The labor movement in Europe played a major role in stabilizing the continent. To many thoughtful people, it was a serious and interesting subject. While I don't think many of my colleagues in the Service were closely associated, I don't think there was a stigma attached to it in any sense. It was a tool of analysis and influence and an important one. Of course, going into African affairs, where it was a brand new field, it opened up all kinds of opportunities. I found myself in Senegal as our first labor officer. I think two labor officers were assigned to West Africa. One went to Guinea, where Sekou Toure wanted a labor officer. I had the rest of French-speaking West Africa, which wasn't very fair, but was very interesting for me.

*Q: Before we go to Senegal, what was your impression of the training for the labor officers.*

LOW: I think it was excellent. We got a fair amount of history of the labor movement in the United States, as well as regulations, NLRB [National Labor Relations Board], and so forth. There was plenty of exposure to the labor movement. At that point, we had another great advantage. All labor affairs was influenced by the division within in the AFL-CIO [American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations]. You were either an AF of L or you were CIO person. Once you got that stamp, nothing you could do would overcome it with the other side. We weren't tarred with that brush. We were seen as relatively impartial and were careful to steer an unaffiliated course. It gave us a great advantage. Also, I think there was a certain feeling of respect within the labor movement for foreign affairs professionals. We had an expertise that they respected and so we were not too affected by the division. In general, we were able to operate fairly freely and fairly easily within the labor movement. Of course our not being part of the labor union movement had its drawbacks too. We were never completely trusted by union officials, but had an advantage in the international community. I think it was a very good move - interesting and helpful. The Labor Department had a seat on promotion boards and looked out for the people doing its work very well.

*Q: Did you get caught up in the Cold War focus of Irving Brown?*

LOW: Irving Brown and his successors were preoccupied with the Cold War to the extent that they would sometimes put it above local considerations. We tried to say, "Look, when there is clear Communist involvement, fine. But often there wasn't." The labor movements in Africa were essentially nationalist organizations. Many times when they received help from the Soviets, the Africans were using them more than they were being used. That was not always an easy point to convince some of the trade union people of. We simply weren't as terrified of all leftist activity as some of our trade union colleagues were.

*Q: Did you find yourself having to prove your anti-communist credentials?*

LOW: I don't think so. I was always very, very skeptical of the charges. I don't think we paid much attention. We were much too busy doing our jobs to be concerned with that kind of thing. We wouldn't have accepted it. There was no questioning of loyalty. It was accepted that we were there to try to understand what was happening in the countries we were accredited to or assigned to report on. We were also there to explain to them what U.S. policy was and why we took the positions we did. I just think that it was a period that was past. It was an aberration and I don't think that anybody looked over our shoulders, nor were we concerned, or had any question about the loyalty and integrity of our colleagues. I don't think anybody really thought of us as being leftist. We were not pinkos. We may have been pinkos to some people, but not to the labor movement. We didn't really have to spend a lot of time defending ourselves. We did find ourselves trying to bring some balance to what they were doing. But in general, we worked fairly easily with them. They were delighted to have somebody to help them understand the local situations and introduce them to local labor officials. I went from country to country getting to know local trade union officials. It was one of the more interesting periods of my career being able to go to Abidjan, Cotonou, Niamey (Niger), each of these French-speaking countries and meet the trade union people there and figure out what their organization was, what issues they were facing, and then write the very first labor reports for each country.

*Q: When you were in labor training, did you still sort of belong to AF [Bureau of African Affairs]? Was that your home base?*

LOW: I guess so. The labor advisor was a remarkable man named Ollie Peterson, Esther Peterson's husband. Esther was then beginning her very extraordinary career which lead her to become the first consumer advisor to the President. Ollie was a wonderful person whom I was very fond of and respected. I think I was considered an AF person being trained to go back to African Affairs. It never occurred to me that I wouldn't. This was an interesting and important time to do so. I used that period to become familiar with the history of the labor movement in Africa and to write a little about it because it was so little known. By the time I went back, I found myself fairly knowledgeable on the subject and with the tools that I needed to analyze intelligently what was happening in these countries. I would write up a report on each country (sometimes 20 pages), which was not a difficult thing to do. When I had visited them all, I proposed and got accepted a program of exchange visitors of these African trade union leaders to the United States. That worked very well.

*Q: This was while you were in labor training?*

LOW: No, this was when I was in Dakar.

*Q: You were in Labor training from 1959-1960. You were keeping in touch with the Africa Bureau. What was the spirit towards Africa? Did you see it change from the time you first went out to Kampala to two years later? Things were moving rapidly. What about Africa as a place to go, the development of an African specialty and that sort of thing?*

LOW: It was an interesting time to be involved in African affairs. Things were happening

very fast. The independence movement gathered speed even quicker than we had expected. And there was a lot of curiosity about what was happening. We were ahead of the game. We had an idea of what was going on, and had experience on the ground. The romanticism that grew up around Africa came a little later. It wasn't until perhaps the late 60's that large numbers of officers entering the Foreign Service began asking for African assignments. We sometimes found ourselves at odds with a very vocal element within the U.S. academic community. It was an interesting debate. These early experts were convinced that the future belonged to the very left-wing initial leaders of African independence - Modibo Keita, Sekou Toure, Kwame Nkrumah, and so forth. They were often the ones writing the books and articles and directing the academic associations. Many others in the community were not convinced of this argument but were less vocal. Those of us who had spent time on the continent did not agree. We saw the strength of the more conservative, tribal, sometimes religious leaders, outside the capitals. I think to this day that is the biggest and the most difficult problem in dealing with Africa: the balance between the urban, more radical group and the conservative, rural, traditional leadership. In each of the four African countries in which I've served, the former colonial power, the British, the Rhodesians, the French, would try to explain to us newcomers this balance. They were always on the much more conservative side, saying, "Sonny boy, let me explain to you how Africa works." You'd listen politely to them and then you'd listen to the academics in this country, who were a little arrogant about the future belonging to the radicals. It was very difficult to bridge that gulf. I think we were right, but it was a tough argument. I do not believe that any non-African can really understand this tension or balance between the traditional and modern in Africa. The successful African politicians know how to balance the two – like Leopold Senghor. The problem contributed to my own conviction about the importance of traveling outside the capitals in Africa. If you didn't understand how the people in Benue in central Nigeria saw life and what motivated them, if you didn't understand when you were talking to somebody from Benue in Lagos, that the things he or she was most concerned about were the three rival tribal factions in Benue, it would often be difficult to have an interesting conversation. But if you began your conversation by talking knowledgeably about local politics, the level of conversation was much more meaningful. You could really engage them in serious conversation about what was important to them and what they really felt.

On the other hand, it was a terrible mistake to see African politics as based entirely on the marabous and chiefs, the traditional elements. The radical urban community and its leadership was clearly the most dynamic element in society. They were going to take the initiatives, successful or not. How you balanced your analysis was the real issue that we had to be weighing constantly.

*Q: Did you feel that you were getting your training from the labor people, that they were developing any sort of sensitivity towards the African labor movement as being something different?*

LOW: No, they often took the position that it was the same as the labor movement everywhere else in the world. That wasn't the case. These were really social organizations. True, they were based on workers, but their motivation was not the same kind of economic

motivation. They were more politically than economically directed. And they were used by the politically ambitious elements in society as a political ladder to power. It was a very different kind of organization from trade unions in the United States or Europe. That was difficult to get people to understand.

*Q: You went where as a labor attaché?*

LOW: We went to Dakar, Senegal. The position was called labor officer. We then had two boys. The third was born while we were there. Within a week of getting there a telegram arrived saying we had been transferred to Abidjan because the under secretary for administration, Loy Henderson, who had just completed a trip to Africa decided that the labor function should be moved to Abidjan. This was the famous trip to decide what U.S. representation in Africa should be. Henderson recommended, quite correctly, that we needed representation in every country. It didn't seem to me that it made sense to move the labor function to Abidjan. By far the more dynamic labor elements were in Senegal. As the old capital of French West Africa Dakar was more influential and better situated transportationwise than Abidjan. Besides, we were there and not anxious to move again. So, we appealed the directive and got it reversed. We stayed in Dakar, from which I operated, but I only remained in the labor function for a year and a half. This would have been in 1960 and 1961. Sometime in 1962, a new ambassador was appointed to replace Henry Villard who had been relieved because of frictions which developed during a visit by Vice President Lyndon Johnson, largely related to the overweening attitudes of his wife. To my great surprise, his replacement turned out to be Phil Kaiser, who had been my professor for the labor training course and a good friend. He also had been slightly skeptical of the new interest in Africa. As soon as the embassy political officer position became vacant a few months later, he got me transferred out of labor affairs, which he considered a dead end in the career, to the political job and we got a new labor officer.

*Q: Just to complete this, you stayed in Dakar until when?*

LOW: 1963. I had been assigned to the Federation du Mali, a fragile federal union of the former Senegal and Mali. The president was the Malian leader, Modibo Keita, and the prime minister was the Senegalese leader, Leopold Sedar Senghor. But the experiment broke up even before we arrived. I traveled a great deal during this assignment - for the first year and a half through out French-speaking West Africa (except Guinea where there was a separate labor officer) and then after that through the three countries to which I was assigned as political officer.

*Q: Let's talk about the labor side first. How did you operate there? How did one get started?*

LOW: You got to know the labor leaders. My attention went to workers organizations rather than industrial relations or questions of manpower. It was the politics that was important. I tried to get to know and explain to Washington who the leaders in each country were and what their role in society was. So, there was a lot to do. It was a very rewarding time.

*Q: Did the employers occupy much of a role or was the labor movement almost beyond that?*

LOW: The labor movements were essentially political organizations created to represent African aspirations. They did some collective bargaining, but their focus was much more on social and political conditions of the African population.

*Q: Did you see these labor movements going in any direction? Were we concerned about finding a Red under ever bed?*

LOW: No. We were concerned with taking them for what they were, political organizations, and getting to know the people and seeing how they related to the power structure in each of the countries. I had a pretty free hand to do what I wanted; to see and report on what I thought was important; and to set up the programs I thought could be useful and important in terms of our understanding of African dynamics and their understanding of U.S. issues and policies. The process, it seemed would inevitably serve to increase our influence. I don't think I ever got any instructions from Washington on what to do. You just found your own way. And Washington seemed to be pleased with the results.

*Q: Was Sekou Toure there?*

LOW: He was in Guinea. As soon as he became president, the labor movement there was turned into an instrument of government. That was true in other countries too but not to such an exclusive degree. In other countries, like Senegal, the political parties attempted to assimilate the unions and exercised the control.

*Q: Who were the leaders that you dealt with?*

LOW: My dealings were on the level of trade union leaders. Senghor in Senegal and Houphouet Boigny in Abidjan were way above the level I was in contact with.

*Q: Both Senghor and Houphouet Boigny had very solid French credentials. Did that show a reflection into the labor movement and their relationship or not?*

LOW: The French certainly were suspicious of my contacts with the labor movement. Every once in a while, our embassy would receive an informal inquiry or even a note from the foreign ministry suggesting I limit my activities and geographic travel. On one occasion, I had a rather bad automobile accident way out in the “bush” near the Senegal River. The vibrations set up by an absolutely straight, but corduroy dirt road broke the front axle of the jeep station wagon I was riding in. The vehicle rolled over a couple of times and I got quite a cut on my head. The foreign ministry said that if I had informed them where I was going, the accident might not have occurred. Privately, they told us that their reaction was generated by some of our French friends. But for the most part, they pretty well let me alone and we had no serious problems. I suspect my activities were a great deal more innocent than they imagined.

*Q: How were you received by the labor leaders?*

LOW: I think as a friend, but also a United States representative rather than a trade unionist or as a labor leader. I was simply the member of the embassy who had been assigned to deal with them. But I was also seen as someone who could help, someone with knowledge and some experience in an area of their interest. So, as a source of information and help, they looked on me as sympathetic. That gave me entree.

*Q: Did you find there was a division here between a labor movement and people who were coming out of the French tradition and the American labor movement? From what I gather, the French labor movement is much more political than the American one. Ours is a more "practical" one of working rights. Did you find yourself playing any particular role because of these two?*

LOW: The French colonial government did its best to keep the metropolitan unions out of the colonies because of their deep divisions and the dominance of the Communist Trade Union (CGT) in France. The colonial governments wanted neither the Communists nor their Soviet colleagues with their left-wing ideas and support for independence to play a role in the colonies. The governments were not entirely successful, of course. The CGT and Communists in France were able to make contact and influence the many Africans in France who provided a channel of communication. However the French labor institutions were not reflected in the colonies as was the case in British Africa. The reflection of the Cold War in France did not extend to the colonies. The issues were much more local and related to domestic politics, including the independence movement. Because I was traveling in West Africa, setting up the exchange program and then moved into political affairs, I never got a chance to know the Senegalese trade union movement very well. In general, one could say that the experience in both French and British Africa was much more African than it was a reflection of European structures or attitudes.

*Q: Did you find the ability to give travel grants a nice tool to work with?*

LOW: Yes, it was very helpful and it was important to give Africans who were going to have an influence in their societies a broader vision of what the world was like. The program was helpful in doing that and doing it in a meaningful way with a section of our society that was sympathetic and not overburdened by foreigners. One of our great talents is our personal hospitality. Through their intimate contact with this part of America, they made close personal ties and learned a lot that was valid including something about our racial problems, which was helpful. They saw that this was indeed a problem, but that we were working on it. I think they gained perspective on this country that was very important in their later positions.

*Q: We are talking about the era (1960-1963) of civil rights and the efforts there. Did you find yourself spending a good bit of time trying to explain what was going on in the United States?*

LOW: The Africans were unquestionably interested and puzzled by it. It was a difficult issue. On the one hand, they had great sympathy for the black population in the United States. However, they wanted to be treated as representatives of their country and to deal with people of equivalent status in the United States who, for the most part, were white. So theirs was a mixed feeling. They were concerned with the racial prejudice they saw, but it didn't dominate their thinking, as exclusively as one might have thought. They criticized both white and black attitudes, whites for their prejudices and blacks for accepting it. But they were primarily interested in the country as a powerful, modern nation and they wanted to get to know and be taken seriously by its leaders.
*Q: When you became a political officer, your broad representation was cut down to one country, wasn't it?*

LOW: No, I had responsibility for political reporting in Senegal, The Gambia, and Portuguese Guinea which represented the three African colonial traditions: Portuguese Guinea, British Gambia, and French Senegal. I found it an interesting opportunity to compare the long-term differences between those very different colonial systems. And very different they were. I was always impressed with the profound difference between the French and British racial and political attitudes towards Africa. The French saw no inherent difference between Africans and Europeans, but the only civilization of value was that which existed between the Seine and the Marne. As a result, the French strictly prohibited Romanization of the African languages ("dialects"). The British, on the other hand saw a profound difference between the African and European, and believed that Africans should be trained to live as a part of African society. They therefore did nothing to interfere with the missionary's zeal to Romanize African languages and provide as quickly as possible African language bibles. In French Africa a person could only be literate in French, schools only taught French, and the number of literate Africans was small, perhaps not much more than 10 percent, but they were very good. As everyone knew, Senghor had been assigned the job of correcting the French of the 4th French Republic's constitution. While in British Africa, people quickly became literate in the vernaculars, a literature grew up and newspapers flourished. Each approach had its arrogance and its realism. The Portuguese tended towards the French approach and a few Africans, or often mixed bloods, attained high levels of (Portuguese) education.

Again, I did the first reporting from Portuguese Guinea where a guerilla war for independence going on. On occasion, the airplane I was in was shot at. I visited there two or three times and also to The Gambia where I also wrote some of the first reports. I found that great fun. The leading African political figure in The Gambia was Jawara. I happened to have been visiting on election day in which his party won the majority. I still have movies of that first celebration by Jawara and his party. He was to rule The Gambia until just a few years ago. I think I was one of the first Americans to make contact with him. I also went over to Cape Verde Islands, although just in passing. I didn't do any reporting from there. I went to Mauritania. We were setting up a consulate which very soon became an embassy with Bill Eagleton as chargé.

*Q: How about the Portuguese fighting there? How did we see that?*

LOW: The question really was, how is it going to turn out? This was one of the cases where I was not as perceptive as I might have been. It looked like the Portuguese government could withstand the rebellion for quite some time. I think it might have been able to had not the government later been overthrown in Portugal in 1974. Actually, they were being pressed harder than I realized when I visited. I think they were less willing and less able to defend themselves in Portuguese Guinea than in any of their other colonies probably because there were fewer Portuguese settlers living there than in Angola or Mozambique. Again, things were moving faster than I realized. Of course, it being a government at war, my ability to meet any of the African leaders was nil. So, it was purely a Portuguese show. The African leadership was in exile, so there was no way for me to contact the other side.

*Q: When you were working there, did you go up to our embassy in Lisbon?*

LOW: No. My reports were among the very earliest done on the country on the spot. I don't believe the embassy in Lisbon was doing much on the subject.

*Q: Were there any major developments?*

LOW: One of the events that occurred during the time I was in Senegal was the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962. It was an interesting lesson in the importance and role of our embassies in countries that are not normally of vital interest to the United States. As far as the U.S. was concerned, the most important two events that occurred during that period related to crises in Berlin and Cuba. Senghor's role as an African leader in those two crises was of considerable importance to us. Early one morning our ambassador, Phil Kaiser, asked me to find a way to personally deliver an urgent letter to Senegalese president Senghor from President Kennedy. I got ahold of my contacts who arranged for me go to Senghor's residence. He was awakened and came out of his bedroom in a dressing gown where I gave him Kennedy's letter asking that he deny landing permission to Soviet aircraft flying to Cuba. The most direct way the Soviets could bring air power to bear on the U.S. during the Missile Crisis would have been by way of West Africa, using airports in either Senegal or Guinea as staging areas. Senghor recognized the importance of this to the U.S. and in a conversation with Kaiser acceded to our request. Sekou Toure did the same in Guinea. We had a less direct involvement in the Berlin Wall crisis, but it was a frequent subject of conversation, and we needed to be able to explain its importance and our actions. I learned two lessons from the occasion. Wherever you are, set up ahead of time a way to get to the chief of state in an emergency. It was a practice which stood me in good stead a number of times after that. The other lesson concerned the old argument over the need for generalists or specialists in representation abroad. It was clear to me that in order to represent the U.S. effectively, one absolutely had to understand the importance to of Cuba and Berlin to us, and be able to explain it convincingly to others. After that a knowledge of the local situation could be very useful in that and other regards. I've always felt that there is a case for broad-gauged officers who understand the importance of our world responsibilities. The academics, and to a lesser extent writers and media people, can spend their lives studying a certain tribe, country, or region, but that's only half our job. The other is to fully understand the dynamics of American society and its interests in their broadest context and be able to articulate and support them.

*Q: The Cuban Missile Crisis was in October of 1962. The Berlin Wall was sometime in late 1961. Is there anything we should discuss on this?*

LOW: One of the pleasures of Foreign Service life for me and I think for Susan was the opportunity which frequently fell to us to introduce the people and country where we were living to prominent Americans. In Senegal we spent a couple of delightful days with James Baldwin, taking him to the great mosque at Touba, one of the largest in the world, and introducing him to Africans. I also remember a number of Congressional visits which were almost always interesting and useful. One of those considered difficult was Senator Ellender from Louisiana, but he worked hard meeting people and explaining to everyone from Senghor on down the limits of U.S. aid and the need to rely on it sparingly. His visit made considerably easier our job of keeping down requests for aid and seeing that what was given was well used.

*Q: You left Senegal in 1963. Whither?*

LOW: Yes. We returned to an assignment in Washington as desk officer for Guinea and Mali affairs. I had already been to Bamako, Mali and was somewhat familiar with it. Before leaving Dakar, I went down to Conakry and spent a week or so down there with the ambassador and the team just looking around. Guinea was the only West African country not included in my responsibilities when I was a labor officer because another labor officer was assigned there.

*Q: Why?*

LOW: Because of Sekou Toure. The idea was that Toure who had been a trade union leader would be particularly interested in having contact with some one who knew the field well, and, it was felt, wouldn't want him to have responsibilities outside the country. So, the poor guy, who was a very bright, interesting man, was the labor officer for Guinea, period. I was the labor officer for all of French-speaking West Africa except for Guinea. To add insult to injury it was I who was going back to Washington to be the Guinea-Mali desk officer.

*Q: You say you spent how long there?*

LOW: I think I was there for a week.

*Q: What was your impression? We're talking about 1963.*

LOW: Guinea was the case of a country that had steadily deteriorated since independence. It showed how far a country which is tightly controlled can sink without there being any significant political reaction. I guess it's somewhat stabilized now, but it continued down for a long time from the point in 1950 when it was the jewel in the French West African crown. Sekou Toure blew hot and cold towards the U.S. and continued to beguile new assistant secretaries of State for African Affairs. He's a very earnest and intelligent man.

They would come back convinced that they could work with him. There would be a few months honeymoon and then it would go sour. This pattern repeated itself a number of times. Relations were improving at the time I visited.

Relations were not good with Mali and they got much worse during the time I was on the desk. It was an interesting time. Bob Pelletreau, my deputy on the desk, and I had a fascinating two years working together. But in those days, the sixth floor didn't really want to be bothered that much by these small countries, particularly the unfriendly ones, as both Guinea and Mali were. The initiatives often came from desk officers like us on the fourth floor. The question really was, how unfriendly could a country be and still continue to receive U.S. economic assistance? Our basic philosophy was that this was economic assistance and it was in our interest that the economies of these countries grow, whatever kind of government was in power. Our interests would best be served if we could establish a long-term trusting relationship or at least a long-term helpful relationship. But there was obviously a limit to that. To what degree could a government consciously lead opposition to American policies around the world and continue to receive aid? Bob and I reached the point where we decided that we just couldn't recommend continuation of the significant level of aid the U.S. was giving. We went up with recommendations, accepted at our office director's level and then by the assistant secretary, that we should be a little less forthcoming in the level of aid and only approve small projects which were obviously in everybody's interest. We cut back significantly on assistance level. Modibo Keita was president of Mali in that period; it was a difficult time.

*Q: You must have had screams and yells from our embassies? Had they reached their limit, too?*

LOW: It's interesting that we have always had extraordinarily able representation in Bamako, Mali. I've never quite understood why that should be. Number one, morale was always enormously high. The Malians may have had difficult leadership at that point, but as a people, they are hard-working, straightforward, attractive, and interesting. The embassy people and the diplomatic corps, in the early years, were living in one hotel. The dining room would have people from the Bloc seated on one side and from the western countries on the other side. They would pass in line. It was really quite an extraordinary thing. But our embassy people were able and tough-minded. They were not clientists pleading the cause of their country of assignment. Bill Handley had just become ambassador. They recognized and agreed that there was a limit to what we should be doing in the face of leadership that appeared to go out of its way to oppose U.S. positions all over the world.

*Q: You were there from 1963 until 1965. Was Soapy Williams there?*

LOW: He was the assistant secretary. Wayne Fredericks, an experienced and committed friend of Africa, was his deputy. Soapy was always a lively person to be dealing with. Bill Trimble was first the West Africa office director and then deputy assistant secretary. Trimble was an extraordinary man if a little old fashioned. I remember my first meeting with him. He warned me about two things - never put classified documents in the drawers

of your desk, and never use the word “feel” to mean think or believe. But he knew how to make decisions and take responsibility. He kept the Bureau going when he moved up to be deputy assistant secretary. While the others talked he moved things along. Leon Dorros, one of the ablest people I worked with in the Foreign Service, served as Trimble's deputy office director and then took over when Trimble moved upstairs. So at the working levels there were good people. Leon went to Greece where he was Henry Tasca’s DCM.

*Q: He was basically a Europeanist.*

LOW: Well, he had been an ambassador in Cambodia. He certainly wasn't an Africanist. But he had been around a long time. He was a clean desk man. You went in and laid a case out. He said "Yes" or "No." If you sent him a paper, it was through and up or back within a day. He facilitated movement rather than obstructing it. He would often just say yes to things that would amaze us. We would wonder what Soapy would think but he would say, "Don't worry about Soapy. I'll take care of that." And away we would go. He got more work done than the other two combined.

*Q: What about Soapy Williams?*

LOW: Ah, fun. The thing I guess most of us remember are the square dances. He would say, "We're going to invite the diplomatic corps for square dancing and all the desk officers are to be present." He would be the caller. Here were all these berobed, dignified ambassadors being directed by the Assistant Secretary to "Allemande left in the corners all; swing your partner right..." Soapy was barking it out and they were doing their best to follow. I had a good time, but I always wondered whether they really enjoyed this kind of thing. It would have been fine if Soapy hadn't been the caller. Soapy featured himself as a French speaker which often horrified us because his French was atrocious and he insisted on speaking it, not just for pleasantries, but during important and sometimes delicate conversations with a foreign diplomats. We knew that all kinds of misunderstandings were being built up, but in the end I suppose no great damage was done. He didn’t concern himself much with our part of West Africa. He focused primarily on Rhodesia and a few other questions. We didn't have a great deal of contact with him.

*Q: What was the problem with Sekou Toure? How was he unfriendly at this particular time?*

LOW: During the time I was involved our relations were comparatively easy. Sekou had just done us a great favor when he denied the Russians the right to resupply Cuba from Guinean air bases. Soapy was one of those assistant secretaries who was convinced that Sekou meant well, so our relations with Guinea were really improving. They had been pretty low. There was some hope that Sekou would turn around. He didn't do it, but at this point, he was much more cooperative. It was the Malians who were being more difficult.

*Q: What were the Malians doing?*

LOW: At the UN, they would not only vote against us, but they would organize opposition

to us on issues like Puerto Rico which the Malians didn't really know much about. It looked very much like deliberate provocation. At the Non-Aligned meetings, they took very aggressive leadership roles condemning and attacking United States positions around the world.

*Q: What did we see as American interests in those two places at that time?*

LOW: I think it was a generalized interest. Since they were both prominent leaders in the Non-Aligned movement, they were countries of some influence around the world. It's a derivative interest in the sense that they could help make our relations better or worse with countries that did matter. Some years later, Chet Crocker, then Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, put it well by saying that the policies we follow towards Rhodesia and South Africa are not only important in themselves, but they affect our relations with everybody else. Guinea and Mali were leaders in Africa. Other African heads of state were more friendly, but less aggressive, less outspoken, less influential, and followed their lead. They set a tone not just in Africa, but worldwide that was hostile to American policies. That's something you try to avoid. So, it was the leadership role they played in Third World councils that was the most important so far as the United States was concerned.

*Q: What about Sekou Toure dealing internally in his country?*

LOW: It was an authoritarian country in which the standard for human rights and treatment of the individual was not very high. A good example was what happened to the Guinean ambassador to the United States, Bangoura, an extraordinarily competent diplomat who served his country loyally and well. He didn't speak much English, but he was a large, forceful, hard-working man who communicated well and got all over the city. He knew people on the Hill, in the Pentagon, and throughout the bureaucracy, and was constantly moving to advance Guinea's interests, particularly in the field of bauxite. Guinea was considered to have the free world's largest reserves of bauxite which were being mined by the giant producer Aluminium Limited of Canada which was probably beneficially owned by U.S. citizens. The Guineans seized the operation and turned it over to a very small American producer, Harvey Aluminum. Everyone in Washington seemed involved on one side or the other. I would get calls from all kinds of people asking me what was going on and threatening dire action if the Department didn't do something one way or the other. Members of Congress were being pressed from both sides. We were in the delicate position of needing to insure that the nationalization of Aluminium Limited in Guinea was done with adequate compensation but it was an American firm that was taking it over. And our AID program was very much involved. Bangoura would come into the Department and talk to the associate director of AID for Africa, Robertson, a wonderful, able man. We would spend hours with him. I would go back to my office and within an hour, I would get a call from the office of one member of Congress or another saying, "I understand you told Bangoura said you said such and such this morning, Please explain how you can take that position." Though he gave us fits, you had to admire and enjoy him. He represented his country skillfully, way above the level one would expect from a small recently independent nation. My wife and I had gotten to know him and his wife and many children somewhat. He was recalled by Toure and, I believe, played a role in Guinean politics briefly and then

disappeared. I later learned that he had been killed.

*Q: Was this Sekou Toure's way of operating?*

LOW:. I don't know the details of what happened to him, but whatever happened, it was a great tragedy for Guinea. We managed to find our way through the aluminum problem. We spent many, many hours on it.

*Q: As you were dealing, in a way, it sounds like as a dual desk or country officer, you were given quite a bit of leeway.*

LOW: Absolutely. As long as I kept Leon Dorros apprised of where we were and what we were doing, he essentially let me deal with the problem. That's what made it fun. I enjoyed it thoroughly.

*Q: Did you find International Organizations (IO) intruding on your bailiwick to get these people to shape up as far as the UN votes were concerned?*

LOW: No, I don't know why they didn't press us much. I spent more of my time with AID than anyone else. Our relations with AID were very close and quite good. The AID desk was ably led. We would be in contact three or four times a day. It was a good team.

*Q: With AID, you were there during a period when you were trying to bring down our involvement there in Mali. Was there general agreement with AID to be able to do this?*

LOW: I don't have a clear recollection, but I certainly don't recall significant foot dragging on their part. I think they were willing to accept it. There were no dramatic statements; it was just a quiet, general reduction. I think they were willing to go along with it, and I believe the Malians got the point.

*Q: Just to get a feel for how diplomacy works, you're having Mali, you want to cut down because you're unhappy with their cooperation. Does somebody from Mali come in and say "What the hell are you doing" and you tell them why?*

LOW: No. You're working on a case by case basis with AID programs. It's like so many other things. If you keep people apprised of what you're doing and you check with them constantly and you get a team working like this, it goes very smoothly. I knew that both the leadership in State was sympathetic and we kept the leadership of AID apprised. They agreed and so everything went along. It's a matter of getting cooperation over a broad area. When you do that, you get a lot done inside the United States government. We never had a problem on this, that I recall. Later on in my career, I did the same thing with regard to Brazil. Again, there was not a problem.

*Q: Did you see in 1963-1965, still early on in African years, an impression of a core of Africanists developing there in the State Department?*

LOW: Yes. I think I mentioned the training program. By that time, many of us knew each other. Some years earlier, while we were in Uganda (57 to 59) the State Department had organized two African training programs for people new to the area. Both spent time at Makerere College in Kampala where I got to know most of them. The academic community was very active and we knew many of them fairly well. It was an interesting period. There were some romantic ideas about Africa. In incoming FSO classes a majority would request African assignments. It was a time when that was the place to which people wanted to go. Even President Kennedy was interested. There was less interest in the Johnson period, but still we got a fair amount of attention. Where we ran into problems was with NATO affairs and the European Bureau. When we came up against EUR or East Asia, which was then Far East (FE), we generally lost those battles. The entrenched State Department bureaucracy was prepared to let us have our own way in areas that didn't conflict with their interest, but once that was being impinged on, they challenged us and were almost always supported by the 7th floor (the secretaries of State, his deputies and the White House (National Security Council) staff. If you were dealing with Portuguese Guinea or one of the others and you wanted to complain about the use of NATO equipment against Africans, you didn't get very far. I remember going into Marshall Green's office in Far Eastern affairs on one occasion. I can't remember what the issue was, but I do remember coming out with my tail between my legs because I lost that battle. We didn't have any problems with NEA [Bureau of Near Eastern and South Asian Affairs] until later on, but the established bureaus generally got their way if there was a conflict.

*Q: This was 1963-1965, a time of heightened civil rights action in the United States, the African-Americans looking for more social justice. Did this have any reflection from your point of view dealing with Africa in those days?*

LOW: Not a great deal. We were pleased at the attention African-Americans were beginning to give to African affairs, but in general they were much more concerned with events in English-speaking Africa than the francophone areas. When it came to putting real pressure in support of our diplomacy or assistance in Africa the community showed it was primarily interested in domestic issues. Congressman Diggs, the forceful Chairman of the Africa subcommittee of the Foreign Affairs Committee, was perhaps an exception. An African-American congresswoman who was next in line preferred chairmanship of a subcommittee dealing with domestic affairs. You couldn't blame her. She was reflecting the interests of her constituents. It wasn't until Randal Robinson showed how to organize the community to press for South African sanctions during the Reagan years that effective influence was brought to bear.

*Q: Was there any cooperation or problems with the French in the areas you were dealing with?*

LOW: It was always a prickly relationship. The French in Senegal when I was there didn't really know how to take us and were very suspicious. They pressed the Senegalese to limit our activities. Cooperation between the French and the Senegalese was very close. There were French all through the Senegalese administration. They knew exactly where we were going, what we were doing. Phil Kaiser, our ambassador, had a good relationship with the

French ambassador, who was a top-notch man in Senegal. He was a university professor, but I am not sure he represented the real power in France which came from the presidency. Though it was not a period of intense difficulty, most French believed we were trying to replace them in Africa rather than simply have access to African leadership and economies. We believed the French position would be strengthened by loosening their domination. There was certainly no intention to assume responsibility in those countries from the French, but they couldn't believe that, and I think still don't.

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*Q: What about in Washington? Did France have any effect on our relationship with Guinea and Mali?*

LOW: These weren't the countries they were concerned with. They had been kicked out of Guinea completely and the worse our relations were with Guinea, the happier they were, but they really weren't involved. Similarly in Mali, they weren't as concerned as they would have been with Senegal, Ivory Coast, or Gabon, where their interest was greater. As far as I was concerned, we didn't have difficult relations with the French.

*Q: Algeria was still going through its time of difficulty. It has a border with Mali.*

LOW: Yes, but there is absolutely no convergence on policy matters. The issues were entirely separate. The Africans themselves weren't concerned with the Mediterranean littoral. They were separated by the Sahara and there really was no overlap other than the fact that they would support the Algerian independence movement and so forth.

*Q: In 1965, whither?*

LOW: After two years in Guinea-Mali affairs I was assigned to what we then called GPM which became just PM (Political-Military Affairs). I was a rather junior officer in an office of very bright and high-powered people like Ray Garthoff, Jeff Kitchen (the director), Howard Meyers, Joe Wolff, and Sy Weiss who were some of the most influential figures in the State Department dealing directly with the Secretary and under secretaries. I was given the job of State Department coordinator on an ARPA (Army Research organization) project to place rods in the ground in Montana in order to detect underground nuclear tests. The project also had useful civilian purposes such as detecting and measuring earthquakes. ARPA decided to invite members of the diplomatic corps out to witness the project's inauguration. It involved no great responsibility or decision making but was a lot of fun. About this time the deputy under secretary for Political Affairs needed a new special assistant and, after interviewing a few people, gave me the job. This was largely because Alexis Johnson said he didn't know anything about Africa and said he would welcome someone in his office that did. For the next two years, I was Johnson and then Foy Kohler's staff assistant. The only other officer was Olin Robison, a Texas Baptist preacher and friend of Lyndon Johnson's spokesman, Bill Moyers. Olin was attached to the office as Coordinator of Youth Affairs in the government. The idea was that the U.S. could increase its influence in the world by paying more attention to young people. Olin was an interesting combination of a Texas preacher and a sophisticated Oxford Ph.D. He hadn't had much experience with government bureaucracy or urban living, but he was highly intelligent, had

good instincts and learned very fast. We worked together very easily and became close friends.

*Q: The period you were there was 1965-1967. Could you explain the position of Alex Johnson?*

LOW: Mr. Johnson was the senior career officer in the Department. He was deputy under secretary for Political Affairs and ranked after the other deputy under secretary, Tom Mann, who had economic affairs and Under Secretary George Ball. However, he had worked with Dean Rusk for most of his life. They were very close. He liked to be called "Mr.," although he had already been an ambassador, because there was a kind of reverse snobbery in the State Department. Most of the assistant secretaries had been ambassadors and were addressed as "Ambassador," but neither Dean Rusk nor George Ball had been ambassadors, so the people on the seventh floor made it a matter of pride to be addressed as "Mr." In those days one of the jobs of a staff assistant was to monitor all the principal's phone calls so as to be able to pick up the lose ends if necessary. I remember one occasion when President Johnson called Alex about Vietnam where he had been "Deputy Ambassador" under Maxwell Taylor. I was writing down the things that the President told Mr. Johnson to do. As I recall there were 13 of them. My job was simply to help Mr. Johnson who responded to each one in orderly fashion.

On one occasion, I looked up and, to my amazement, saw Secretary Rusk walking into the office. The Secretary didn't very often get up and wander around the State Department. I had never before seen him come into our office. There was quiet for maybe 45 minutes. Then he left with a big smile on his face. Alexis Johnson called me and said, "There are going to be only three people in this building involved in this, and you will be one of them. Svetlana Stalin just walked into our embassy in New Delhi and we have to get her out of there. We're going to do it and nobody is going to know anything about it." A month later, we brought her to New York. Nobody expected it. We ran the operation for one month communicating through CIA channels. The only other person in the Department involved was Mac Toon, the country director for the Soviet Union. My job was just to be sure that the right people knew and the wrong people didn't know and to keep track of the telegrams. We got her out of New Delhi into Switzerland. I remember Marvin Kalb looked for her in Switzerland for two weeks and never found her. I also remember Zbig Brzezinski calling from Policy Planning and insisting that he had a right to know what was going on, pressing me very hard. I was not a very senior officer at the time. I had to say, "I'm sorry, Mr. Brzezinski, but I can't help you on that subject." Mac, Alex Johnson, Alex's secretary, and I worked with the CIA and arranged that whole operation. It was very successful. Normally our office wasn't that operationally involved.

I remember two or three other things that happened during that period. Dean Rusk at one point went to Punta del Este, Uruguay for an OAS [Organization of American States] meeting. During it, the military asked for our okay to run a destroyer into the Black Sea. They do it periodically to validate our treaty right to pass through the Straits and into the Black Sea. This destroyer got a little close to the shore and the Soviets buzzed it with a fighter plane. The situation got a little tense. I remember only two telegrams that showed

Dean Rusk himself as both drafting and authorizing officer. This one was from Ponta del Este and said something to the effect, "Is this frolic really necessary?" People got the point. The other Rusk message I remember was just before the Nigerian civil war broke out. Our ambassador in Lagos had sent in a message listing what he considered to be American interests in the event a civil war broke out. As I remember them, the first was, if possible, to avoid a war which would not have been in our interests. The second was, if it broke out anyway, to deny the Soviets ability to expand their position in the country. The third was to support our allies and it went on with eight or nine interests. Number seven or eight was to protect the interests of American lives and property. The reply, to the ambassador, was drafted and approved by Dean Rusk. As I remember, it went something like "Let there be no mistake. Your first and primary responsibility and that of your embassy is the protection of American lives and property." That was all there was to it. Rusk's statements were pithy! I always considered that message an important lesson. It should have been framed and sent to every Foreign Service officer operating in a crisis to keep his or her priorities straight. Political and economic officers, ambassadors and deputy chiefs of mission too often forget the importance of the basic consular function. Had we kept it in mind we might have avoided problems in other countries, like Chile, for instance. It was an interesting example of what's important in diplomacy.

Working for Alexis Johnson was a fascinating experience. But there was a lot for one person to do. I'd read the telegrams, pull out what I considered the important ones for him. Every once in a while, the bureaus would get at each other and nobody could write the memo or telegram. We'd end up doing the drafting ourselves. On one occasion, we had to get something to the Secretary in two hours and the bureaus couldn't agree, so I ended up dictating it. It would have taken me a day under normal circumstances, but when the pressure is on, it's amazing what one can do.

*Q: Was George Ball there during this time?*

LOW: George Ball was under secretary.

*Q: What was your impression of his role in the Department at that time?*

LOW: I had none. We had very little contact with him. Johnson worked much more with Rusk than he did with Ball. I had very little to do with Ball's office. I had a great deal to do with the executive secretary, Ben Reed, a wonderful, able, and competent executive secretary who had everybody's confidence both above and below him. I should say a couple of things about Alexis Johnson himself. He was a remarkable man. When I knew him, he took only one day off a year - Christmas Day. He would come in relatively early and he stay until seven, eight, or later. I often stayed that late but usually left around seven. It was agreed that I could have Sunday off. I would work Saturday until six or seven in the evening, but Sunday I was off. I did appreciate that opportunity to be with my family. Other than that, it was constant work. I rarely sat in on meetings, but I would always ask people who met with Johnson to drop by and tell me where things stood after the meeting. They always came out feeling satisfied that they had had an opportunity to put their case at a decision making level, even if they were overruled. That was Johnson's great talent. He

was a judicious man. He listened. Whether he had made up his mind beforehand or not, he certainly gave no indication of it. It was a wonderful lesson to me. I was also impressed at how many people in Washington there were above, and giving instructions to, the fourth ranking officer in the State Department (and on a couple of occasions he was Acting Secretary). There were many more of them, it seemed to me, than people to whom he was giving orders. Johnson played a little game with me. He kept things pretty well to himself. He didn't spend much time telling me what he was doing, or what he expected me to do. Partly it was in his nature not to say any more than he had to, and partly he just didn't have the time. Yet he expected me to know everything that was going on. I certainly couldn't be helpful unless I did. So, I was kind of running an intelligence operation against my boss to try to keep up on what was happening and to know what he was doing. It worked pretty well as far as I was concerned. I probably wasn't one of his greatest assistants, but may have been marginally helpful, and I enjoyed the experience. He was followed by Foy Kohler, who was a similar person, but very different, too.

*Q: How did Floyd Kohler operate?*

LOW: Similarly. He didn't have the same relationship with the Secretary. That made a difference. I think I should have played a larger role than I did. I could have helped more. But I wasn't of a mind to tell him what to do. So, it was not quite as close a relationship as I had with Johnson. I think he probably told personnel that they could find somebody else. So, when they called me up and asked if I wanted to go to the War College, I said, "Fine."

*Q: During the 1965-1967 period, did the war in Vietnam intrude.*

LOW: Yes, constantly. That was the time of the Christmas bombing and so forth. I remember that snowy day listening to the President talking to Alexis Johnson. We were in all the time, every day.

*Q: Did you find that you were serving as a conduit to the bureaus or sorting out? As a special assistant to Johnson and Kohler, what was your relationship with other parts of the Department?*

LOW: I guess I felt my role was to help them in their communication with Johnson. My role wasn't to be a policy person myself. In the first place, I had nowhere near his knowledge of these issues. I was brand new in any discussion of Vietnam. So I really saw my role as trying to help clarify what he wanted them to do or getting to him what they wanted him to understand and resolving misunderstandings between them. It was an interesting role. But a staff rather than a line function. I've always had a horror of staff assistants who assume decision making positions themselves. I was determined not to do that. Bob Miller was the special assistant downstairs from me in East Asian affairs (then Far East). I think the assistant secretary in FE was Bill Bundy. He spent a lot of time with Johnson whose expertise was East Asia. They had a great deal of respect for each other. I dealt at a lower level. The job was one of facilitator, nothing more than that.

*Q: During this time, were you yourself going through any thought processes about our*

*commitment in Vietnam at all or were you just pretty well tied up with what you were doing?*

LOW: I can answer that by describing the following year when I was a student at the National War College. I was part of a car pool made up of Bob Yost, Bruce Laingen, and me. We fought the Vietnam War every day. I took the hardest line of the three. I felt that the U.S. had a role to play there. I don't think I ever was a proponent of large land forces, but I did feel more than my colleagues did that we had to stand firm. The Tet Offensive occurred when I was at the War College. I interpreted it as a defeat for the communists while colleagues saw it as a defeat for the U.S. It could have been interpreted either way. I was also impressed with the difficulty of the situation. I thought that we had to stand firm until there was a way out, although I did not feel that we should be fighting the war for the South Vietnamese. My good friends in Washington who were not in foreign affairs and my own family were much more opposed to our role in Vietnam. While I thought that the domino theory was simplistic, I did believe that our resistance to Communist expansion in Korea and Vietnam had an important impact on the outer crescent – from Burma through Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Japan; that a less assertive role would have led them to much greater accommodation with China and the Soviet Union.

*Q: You were at the War College from when to when?*

LOW: 1967-1968. It was always a pleasant experience.

*Q: Which war college was this?*

LOW: The National War College.

*Q: This was the time when the military was heavily engaged in Vietnam. What were you getting from your military colleagues?*

LOW: I was half-way between my military colleagues and the civilian State Department. It's interesting, I don't recall that there was a great deal of debate on that subject. We were all loyal citizens. Dean Rusk was a strong supporter of the war effort, of course. Among the people I knew, my car pool mates were much stronger than others in feeling that we were doing the wrong thing. But mostly, those arguments were not held at the War College. You didn't get into that kind of an argument there. People mostly kept their reservations to themselves or discussed them with people they knew to be sympathetic. On reflection, though, I believe a number of my military colleagues had their own reservations. The majority probably were unhappy with the restrictions put on an all out effort. But few of them were vocal or aggressive about it. People were there to learn and valued the time and experience to broaden their perspectives. I was impressed with the tolerance of views and genuine inquiry.

*Q: The Washington car pool is quite an institution.*

LOW: Absolutely. It's been instrumental in my career. Only my wife was more influential

than the car pool in shaping my career, but the car pool was instrumental in getting us first to Africa and then later to Brazil.

The most important thing from my point of view at the War College was that one of my closest friends, the person with whom I found myself more often in agreement, and the person whose thoughtfulness impressed me the most was a young Air Force lieutenant colonel by the name of Brent Scowcroft. That had something to do with the rest of my career, too.

*Q: You must have taken one of these trips. Did any of them stick in your mind about what you picked up?*

LOW: I went to East Asia because I had never been there. I don't think there was anything terribly significant. One of the things that made the greatest impression was our 24 hours in Seoul. People say "What can you do in 24 hours?" And "A little knowledge is a dangerous thing." But, 24 hours is better than nothing. You do get an impression of a country. I guess we were in Korea for three days. We went up to Panmunjom. It was walking through the village of Panmunjom that an enlisted man came running up to tell us that Martin Luther King had been shot. You remember where you were when you hear news like that. We flew from there directly back to Washington. When we arrived at Andrews there was some concern whether we would be able to get from the airfield back to our houses. There was a lot of smoke coming from the streets of Washington. We all avoided the center of the city and there were no problems.

*Q: There were paratroopers in Georgetown. How did you feel about yourself, did you feel that you were an Africanist by this time? What did you feel about where you wanted to go and do?*

LOW: That was very much on my mind. At that point I did not want to go back to Africa. I did not feel that I was an Africanist. I had, after all, done my doctorate on East Asia. I had never been to the Philippines, but I wanted to go. I was interested in Europe. I had lived there. I felt that the time had come for me to broaden from African affairs. As I said, the car pool was instrumental in many decisions. Bob Yost was driving that day and he said he had to go by the Department. I thought I should do something, so I dropped into Personnel. There had been some talk of a job in the political section at the embassy in London. They had offered Oslo, but that's the only time my wife ever expressed reservations about an assignment. There just wasn't enough daylight for her to feel comfortable. She is very light-sensitive and didn't want to live in a country where it was that dark all winter long. So, we were to go to London where I was to be the third officer in the Political Section. That sounded somewhat interesting. Anyway, when I walked in my counselor looked up at me. and asked, "What's the matter with Brazil?" I remember well the rest of the dialogue which went like this. "Nothing is the matter with Brazil. What's the job?" "You can be in charge of Brasilia." "Isn't that the capital?" "Yes." "How come I would be in charge?" "Well, the rest of the embassy is in Rio and it's going to be there for a while." "That sounds interesting." And I thought to myself, a lot more interesting than third officer in the London political section, and it had a lot more light. I was a little concerned about the timing of the

embassy's move to Brasilia and my ability to report directly to Washington, but I was reassured on both matters so I said, "Okay" and walked out of the office on my way to Brasilia. Never in my wildest imagination had I thought of going to Latin America.

*Q: Did you have to have Portuguese training?*

LOW: Yes. I learned that the officer who was supposed to go to Brasilia to be counselor and in charge of that part of the split embassy was Bill Harrop. But just as Bill was packing to go, they discovered that he had reached the statutory limit on time abroad. By law, a foreign service officer had to serve three years of his or her first 15 years in the United States and Bill had been abroad for 13 years without any prior service at home. He couldn't go abroad again. Personnel had just received a letter from the ambassador, Jack Tuthill, telling them to get him somebody in Brasilia fast. I happened to walk into the office that day and I had a head, two arms and two legs. I don't think they would have considered me if I hadn't appeared in the office at that moment, so I was it. And off we went. It was pure coincidence that I walked in that day, and I wouldn't have done it if it hadn't been for the car pool.

*Q: If they need somebody in a hurry and you don't speak Portuguese...*

LOW: The important thing was to get him a flesh and blood name. Almost anyone – including Harrop – would have had to learn Portuguese. There weren't that many around. I guess this was May. We were within a few weeks of finishing the War College year. I only got 12 weeks language training. And my predecessor in Brasilia, Herb Okun was just leaving.

*Q: You went to Brasilia from when to when?*

LOW: From 1968-1971. It was one of the great assignments that the Foreign Service had to offer because there were very few where a young or mid-level officer could be in charge. That's why the Navy to me is perhaps the best career there is in the early period. You get command early in your career; you get a ship. The great thing about these positions is that you can make mistakes and nobody knows the difference. You are able to build up a certain confidence; experience in management and decision-making. Here I was, an FS-03, in charge of the post in the capital of a large and important country. The presidency and much of the government except for the foreign ministry was in Brasilia. The legislature and the court were also in Brasilia. It was one of the most interesting jobs I ever had. And we enjoyed the Brazilians who are a very attractive people.

*Q: During this period, what was the political situation?*

LOW: It was a military dictatorship with a relatively weak general as chief of state, Costa e Silva. While I was there, Costa e Silva had a stroke and had to be replaced. I was traveling in Belo Horizonte, capital of the neighboring state of Minas Gerais, where I got the first hint of what was happening, before the embassy in Rio heard about it. But it was a difficult time with much of the world led by organizations like Amnesty International, very critical

of Brazilian counter-terrorist practices. They were facing a serious terrorist threat and insisted that when they caught a terrorist, they had to get the names of his or her confederates within 24 hours if they were going to make any progress in the internal war they were fighting. So they used every tactic they could, including brutal torture, to extract information from terrorists when they caught them. They were merciless. We didn't like that. But they wrapped up the terrorist movement. This was the difficult issue. I came back to Washington as Brazil desk country director after that assignment. The main issue we were dealing with was the criticism of Brazil's human rights tactics. I had to testify before the House subcommittee on that subject. I didn't do very well.

*Q: Sticking to this particular time, what was the staffing and what did you do?*

LOW: We had about 15 Americans in Brasilia. There were five other embassies there: the British, the Yugoslavs, a couple of others (the Germans maybe). We were the only one with a staff of any size. It was a matter of keeping in touch with the legislature, some of the ministries, and sometimes the presidency and judiciary which Rio couldn't do. It was a busy time because we handled many normal embassy functions except dealing with the foreign ministry on relations between the two countries. As far as I was concerned we had all the fun. We dealt with the interesting things that were going on in Brazil. I knew the Vice President, and was often invited to the President's house for social occasions - often movies. The Vice President, chief justice, and some of the ministers came to dinner at our house even though we had no official U.S. government china or tableware, though I only invited people of this level when the ambassador was visiting from Rio. (Friends in the States helped us furnish our very modest house. On one occasion a couple of shopping bags of tablecloths were delivered to a lawyer-friend, Sid Dickstein, on instructions from his wife, disrupting a high-level, confidential, board meeting on acquisitions he was attending. The tablecloths had to be turned over to our son who was coming out to join us.) In Brasilia we often had readier access to the leadership of the country than our colleagues in Rio. I was lucky, though. The political counselor in Rio, Frank Carlucci, encouraged my contacts and reporting.

Life in Brasilia was pleasant. At 3,500 feet in altitude with marked seasons, the climate was marvelous. As some of the first foreigners in town, we found the Brazilians very friendly and welcoming. They had all been sent there (often against their will) by their government and, having left their friends and relatives, were looking for new friends. It was a positive atmosphere. The very small advance staff of the foreign ministry there was also friendly, pleased with the U.S. lead in taking seriously the Brazilian government's intention to move to Brasilia. Most of the rest of the diplomatic corps (except for the British and Yugoslavs) reluctant to leave Rio, dragged its feet. The doors were usually open to us. The normal frictions between our two countries were acted out between the embassy and foreign ministry in Rio. While in most offices people were pleased to see us. So, it was a good experience.

*Q: What were you getting from your observations about how the Brazilian government was developing? It had a dictatorship. Were we able to sort of weigh in at your level?*

LOW: No. The military was running the country. We had a very able military attaché in Rio, Art Moura. He had an assistant, a young major, in Brasilia who was quite ambitious. He had good contacts, but didn't really know how to use them and certainly didn't want to share them with the rest of the embassy. I think I was closer to his boss than he was. It was not an easy situation. It was one of the few times when I had someone from another agency in whom I did not have a great deal of confidence. My military contacts were more often made through the Rio attaché than they were through the major in Brasilia. The latter left the service shortly thereafter. We did have some contact with the military at a lower level. But the military-political leadership kept aloof from us. We had some difficult issues, like declaration of a 200 mile territorial limit, which Brazil sprang on us without warning. This was at a time when the U.S. was still strongly defending the three mile limit.

*Q: We're talking the national sea boundaries.*

LOW: When the announcement came Washington went through the ceiling. It was almost as though it was the embassy's fault. I got a telegram saying that the Secretary of the Navy, John Warner, would appear in 18 hours, and he wanted to meet with the Brazilian Minister of the Navy. I was to arrange it. I did set it up though the Brazilians were very reluctant. It was one of the frostiest meetings I ever attended! I can remember John Warner standing up with his extendable pointer lecturing the Brazilians sitting there cold eyed with no intention of moving back one inch. It was one of the most unproductive American efforts to influence another government I ever saw. As a matter of fact, it made it much worse. That was one of a number of difficult issues that we had to deal with. Washington was unhappy with us for not giving them warning of the Brazilian more. The failure of the Brazilians to warn us was a measure of the rather stand off relations that existed at that point.

*Q: You were going to mention some of the elements.*

LOW: There was considerable difference of opinion within the embassy. I believe that one of the causes, strangely enough, had to do with the physical structure of the building. The embassy in Rio (now the consulate general) is a tall building with four rooms on each floor. To talk to a colleague in another section of the embassy one had to walk up or down stairs. People don't communicate easily that way. For some reason, one thinks of it as more of an effort to walk up or down than down a corridor. When everyone is on the same level, as we were in Brasilia, they're always in each other's rooms and a collegiality develops which aids understanding and cooperation.
*Q: Hospitals don't work well up and down.*

LOW: In this case, it was extraordinary. I would go down to Rio about once a month to participate in the ambassador's staff meeting. Before and after the meeting I would go from floor to floor talking to the economic counselor, the political counselor, etc. I had a better idea what was going on by the end of my visit than they because they wouldn't talk to each other. They communicated by memo - nasty ones. I had never seen such harsh language in inter-office memos as I did in that embassy. The political counselor and the AID director were at odds. I confess that I also found the AID director very difficult to work with. The Agency people were off on their own working in other directions. AID at that point had one

of the largest missions anywhere in the world and one of the biggest programs. In view of the government's human rights record, the political side of the house, including the counselor, Frank Carlucci, and the ambassador, Jack Tuthill, were not at all happy about the level of assistance we were giving. They were particularly critical of the large size of the embassy staff. Their view was that we should not be that heavily involved with an authoritarian military government. The AID group, supported by the economic section, saw the AID program as separate from political considerations.

Frank was the political counselor during the first year I was there. My title was counselor of the embassy, and principal officer in Brasilia. I had no functional designation. When Frank left to go back, I became the political counselor resident in Brasilia. The political section in Rio was under me though we operated pretty independently.

One of the interesting events was the visit of Nelson Rockefeller, who was sent by President Nixon at Kissinger's instance to survey our relations in Latin America. He was instructed to meet with each head of state on the continent without the local American ambassador being present. I always considered this a counter productive exercise which demonstrated the President's lack of confidence in his own representative to that country, undermining his authority to represent the U.S. in the future. In this case, it was somewhat easier. Ambassador Elbrick resided in Rio. He didn't come up for Rockefeller's Brasilia visit, so his absence during the Governor's conversation with the President appeared less anomalous. But the visit was difficult for our tiny staff to arrange. Rockefeller came with two plane loads of staff and press. They insisted on every amenity being provided, from "secure ice cubes" on up. (That meant that we had to be certain that every piece of ice that was put in one of the Governor's or his staff's glasses had been made from boiled water.) When you've got eight or nine people to arrange all the meetings, accommodations, security, and press down to this level of detail, it's quite a job. We spent weeks doing nothing but preparing for the visit. I, myself, had no role whatsoever to play during the actual visit. Nor was it an edifying spectacle. The Rockefeller group simply overwhelmed its hosts. The embassy's ability to deal with the Brazilians afterwards was not strengthened. I hardly met Rockefeller, much less had an opportunity to brief him on the local situation. Months afterwards I received a form letter of thanks which looked like it was machine signed and sent to all Latin American posts.

*Q: What was he trying to do?*

LOW: He was sent by President Nixon after he had gone through that very difficult demonstration in Caracas when our relations with Latin America were very tense. It was a mission of inquiry to find out what we could do to improve the situation. It was not a happy chapter in American diplomacy. I don't think that it resulted in any significant changes and it certainly undermined the effectiveness of our diplomacy there.

*Q: Was this Kissinger cum Nixon?*

LOW: I don't really know, though I was told that the idea that the ambassador should not be present during Rockefeller's meeting with the presidents was Kissinger's idea. Whether

that's true or not I can't say.

Perhaps the most important event which occurred during my more than three years in Brazil was the kidnaping of Ambassador Burke Elbrick on July 14, 1968. From that moment on, security was a major concern in my life. I had a detail of police in a little Volkswagen following about three feet behind my car wherever I went. I was convinced that they were going to run right up my tail and felt that I was probably in greater danger from them than the terrorists. We also had two or three armed guards at the house around the clock. The Brazilian authorities would call me every once in a while to say, "There is another threat. The Belgian honorary consul (or someone else) got a letter from the terrorists saying they were going to get him. But we don't think he's the one they are after. The one they really want to get is you." That always made me feel good. They gave us a police dog that pushed our cook into the little bathtub of a pool we had and snatched the roast beef from our table. It was a trying two and a half years, but there were some funny moments. I particularly remember the time our little cook was accused by one of the guards of stealing his machine gun; it later turned up in the garbage can where he had left it. But it was also a little disconcerting, particularly on one occasion when they called me and said they would get me by morning. I had an official appearance that evening at some kind of film opening. I decided to go anyway rather than let them scare me off. So the Brazilians provided plenty of police and the occasion went off without a hitch

*Q: Who was doing this and what was the purpose of both the kidnaping of the ambassador and the threats against you?*

LOW: By demonstrating the weakness the military government through its inability to protect diplomats the terrorists were using us to embarrass the Brazilian government and show it up as ineffective. Our ambassador was only the first of a number of ambassadors and diplomats kidnapped. Not long after Elbrick's kidnaping our consul in Porto Alegre was shot in the leg in a botched kidnaping attempt. The American ambassador in Brazil, as in a number of other countries like Greece, is often treated as a tool in local political rivalries. I think Jack Tuthill was used that way by both the government and the opposition - set up and embarrassed in their efforts to get at each other. Once Elbrick was freed, he became a kind of lame duck. The Brazilian government was embarrassed by his continued presence which reminded them of their humiliation. (They had had to turn over to the terrorists quite a number of prisoners to free Elbrick.). Not long after he had returned to duty, he was called up to Brasilia by the foreign minister. He asked me to go with him to the meeting, as he always did when he came to Brasilia. The foreign minister, Gibson Barbosa, criticized Elbrick for a statement he had made at the time of the failed attempt on our consul in Porto Alegre and led him to understand that he was no longer entirely welcome in Brazil. There was no formal declaration that he was *persona non grata*.

*Q: Why?*

LOW: His presence was a constant reminder to them of their failings. Also, it had been alleged that in his discussions with the terrorists, which were taped and the Government got ahold of, he had admitted many failings of the Brazilian government. He epitomized all

their problems to them. One of the things that always surprised me was that he had another engagement somewhere else in the country, so after the meeting with the foreign minister, he got on the attaché plane and went off to his engagement, asking me to write up and send in the reporting cable without showing it to him first. Of course, it resulted in his recall. I thought it was utterly extraordinary that he would tell a junior officer to write the telegram that resulted in ending his very distinguished career. He was a proud and fine man and I think he knew that he would have to leave. I suppose, also, that he realized it didn't make much difference how the conversation was reported. The facts spoke for themselves. He saw it better than I did.

Elbrick was replaced by a man who neither spoke Portuguese nor knew a great deal about Brazil, Bill Rountree. But he was an extraordinarily competent diplomat. Still, I don't think Bill was ever comfortable in Brazil. He decided, I think correctly, that he should come first to Brasilia. No ambassador, American or other, had ever done that. All had gone to Rio first to present their credentials and reside. He landed in Brasilia and spent a couple of days there, then he went to Rio. He was playing to the gallery (the presidency, the military and the public) to a certain degree because the foreign ministry, itself, had been dragging its feet about moving to Brasilia even though most of the rest of the government was already there. The foreign ministry didn't like the idea of moving to a raw new town in the middle of nowhere, leaving Rio's beautiful harbor and beaches as well as friends and family. I think they thought the ambassador was grandstanding a little by showing our public commitment to Brasilia and showing up their well known reluctance to come. Officially of course they expressed their pleasure in his action, but it embarrassed them a little.

Rountree did visit Rio frequently, but he and his wife, Suzanne, lived in Brasilia in a tiny apartment in the chancery for at least a half a year until the house, which I had earlier found and purchased for them, was ready. Everyone thought I was crazy. They said the house was inappropriate and too far outside the city. But it had a great view and was only 10 minutes from the chancery. The Department had said they wanted us to hurry up and get a house for the ambassador and this was the best available from a very limited choice. Despite its shortcomings, it is still the residence of the American ambassador today and many say it's the best house in Brasilia. The Rountrees were lovely people. During all the time they lived in that cramped, inelegant apartment, we never heard one word of complaint. He was a great boss, too. He had been ambassador three times and assistant secretary, but had no pretensions. The Brazilians are very relaxed and informal. I can remember, he was invited by the governor of Goias, the state surrounding the Brasilia federal district, to visit his summer house. This was a very modest bush house on the bank of the Araguaia River. Rountree called me to ask whether he needed to bring a black tie. My answer was "Mr. Ambassador, I don't think you are going to need shoes most of the time." He was a little taken aback, but asked Sue and me to go along to help translate. And I think both he and his wife had a fine time, loved it, in spite of her being dumped in the river when their boat overturned while fishing. I think Rountree was respected by the Brazilians. He behaved according to their idea of how an ambassador should. He didn't get too involved in Brazilian politics which they greatly appreciated. Interestingly, I think he was more successful than somebody else might have been.

*Q: One always hears in the Foreign Service that the Foreign Service of Brazil is often ranked at the top or next to the top as far as professional foreign services. Did this reflect itself from your perspective in Brasilia?*

LOW: Yes, I agree with that. Both from my experience in Brazil and elsewhere in the world with Brazilian representatives, that they are very competent. They are smart and very well trained. They have their own college, and everyone of them is fluent in both English and French before they start to learn any other language. Their knowledge of the history of their own country and its diplomacy is extensive. (Something it has been my personal crusade to improve for our own Foreign Service.) All this makes them independent minded and tough. They think of themselves as the USA of Latin America, the biggest and most important country of the region (half the continent with almost half its population, bordering most of the others) and the one which should be its natural leader. Of course the other countries, which are Spanish speaking, don't agree. The Brazilian diplomatic service, and most other leaders of the country, think their country should be considered among the world leaders and they resent the fact that their position has never been adequately appreciated by the United States. They see themselves as the rival to the United States in Latin America. They were not easy to deal with politically.

On the personal level, I had close relations and got along very well with many of them because of their competence. But I was under no illusions about their determination to defend their interests as they saw them, which were often in conflict with ours. From the 200 mile limit, to relations with Cuba and on many other issues we differed. They took a certain pride in finding differences with us. But this was mostly on smaller issues. One might even call them family differences. On the big issue they were firmly on our side in the Cold War. They mistrusted the Soviets as much or perhaps even more than we did and could not understand why we didn't sympathize to a greater extent with their government and its efforts to defeat its terrorist threat. As an authoritarian military government they were nationalistic. Some of the military presidents were more broad-gauged, less narrowly nationalistic than lower elements in the military. These were very close to national socialism and quite antagonistic to the U.S. even though the leaders were not. Sometimes we ran into tension at working levels which could be reflected in the foreign ministry. Many in the ministry were pleased with the military's independent-mindedness. For the most part, while being pro-West, the foreign ministry was sympathetic to continued military domination of the country. They saw our opposition to military domination as part of our failure to appreciate the importance of Brazil. So, we had some real problems in dealing with the foreign ministry.

*Q: This was also a period which lasted for a while where people were looking ahead to the 21st century. Brazil was named often as one of Japan, Brazil, maybe China, as the countries that were going to sort of succeed the United States in the next century, at least to some extent. That talk has really died out. Were you feeling that they felt they were on the go?*

LOW: Yes and no. One of the most attractive Brazilian attributes is their slightly self-deprecatory sense of humor. One of their great jokes about themselves is that Brazil is

the country of the future and always will be. I think that they did feel that we gave them insufficient credit for their importance. But I don't think in their heart of hearts that they really thought of themselves as a first-rank global power on the level of the United States and Russia. Yes, we should consider them on the scale of a Britain or France, but it would be a while before they become a first rank world power. Presently we don't give adequate weight to the fact that their economy is three times that of Russia. We shouldn't take them for granted. They are very proud and quite self-confident, which, in a way makes them easier to deal with than people with a small, weak country complex. The Brazilians have their own culture and are quite comfortable with it. They feel confident of their size and strength which absorbs them mostly in domestic affairs and they don't feel at the mercy of what goes on outside their borders.

*Q: Did you find in your connection at the capital that we were interested in Brazil's role as the colossus to the south? They've got something like nine countries bordering it. Did that ever impact on your work there?*

LOW: I don't think we in the United States have ever really thought of Latin America in these terms. To most Americans, and I think that includes the Bureau of Latin American Affairs, Brazil is just one among a number of countries in Latin America. This is perhaps what they resent most. They do not feel they are just one among the other Latin Americans. They consider themselves unique because of their size, their potential strength, the fact that they border all the other major countries except Chile and Mexico and because they are Portuguese speaking. America's policy has never accepted this view of Latin America with Brazil as the dominant power, in part because the rest of the Latin Americans don't accept it either. They don't take Brazil as a leader, partly because of the language issue, and partly because they just don't want to. So, it's not an easy thing. They want to be taken for something they're not, in a sense, and we don't give them that recognition.

*Q: During this time, did Brazil intrude itself into any major world issues?*

LOW: Not that I can recall. Later (not while I was there and not even while I was on the desk), we had a nuclear development issue. That really all came much later. They were very supportive in the East-West conflict. It was things like 200 mile limits and aid. They were mostly bilateral kinds of things rather than world issues. There were no major world issues.

*Q: At least during much of this period, I always think of inflation as being the dominant thing within Brazil.*

LOW: Not at this point. This was a serious and effective government with one of the fastest growing economies in the world, though its increasing wealth was very poorly distributed. It's economic policies had turned it around. There were periods of rapid inflation but they came earlier and later. And the Brazilians have been successful in controlling them before they got out of hand. Our assistance played a major role in stimulating this economic growth. The biggest issue at this point was terrorism. I was much impressed by the professionalism of some of our other agencies. Nobody, particularly in the intelligence

field, got themselves so attached to the military that they weren't willing to report honestly. I had to take my hat off to the people who were doing it. They were professionals and they called the spade a spade. In spite of their close contacts, when they saw denial of human rights, they reported it and didn't try to hide it. It was a competent staff, in that sense.

*Q: This was at the height of the Cold War, which seemed to be at its height for decades. Was this terrorism from our perspective seen as a reflection of the Soviet Union and its operatives or was this a home grown one? Did we see any connection?*

LOW: So far as we knew the organization of the terrorist movement was strictly Brazilian though we believed it received training and supply assistance from abroad which was certainly provided by the Soviets or at least Bloc members. Of course, this created a certain bond, a certain sympathy, in some parts of Washington. Washington was torn on this, just as our embassy was torn, whether to be sympathetic as any ally in the Cold War, or to condemn what were quite evidently civil rights violations. It was a difficult issue.
*Q: Also, just at this time, you had the Tupamaro movement in Uruguay, which would seem to fall into a pattern.*

LOW: Yes, very definitely. Sue and I and the kids were planning to visit Uruguay on our way through Chile and Argentina and back to Brazil on vacation, but we had to desist because at that point an American official was an imprisoned hostage. The embassy didn't want us coming through. It was very much part of that same situation..

*Q: One last question and then we'll move to the Brazil desk. When you left Brazil in 1971, what was your gut belief about whither democracy in Brazil at that point?*

LOW: I was bullish. I considered the government to be a restrained military authority. I was confident that it would turn things back to the civilians eventually. The threat that they had to deal with was very real. Though I was under no illusions about the methods they were applying, I was not without sympathy for their legitimate need to protect their own survival. If they were brutal in their treatment of terrorists, this did not extend beyond that to their political critics of other members of society. In general people did not feel watched or constrained. But I felt that this was not a dictatorship that was unfettered. The military imposed considerable constraint on its own head of state. This was not a repressive one man dictatorship. Nor was social or economic activity controlled by the state. The press was relatively free and often critical of government. Elections were taking place at local levels. For much of the time, there was an active parliament though it was dissolved later. National leadership was imposed by force of arms. But there was quite a bit of decentralization. The leadership of the government, the ministers, were largely civilian. Politics was healthy and lively. It was a military authoritarian government which allowed for considerable decentralization of authority in which the rule of law, as opposed to the individual, was operative in most transactions. The government worked. There was a lot of criticism of economic policies, of the gap between the wealthy and the poor, of the government's failure particularly to deal with favellas (urban slums) and so forth. But they were building a healthy economy for a country. Maybe they should have encouraged greater distribution of wealth. In this sense, they were more conservative than we would

have liked them to be. But it was a responsible government and it was effective. The economy was growing at some phenomenal rate of six or seven percent for the eight or nine years prior to the time I arrived.

The time in Brazil and in ARA overlaps because I went back to ARA to be Brazilian country director. So, the issues remained the same. You have to be clear about this. The Brazilian leadership believed they were acting in the best interests of the nation. But that was the best interests of the nation as they conceived it. They believed that they were the best able to carry it out and that they could not trust the popular will to do so. They also believed that in order to maintain this leadership, the end justified the means and they could take such steps as were necessary to survive. In this pursuit, there is no question but that people were imprisoned, often mistreated; and it was an authoritarian government that was neither democratic nor responsive to a popular mandate. We felt ourselves caught in this. We couldn't make over the government of Brazil. It was operating reasonably efficiently, but it was engaging in practices which we all felt were not only undesirable, but in the long range not in Brazil's interest, and certainly not in the United States' interest. The economic development had been remarkable during that period. The growth rates for almost 10 years were near 10%. Everybody spoke of the "Brazilian miracle," so the military leadership got a certain amount of credit for its effectiveness. But the other side was not pretty. They were faced with a violent opposition and they took the steps they felt were necessary to defeat it.

That situation extended over into the next two years in Washington (1972-1974). I took Bob Dean's place as country director for Brazil. The same issues continued. I had to testify before the House Subcommittee on Governmental Affairs on U.S. policy and programs in Brazil and the situation in that country. It was not an easy position to be in. I found myself not wanting to defend the Brazilian government, but on the other hand needing to defend U.S. policy of assisting it - a policy which sought to encourage both change and development to benefit the majority of the population. Development occurred. It did not benefit the majority; it benefitted the wealthier. But this, in turn, produced a growing economy which provided better roads, schools and hospitals to the benefit of all. The non-wage benefits were considerable. Roads were built in the northeast which allowed people to get to hospitals. Their wages may not have gone up, but when they were sick, they could get on a bus and get into town, which they could not have done before. There was nothing the United States could do to change the kind of government the Brazilians were living under. The question was to what degree did we want to cooperate with that government? Our feeling was that a little assistance would help significantly. I think it did. I think that United States aid over that period played a significant role in helping create the 10% growth rate, even though it didn't trickle down a lot. We had to walk that line in our testimony but I am not sure we were successful in defending our position convincingly.

*Q: What was the reason you were up there making this testimony?*

LOW: In part no one senior to me wanted to go! The hearings were called by the Chairman of the Government Affairs Subcommittee, a congressman from Minnesota, at the urging of his staff who were opposed to assistance to Brazil. I don't think he was sympathetic to U.S. policy either, but he was a fair and considerate questioner. His interest, I think, was getting

the information out. He was concerned with our policies and whether or not we were doing anything to encourage or support authoritarian government in Brazil. The questioning was tough. I tried to make the point that we were not encouraging the authoritarian government, that we were discouraging it to the degree that we could. Our assistance, which was then rapidly declining, was intended for the people of Brazil, not for the government, and that it should not be confused. The fact that we were providing project assistance around the country was not a measure of approval of the government. We had our choice. We could either help or not help. We could have gone away and said, "No, as long as you have this government, we won't do anything." We might have felt better, but nothing would have changed. The amount of aid at that point was not large. Its withdrawal would not have made any of difference to the Brazilians. They certainly wouldn't have changed their government or modified their practices. The return to civilian government would not have been speeded up. That was dependent on defeat of the terrorist movement and on domestic politics.

*Q: To put it in some perspective, I was in Greece from 1972-1974. You had the colonels there, whom we were supporting because of our military bases. You had Park Chung Hee in Korea, who was also a dictator. Vietnam was still under a rather dictatorial government. Could you describe what the Latin American context was at that time as far as democracy versus non-democracy?*

LOW: It was a period of transition. There were increasing numbers of democratically-elected governments. Brazil was not one of them, but the Brazilian authoritarian government was an institutional authoritarianism, rather than one-man rule. So far as I know, military officers did not profit personally from their rule. Some of the four or five military presidents were capable and broad-gauged leaders; not all, but most. They were undoubtedly aware of some of the brutality and authorized it. One might call it a benign authoritarianism, but it wasn't very benign to the people who were tortured for wanting to change it violently.

*Q: What about countries like Argentina, Peru, or Chile? Chile was a democracy at that time.*

LOW: Yes, although the Allende episode occurred during that period. Peronism in Argentina was an exercise in personal power and more arbitrary than the Brazilian government. There was no question but that the President was chosen by the military establishment. His constituency was the armed forces from whose ranks he was chosen for a specific term of office.

*Q: Not like Stroessner in Paraguay?*

LOW: Not at all. It was a five year term and it was respected by all. There was considerable freedom of expression in the press. There were limits, but they were pretty wide.

*Q: This was the period of Henry Kissinger and Richard Nixon, their high period. Kissinger was still National Security Advisor, but he and Nixon were a very strong team. How did*

*this play? Here you have the White House with a rather weak Secretary of State (William Rogers), and an authoritarian government which is putting down the communists in Brazil. How did this play?*

LOW: The old State Department adage that regulated Latin American affairs was firmly in place. "Keep it off of the seventh floor."

*Q: Explain what this means.*

LOW: It means the Secretary and under secretaries, whose offices were on the seventh floor, did not want to have to deal with Latin America if they didn't have to. That was the job of the assistant secretary for Latin American Affairs on the sixth floor. The seventh floor was concerned with the Soviets, world politics in Europe and Asia and did not want to divert time and attention to Latin America. So, it didn't really get a lot of attention. It was only after the Nixon fiasco in Venezuela that they became a little more conscious of the growing unpopularity of American involvement in Latin America. Then they sent Rockefeller around to visit every Latin American country. But beyond that, there was very little interest in making a fundamental change. It was business as usual, which meant neither Nixon or Kissinger wanted much involvement in Latin America, unless they weren't busy elsewhere. It was only later, after we got out of Vietnam, that Kissinger as Secretary of State became involved to any degree in Latin America. By that time I had been assigned to be the Latin American staff officer in the NSC.

*Q: During this time, other than answering as well as you could Congress, what were you doing?*

LOW: The principal issue we were wrestling with was the related one of the aid level for Brazil. The Bureau of American Regional Affairs (ARA which was principally Latin American affairs) at that a time had an integrated AID-State structure. I was the country director. The deputy director was a senior AID officer, Dick Lippincott. So far as I was concerned, the system worked very well. Dick and I worked very closely and saw eye to eye. When I was away he was in charge of Brazilian affairs and reported straight through State channels. He did it very well, and was highly regarded in State. Dick was absolutely convinced, along with a number of other AID people, that Brazil no longer needed foreign assistance. Its economic growth now provided sufficient resources to continue on its own. It should be "graduated." Besides, our aid was creating more political problems than it was helping and leading us to a level of interference in internal affairs which was undesirable. Dick, with my support, led a successful effort over two or three years to phase down the AID program from one of the highest in the world to almost nothing. It was the sensible thing to do.

*Q: Did you and Lippincott find that it was difficult to phase out a major aid program? A bureaucracy gets entrenched. People like it, they've got ties to business concerns in the United States, Congress, and all that.*

LOW: Yes and it took time. It was extremely difficult, but it wasn't so much that the

administrators were entrenched or self-serving. There were contracts, agreements, and projects in full flower. You can't abandon a project in the middle without a lot of waste and disruption. So, it took a while to draw things to a close.

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

LOW: Charlie Meyers was Assistant Secretary. John Crimmins was the senior deputy, which made life a lot of fun. Two wonderful people. Communication was easy. We got the guidance we needed, and they let us take care of our responsibilities. It was a very happy relationship. Then John Crimmins went out to Brazil as ambassador when the Carter administration came in.

*Q: I take it this time in ARA, unlike a decade later, you didn't have the right wing ideologues in the ARA apparatus, which essentially come from Congress and from the academic world, which made things much more difficult.*

LOW: No, not at all. Charlie Meyers was from Sears Roebuck. He was a Republican appointee who was one of these people who understood how government works, understood the bureaucracy, and instead of creating a "we-they" situation, took people for what they were on an individual basis. He relied on John Crimmins to run the Bureau, and focused on the outside world. They got along very well. When he needed to, Charlie operated within the bureaucracy very effectively. He was respected and we thought highly of him. He made his views known, but listened to others and was judicious in choosing the best course.

*Q: How did you find being back in Washington although you had actually had this when you were in Brasilia? What was your impression of the reporting from the posts and from the intelligence agencies? We still had a fairly sizable number of consular posts in this big country.*

LOW: The intelligence agencies did a good job. They were very frank and not influenced by their contacts. I think they as well as the Foreign Service people did a pretty good job. Although I don't think State reporting was brilliant, it was pretty good. I had a fine political officer in Brasilia, Bill Young, who was perceptive and hard working. We have had in the past some rather remarkable political officers who got very close to the Brazilians. You could do that in Brasilia, where no one was really at home, neither we nor the Brazilians. Everybody had left the social contacts they had grown up with. It was a new city. That meant that contact was easy, open, and friendly. I think we had pretty good relationships.

In Washington, when I went to the National Security Council, the focus changed. The primary issue then became Panama and the effort to negotiate a settlement to the Canal problem. In my experience when there are substantial armed forces involved and State and Defense are in agreement, you can get a lot done. That is exactly what happened. The Navy had concluded, just prior to the time I came back, that the Canal was really indefensible, that the U.S. didn't need the Canal as much as it used to, and that it would be better off getting out of an increasingly difficult situation. That changed things immediately. All of a

sudden, we could work together with the U.S. military to create a long term relationship acceptable to both the U.S. and Panama. Politically it wasn't a popular idea in the country. Once the Navy decided to negotiate a new agreement with the Panamanians they wanted to move fast. The State Department wanted to negotiate an agreement that would stand up over time and leave us in a better position to bring our strength to bear to defend the canal if necessary. And we realized the negotiations would not be easy. On one occasion we had to keep the Secretary of the Navy from running down to Panama to negotiate unilaterally with the Panamanians. Ellsworth Bunker was head of the U.S. negotiating team. Kissinger then was Secretary of State and, as National Security Council Advisor, Brent Scowcroft was my boss. When I learned of the Navy Secretary's plans, I asked to see Scowcroft urgently before he left for Europe with President Ford. I got in to see him around 8:30 in the morning. He agreed with me that the trip was ill advised, made a call to have it canceled and then fell asleep sitting at his desk. I realized that he hadn't been to bed at all the night before.

I went with Kissinger on two trips, one to Chile for an OAS conference, and another one to Mexico. I can remember coming back from Chile. It was one of those experiences when Kissinger had a speech to make. On draft 10, he told us he wanted a new draft and this time he'd read it! It was three in the morning when he returned draft 15 to us and said he wanted it back by six in the morning when he would wake up and go over the final draft. Not surprisingly, we were pretty exhausted when we got on the plane to come home after his speech later that morning. Kissinger went up to his end of the plane and immediately started going through the pile of papers which had accumulated during the meeting. The intensity of concentration that he could give was extraordinary. As soon as the plane leveled off, he got out of his seat. He came back to tell my Middle East colleague to straighten somebody out in Amman. Then he asked someone else to get him a Senator in Washington on the phone. I can remember his waving a pile of papers in his hand in front of my nose and saying, "These Panama negotiating instructions… Nixon hates it, but he will sign." That characterized the U.S. position from Lyndon Johnson on, including Jimmy Carter. Presidents regularly came to office by saying one thing and doing something else. I remember Senator Hayakawa's comment: "We stole it fair and square." Carter ran for office saying we would never give it away. Once in office they realized there was no choice but to negotiate a reasonable new arrangement turning over control to the Panamanians. Our job was to get agreement between State, Treasury, and Defense on a negotiating position and get the instructions out. Kissinger would get the President to sign off every time. We kept the negotiations going and until they reached a successful conclusion after I left in the Carter period.

*Q: I want to go back to the Brazil time for a moment and then follow that through. 1972-1974: Allende came in, but he was only there a short time.*

LOW: That was earlier during my predecessor, Pete Vaky's, time on the NSC. Kissinger was still in the White House and I was in Brazil. Fortunately, I didn't have to deal with that issue.

*Q: Had the Pinochet government taken over before you came to the Brazil desk?*

LOW: I think so, yes.

*Q: So, this was not bubbling over. When you have something like that, everybody on neighboring places is picking up the heat from that.*

LOW: That was not an issue while I was in Washington.

*Q: You were in the NSC from 1974-1976. How did you get the job?*

LOW: My War College classmate, Brent Scowcroft, called me one day and asked if I would take the Latin America position on the NSC staff. He was deputy to Kissinger who was still at the NSC. I, of course, agreed and went over right away. Kissinger was still National Security Advisor for about the first week I was there. My office was on the third floor of the Old Executive Office Building. It was an interesting layer cake with Nixon's people on the first floor around his EOB office which he used for work saving the Oval Office for more formal meetings. They were busy trying to figure out how to keep him in office. The Vice President and his staff had their offices on the second floor and they were busy planning what to do if Nixon was forced out. We were on the third floor. Our job was to keep the government moving. We were pretty oblivious of everything happening below us. One day, I happened to look out my window at the West Wing as everybody was streaming from our building towards it. Sensing that something was up, I tagged along although our floor hadn't been invited. The career people were well-treated, but this was not our business. I was about the last person to squeeze into the East Room of the White House to hear Nixon's resignation speech. I confess to having been a little surprised. His resignation never crossed my mind, I never thought he would leave voluntarily. Then Kissinger went over to the State Department and Scowcroft became National Security Advisor. A more conscientious, considerate or harder working man I never knew.

*Q: You arrived there in 1974, so the whole Watergate thing was right at its height. Did this trickle up to the third floor?*

LOW: What it meant was that we didn't see much of the President. I never had direct contact with Nixon. I had started around the middle of May and he resigned in early August. I never saw him during those three or four months.

*Q: Outside of corridor gossip about what was happening, was work going on?*

LOW: Absolutely. The only thing we knew was what we read in the newspaper. Of course Kissinger was heavily involved with the President, but Scowcroft was fully devoted to carrying out the work of the NSC. Watergate was another world of which we were entirely unaware. Nixon signed what he had to sign and we just continued. At our level, the government continued to operate.

*Q: Was Al Haig a presence?*

LOW: Not so far as our work was concerned.

*Q: Let's talk a big about the Panama Canal thing. As you came on board in 1974, how had things progressed at that point?*

LOW: There's not much to add. The policy of trying to negotiate a new Canal agreement with the Panamanians had been set by Lyndon Johnson at the time of the first riots in Panama in the early '60s. The Navy had some time previously won acceptance of the concept of a two ocean Navy. Now it was becoming quite clear that defending it militarily from Panama would be virtually impossible without a war involving great loss of life. When the Navy's ships became too large to transit the Canal, it became clear to senior leadership that not only did they no longer need it, but it could become a serious liability, so they dropped their historic opposition to a new agreement and the policy was set in concrete. The presidents that followed Johnson had no choice. Negotiations in a sense depended more on the Panamanians to set the speed with which we could move along. We also realized we had to start figuring out how we were going to get popular support for this inside the country. Most of this strategizing came after I had left the NSC for my next assignment. The special negotiator was Ellsworth Bunker who had an able retired colonel working for him. There was pretty good understanding between State and Defense in terms of planning which made life easier for us in the NSC and we didn't have to bat heads together. This was one of those few occasions when the realities (call it national interest?) simply overcame politics and popular mind-sets. None of the Presidents really wanted to do this, but all realized that they had no choice. In my experience, Reagan faced similar situations in South Africa and the Philippines. In both cases his clear preference would have been to stick with the apartheid government in South Africa and Marcos in the Philippines. But a combination of popular opinion and the unanimous view of the White House (NSC) staff, the State and Defense Departments forced him to agree to exercising strong U.S. leadership to force changes in the two governments. There simply was no alternative. Of course this is just an observation. I had long gone from the NSC by Reagan's time

*Q: I would think when it got to this point that the real problem - and the NSC being sort of the coordinator would have the hardest time - would be with particularly the Pentagon lawyers, not the military making a decision. Once the lawyers get into this thing, they want to squeeze everything out. Anything dealing with bases... Pentagon lawyers are the worst obstacle.*

LOW: Well, perhaps in some situations you may be right, but not in this one. The military was strongly supported by the civilian policy level officials. If the Pentagon lawyers were involved, their views would have supported State's desire to negotiate a satisfactory long term relationship. I went down to Panama on a couple of occasions. I myself was not closely involved in the actual negotiations. Our problems were more with the Panamanians in those days. They were being rather stubborn and difficult. We wanted to make an arrangement that was really workable, preserve some base rights in the area for a certain amount of time, and assure the right of intervention in the event the Canal was threatened by outside forces. It was not an easy negotiation. Even though our overall relations with the

Panamanians were good, they were constantly changing the participants on their side.

In the middle of it, I got a phone call from Bill Schaufele, who was then Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, asking me if I would agree to having my name put forward for ambassador to Zambia. Though it had been some time since I had been in African Affairs, it sounded like an interesting job so I told him to go ahead. The president, Kenneth Kaunda, seemed like a sympathetic figure (by chance, the New York Times Magazine section that week carried a long article on him with his picture was on the cover), and the various Southern African struggles were very much on people's minds. That kind of a job at that point hadn't crossed my mind. There had been some discussion about the DCM job in Mexico, but I hadn't even thought of an embassy at this point. So, I was surprised when they told me that I had been selected. That was 1976.

*Q: Before we leave the NSC, were there any other issues that the NSC got involved in this 1974-1976 period concerning Latin America?*

LOW: I think they were pretty run of the mill. We had intelligence oversight responsibilities, but again, those were fairly routine. We were asked to clear off on certain operations. We looked at it and did so. But I always remember being a little uncomfortable because it seemed to me hard to figure out the criterion under which one would approve or disapprove. I don't remember any major problem.

We were a little concerned over the increasingly independent directions the OAS (Organization of American States) was taking, particularly when it came to Cuban relations which were politically sensitive. But we recognized there was not much we could do, and a little distance was not a bad thing. We had good relations with Bill Rogers, who was then Assistant Secretary of State for Latin American Affairs, succeeding Charlie Meyers, and with his staff.

*Q: How about Nicaragua, Somoza, and all that?*

LOW: No Central American issues came up during that period. It was before guerilla activities had begun and hostilities had not yet broken out between the countries there. It was clear that, just as the situation in South Africa affected our relations with every other country in Africa, Panama affected our relations with every country in Latin America. Our progress in the negotiations with Panama, and the state of our bilateral relations were a major influence on our multilateral and bilateral relations with the rest of the continent. The Panamanians were effective in drawing worldwide attention to their cause in the press, at the UN and international conferences. The issue came up in most international meetings wherever in the world they took place. That was their way of building negotiating leverage. A resolution would be passed insisting that the United States work out a new relationship with Panama concerning the Canal before any conference got down to its business. In those days the U.S. was hassled at every international conference anywhere in the world, particularly those held in Bloc countries and the third world, just as we were five years later when I was involved in African affairs over South Africa. As Chet Crocker put it so very well, "Our relations with South Africa and Rhodesia affected our relations with every other

country on the continent." It was similar in Panama.

*Q: How about Puerto Rico? Those that didn't like the United States would raise Puerto Rico as a colonial issue.*

LOW: Yes, it came up from time to time, but more as an annoyance than a serious issue. It would be employed to try to soften us up for other, more contentious subjects or to demonstrate independence from the U.S. by countries like Brazil and Mexico. The situation there was completely transparent, and others knew well that we were following democratic procedures; more so, in many cases, than they themselves were with minorities in their own countries. We would explain to the Brazilians or others that this was an internal matter which we were taking care of in a democratic way. They would smile and get a little mileage out of it, but not very much. It was never a major issue.

*Q: I'd like to ask you a technical question. You were on the NSC working for Henry Kissinger. When he was down in Chile or somewhere working on a speech and says, "I want another draft," there is nothing to say that the 13th draft is going to be better than the first draft. As one of the apparatchiks in this process, how do you work it? Do you save your best phrases or something for when you know there is going to be a final one? What do you do?*

LOW: My role was one of damage limiting. I always saw a copy of each draft, I was not an original drafter. His speech writers and ARA would do an original draft. My task was to be sure that the President's position was respected and not compromised in any way and prevent one agency or another from running away with a policy issue that hadn’t yet been resolved within the government or was disputed by another department, and finally to see that the statement made sense altogether. I was not a word craftsman. The speechwriters in Kissinger's day, as in other days, had much more authority and played a more important role than people give them credit for. In those days, Kissinger had discovered human rights and had become an advocate of a more forthright position. It was interesting to see him go to Chile and proclaim the American backing for a strong human rights position.

*Q: Let's turn to Zambia.*

LOW: I was in Zambia from 1976-1979.

*Q: Let's talk first about the process. Zambia was pretty much a province of the professional Foreign Service with regard to the ambassador.*

LOW: There was not a long line of political candidates for the position. I don't think it ever had a non-career ambassador, before or since. Southern Rhodesia and now Zimbabwe had on some occasions, but nobody really knew much about Zambia or wanted to go there. Actually, it's a more pleasant and interesting post than might be thought. But, it was clearly a career appointment.

*Q: So, once the decision was made, there was no particular problem.*

LOW: Not as far as I'm aware.

*Q: In Zambia in 1976 when you went out there, what was the situation?*

LOW: It was a very interesting moment. Kenneth Kaunda had been President since independence in 1963. The war for social and political justice and independence in Southern Rhodesia had been going on for five or six years with increasing violence. The British had been making a number of efforts to resolve the matter, but they were torn, on the one hand, between not wanting to get involved and, on the other, wanting to honor their obligation to the indigenous population to leave it in a position to defend itself. It was the time following what's known as UDI, the Unilateral Declaration of Independence of 1965, in which the white government headed by Ian Smith, was in complete control with no African representation. In 1965 the British had declared that they would not resist UDI with armed forces, which emboldened Smith to go ahead with it. Their announcement was a mistake. That was Harold Wilson, I believe. On the one hand, they said they wouldn't resist it with armed force. On the other hand, they would not relinquish their legal claim that Southern Rhodesia was British territory and they would not negotiate or turn it over to any government without the agreement of the majority of Africans. There was an impasse which was increasingly opposed by two separate, organized African resistance armies.

A number of negotiations had taken place at various places, on warships and trains over Victoria Falls, between Smith, the British and the African leaders to find a satisfactory constitutional framework to which the Africans would agree. They had not made much progress by that time. But two other completely extraneous events had occurred which changed things radically. A coup d'état in 1974 had resulted in replacement of the dictatorship in Portugal by a democratically elected government which quickly withdrew from both Mozambique and Angola on Rhodesia's borders. Both countries soon became dominated by left-wing, independent African forces. That meant a source of arms and easy asylum on the Rhodesian border became available to the African independence forces. Prior to that only Zambia served that function, and it was constrained by being a landlocked state with supply routes running through apartheid controlled South Africa or Portuguese possessions. It suddenly became much more problematic that white rule could long survive in Rhodesia and perhaps even in South Africa. It was becoming increasingly evident that the U.S. would have to change its previous position that southern Africa was a British responsibility which we may not have liked, but which we would not interfere in.

The other important external factor was the end of the Vietnam War. That meant two things. First, freed of his Vietnam preoccupation, Kissinger now had time to give his attention to other parts of the world, areas where we might improve our international image. He immediately saw that a new more active role for the U.S. was needed in Southern Africa and he decided to take a trip through Africa in the spring of 1976. Before I got there he declared, in Lusaka, Zambia, that the United States was in favor of self-government in Rhodesia. I arrived two weeks before Kissinger was due to visit Zambia and meet with Smith in Salisbury, Southern Rhodesia (later Zimbabwe). I hadn't yet had a chance to present my credentials formally, which meant I had no formal representative role. Kaunda

got around that by always referring to me in third person. He couldn't have been nicer. I was fully involved and included in everything two weeks after I had arrived. Meanwhile Smith had accepted the principle of majority rule in Southern Rhodesia. Until 1977 I traveled and focused on getting to know Zambia.

Since his first trip, Kissinger had completely changed U.S. policy, taken over the negotiations between the independent but illegal white Southern Rhodesian government and the Africans, introduced the principle of majority rule as the basis for world recognition of the independence of Southern Rhodesia and gotten it accepted by the Smith white ruled government of the country. The next step was to return the British to the negotiations. It was agreed that they would chair a meeting with the Rhodesians and Africans in Geneva. But, then came the election of 1976 in the United States. Ford was defeated and Kissinger became a lame duck Secretary of State. His influence was badly weakened and the conference ended in complete failure. Carter became President and Vance took over as Secretary of State. In the meantime the British had also undergone a change of leadership. Harold Wilson had resigned and the foreign minister, Jim Callahan, had taken his place with Tony Crosland named foreign minister. But before significant negotiations could be resumed, Crosland died and Dr. David Owen was appointed. Owen, who was a brilliant, somewhat impulsive, but caring individual, really wanted to achieve a settlement in southern Africa. Rhodesia was even more of a thorn in the British side than Panama or later South Africa was for us. The world just wouldn't let them evade their responsibility for finding a just settlement in Rhodesia. Owen plunged in to try to resolve the situation with a trip around Africa. His broad conclusions were shared with our embassy in London and sent around to us. I don't recall the details, but the solution he proposed seemed wildly unrealistic to me. Both my colleague in Dar-es-Salaam, Jim Spain and I registered strong disagreement with Owen's conclusions. Whatever our differences with him, I know they were shared with the British and apparently they were persuasive enough that Owen and Vance consulted and decided to try a joint negotiating effort.

An African chiefs of mission conference had been organized in Abidjan at just about that time (May, 1977), even though a new Assistant Secretary for African affairs had not yet been appointed. Dick Moose was there as Under Secretary for Management along with Andy Young, ambassador to the UN. Moose and Young called me in to tell me of Vance and Owen's decision to form an Anglo-American Consultative Committee to explore a final solution for the Rhodesian problem and I was to be the American representative.. Whether it was then or a few weeks later I was informed that former ambassador John Graham was to be the British representative on the committee. After a few months I was to come back to Washington as senior deputy assistant secretary for African Affairs to Wayne Fredericks who would be assistant secretary.

But things don't always work out as planned. Wayne was hit by a taxi in London crossing the street as he was on his way to the airport to return to the States and suffered a concussion. It took some time before he recovered completely. The Department decided not to wait and Dick Moose was appointed assistant secretary. By that time I had become completely immersed in the Rhodesian negotiations. Dick recognized that they would continue for a long time and that it would be a mistake to take me away. Bill Harrop

became senior deputy in AF and I continued what became virtually my sole occupation during the remaining almost two years in Zambia.
*Q: I'd like to stop here and talk a little bit about how in Zambia. We did not have diplomatic relations with what was then called Southern Rhodesia. Were you the principal observer? What was the role of the American embassy as regards Southern Rhodesia?*

LOW: Zambia had absolutely no relations with Southern Rhodesia. It was in my capacity as a member of the Anglo-American Consultative Committee that I traveled to Southern Rhodesia. But I was exclusively engaged in negotiation of a settlement. I had no function as representative to Southern Rhodesia or later Zimbabwe.

*Q: I'm really talking about the practical thing. Were you getting information about what was going on?*

LOW: No except in so far as it affected the negotiations. For instance, I later became very interested in whether Smith's attempt at an "Internal Settlement" would work, and eventually concluded that it would fail as I informed Washington. We had nobody in Salisbury. The British kept us informed to a certain degree, but we really didn't have much information. The African forces were split between Zanu and Zapu. Zapu was the Ndebele group; Zanu the Shona. The Shona constituted perhaps 3/4 of the population; the other 1/4 was Ndebele. Zapu which was predominantly, but not entirely, Ndebele was headed by Joshua Nkomo. He had very close relations with Kaunda and his headquarters were in Lusaka. The Shonas, headed by Robert Mugabe were based in Maputo and had very close relations with the Mozambicans. We had contact with these leaders through our embassies in Lusaka and Maputo, and I had extensive contact with them in Salisbury (later Harare). I also had contact with the African movement in Namibia, then Southwest Africa, which also had its headquarters in Lusaka. The head of that organization was Hage Geingob, an American Ph.D, who subsequently became prime minister of Namibia at its independence. He was a rabid New York Knicks fan.

During the course of my three years in southern Africa I got to know the Africans pretty well, but Nkomo best of all. He often came to the residence to discuss procedures and substance, and I saw him at all the formal negotiating sessions. I never visited Zapu headquarters. He usually had others with him; sometimes only one person, but often a whole committee. Nkomo was a very big man weighing well over 200 pounds. We had a two person settee in our study which fitted him perfectly. We occasionally traveled on the same (commercial) airplane and would sometimes talk.

There was one episode in particular I will always remember. Johnny Graham and I, with his support staff of three or four traveled around southern Africa in the U.S. attaché aircraft from our embassy in Pretoria. The crew would use the occasion to take routine photographs of the terrain we passed over with a camera mounted in the belly of the plane. They were pretty relaxed and when we were in Salisbury would leave the camera with film in it in the plane. On one occasion they noticed the film was gone, but didn't take any notice. It happened a couple of times. During this period the war was spreading and becoming more violent. Smith's planes even bombed Lusaka hitting Nkomo's house which was only a few

blocks from President Kaunda's (and about the same distance from ours). Other Zapu targets in Lusaka were hit. How large the Zapu military presence in Lusaka was, I don't know, but it was not insignificant. The Rhodesian air force regularly attacked Patriotic Front, particularly Zanu, camps in Mozambique and Zambia. At one point I had invited Nkomo to breakfast. I got the newspaper early. To my horror, it carried a front page story quoting a South African source who described the picture-taking activities of the U.S. embassy attaché plane and claimed that the pictures were being turned over to the Rhodesian air force. Nkomo arrived and we started breakfast. When I asked him he said he hadn't seen the paper that morning. I showed it to him, looked him in the eye and said that it was absolutely untrue that we had given any pictures to the Rhodesians. He was quiet for a minute then nodded. I never heard another word about it. Had he wanted to, he could have raised a fuss and my safety in Zambia, as full as it was of Zapu forces, wouldn't have been worth much. I appreciated his role in this. We discovered that the Rhodesians had taken the film out of the plane's camera. I doubt that they got anything significant. We certainly weren't flying over Patriotic Front camps and wouldn't have recognized them if we had. But we lost our airplane which was invited out of the country and there was hell to pay in the attaché and intelligence sections of the Pretoria embassy.

One other small incident I remember about my relations with Nkomo. I sometimes got annoyed that both the Rhodesians and Patriotic Front considered they were doing us a great favor to agree to negotiate. On one occasion Nkomo and I were talking, I think it was in a Zambian guest house, and he made what I thought was a rather outrageous demand. I decided to try a new tactic and show a bit of anger myself. I asked him if he really wanted me to report his remarks to Washington. I can only say that it is my recollection that he backed off and started roaring - all 200 plus pounds of him. I never tried that again.

*Q: Basically, your information about what was going on - it wasn't as though you were sitting there with all sorts of intelligence people streaming in, letting you know day to day.*

LOW: Not at all. But I had a lot of contacts in various fields. Everyone wanted to talk about the situation. I made a point of talking to anyone who knew something about what was going on. That included some very active and knowledgeable journalists, religious leaders like the Quakers, business men like the Union Carbide people.

*Q: Did this make any difference as a practical measure?*

LOW: There was a lot we didn't know about the internal dynamics within the two African groups or, for that matter, inside the Rhodesian government and military. We got a certain amount from the British. We talked to everyone we could. Nkomo and Mugabe were forced by President Julius Nyerere of Tanzania and Kaunda of Zambia acting for what they called the frontline states (Zambia, Tanzania, Botswana, and Mozambique), into a very loose joint organization called the Patriotic Front, made up of Zanu and Zapu.

When John Graham came to Lusaka we talked at length. We put at the disposition of the Anglo-American group the attaché plane from Pretoria. He had a well organized staff of eight or nine including a lawyer and secretarial help, but I was alone. I did all my reporting

by using a hand recorder and leaving tapes at each embassy I visited. Our embassy in Pretoria would send someone up to collect my reports when we stayed for any length of time in Salisbury. It wasn't until near the end of our travels that Washington was able to provide a secretary to accompany me to help with organizing the trips and preparing the reports. The British made all the physical arrangements for our board and lodging in Salisbury where they stayed in the former Governors house and I at the Meikles Hotel. During the course of those two years I spent at least six months in that hotel. In other cities we each depended on our own embassies. Our negotiating instructions included the crucial requirement that any settlement had to be based on one-man-one-vote elections because it had to be acceptable to the African population. The Rhodesians agreed to our arrival in Salisbury and we started in mid 1977. I think during the next two years I made seven or eight swings through Southern Africa traveling, I once figured out, over a half million miles. Remembering the exact sequence of the trips and meetings is not easy, so I may not be entirely accurate in my account.

*Q: Did the British ever say "What the hell are you Americans doing?"*

LOW: No. Johnny and I had a wonderful relationship. We kept nothing from each other. There were times when I could help him with London by getting Cy Vance involved and others when he could help me with Washington by bringing in David Owen. He was a brilliant draftsman. He could dash off a lengthy report with an ink-pen and change only a word or two while we were flying from one city to another – sometimes we would have as many as three meetings in three capitals in a day. He was bright and sound, and a delightful companion. We didn't always agree exactly, but we worked together very closely. In general, he had better relations with the Rhodesians than I, and we Americans had much better contacts with the Patriotic Front than the British. David Owen understood well that the British needed us to increase their credibility.

*Q: Why was this?*

LOW: They carried a pretty heavy burden not only from years of colonial rule, but the Africans didn't trust them very far in terms of a settlement. British relations had been close with the settlers and not very close with the African nationalists. On the other hand, Andy Young and Jimmy Carter were revered figures in that part of the world. The Africans were much more willing to talk to us and believe us.

Together, we hammered out what we called the Anglo-American Proposal. This continually changed, but it was a proposal for transition to be followed by an independence government based on a one-man-one-vote election. Smith was interesting. The first time we told him that we would not accept anything less than one man, one vote, he nearly exploded. His initial proposal was for an African electorate of about 10 percent of the population. I argued that he might find the mass of Africans, including the rural voters, more sound and stable than the intellectualized and more radical African urban electorate which would qualify under his proposal. It took a little while but he came around to our point of view sooner than we had expected. Most of the time we met with Smith's Chief of Cabinet, Jack Gaylord, and a group of technical ministers. We discussed and negotiated for

a couple of weeks until we had the basis for a broad agreement. Gaylord was a measured, reasonable man who carried out Smith's instructions carefully. But he also understood that he was pursuing only one of Smith's paths towards an ultimate solution, and probably his least preferred one. At least in the beginning Smith still thought he could win a military victory over the Patriotic Front. I don't think he finally realized he couldn't win this war until after I had left Rhodesia in 1979 and then only after his military commander General Peter Walls and intelligence chief, Ken Flower, forced him to face the facts. He had a third alternative solution which he developed in 78. Unbeknownst to us, while we were negotiating with him and Gaylord, he was in discussion with three moderate African leaders residing inside Southern Rhodesia, not members of either Zapu or Zanu, who were willing to make an accommodation with Smith and accept a partnership with his government. His announcement of the agreement was made in March, 1978. He set up an Executive Council of which he was the chairman and three Africans were included: the most prominent was Bishop Abel Muzorewa, who had acted for Nkomo and Mugabe while they were in prison in successfully leading African rejection of an earlier solution negotiated between Britain and the Rhodesians; he had achieved a certain popularity among the African population. Another was Ndabningi Sitoli, a political activist and former head of Zanu who had decided to abandon the armed struggle. Thirdly, Smith included one of the senior chiefs of the Shona tribe, Chief Jeremiah Chirau. Majority rule was promised by the end of the 1978. Later Smith postponed the elections until April, 1979. The arrangement was called the an "Internal Agreement." Smith's method of operation was to pursue each of these possible three solutions simultaneously, hoping he would not have to settle for the track we were following.

*Q: You're talking about Ian Smith.*

LOW: Right. The negotiations for the ultimate form which an independent Zimbabwe government would take were carried on with the white Rhodesian government. We were unsuccessful in engaging the Patriotic Front in a discussion of this subject. We would spend days and days and weeks going over one provision after another with Gaylord and his group. Their concern clearly was with the ultimate arrangement that would be made, the ultimate constitution of an independent state. Then we would take what we had hammered out with the Rhodesians to the Africans. Their concerns were quite different. We didn't really understand this for a while. They weren't concerned with the constitution of the independent state. Their preoccupation was with the transition government which would be in control prior to the first elections and until independence, because during that period it would be decided who would take power. I believe they thought that whoever won could change the independence constitution as they wished.

*Q: You're really talking about the rivalry between the two African groups, who among them would have power.*

LOW: The negotiating process worked, in the final analysis, because each of the African parties was absolutely convinced that it would win a democratic election. No one was trying to avoid an election. Since each believed it would win the election, their principal concern was not so much to create election conditions favorable to themselves as it was to

prevent the white establishment (bureaucracy, police force, armed forces, and politicians) from controlling the transition period in which the new leadership would be selected so as to tilt the election towards the internal settlement leaders. They wanted to control that period themselves. In a sense, it was a non-negotiation. The Patriotic Front wouldn't discuss land distribution or constitutional amendment procedures or other matters in the independence constitution which we had discussed in detail with the Rhodesian government. And the white Rhodesians weren't interested in talking about the transition period.

The situation was complicated by the number of parties involved. Not only were we talking to the Africans and white Rhodesians, but periodically we went to South Africa to tell them what we were doing, then to Mozambique to brief Machel; to Tanzania to bring Nyerere up to date; and back to Zambia to do the same with Kaunda. Sometimes we would include Seretse Khama or his successor, Masire, in Botswana. Even though they wanted to be kept informed they would all say "Don't talk to us. Go back to the parties and get their agreement. We're all for you." The Frontline states, all wanted a solution, and supported our efforts. The war was hurting them too. However, their leverage with the Patriotic Front was limited. PF forces resident in Zambia and Angola were strong compared to the local armies. The South African position was not entirely different. Though there were no Rhodesian forces inside its boarder, popular sentiment was such that its leverage over Smith was also limited. The South Africans were frank. They told us they would not participate in imposing a settlement on the Rhodesians, but that if we could get an agreement between the parties, they would help see that it stuck.

At first, Mugabe and Zanu did not accept American participation. He insisted on the fiction that the only party with whom he could negotiate was the British, whom he held legally responsible for Rhodesia. He believed he had more leverage over them. I don't think he thought he could bring the same degree of pressure on us. So, for a while, he would either refuse to meet with Johnny if I was there, or pretend that I wasn't there. Though the fiction was always maintained, his objections to U.S. participation was dropped after a few months. I believe Mugabe recognized the advantages which the U.S. could bring to the negotiations.

We had a number of meetings and thought we were making progress. In fact we were able to set out a fairly detailed ultimate structure of the independent state. We showed the complex arrangement, largely drafted by the British lawyer, to each party. During this period it was always on the table and subject to negotiation although it was eventually published. When we thought we had gotten far enough, David Owen, Cy Vance and Andy Young decided to meet with each of the parties - Smith and the Rhodesians on the one side and the Patriotic Front on the other. The meeting with the PF in Dar Es Salaam was difficult. The large PF delegation, which included a number of military figures, was often hostile and emotional, though the proposal was not rejected.

In an initially unrelated development, President Nyerere of Tanzania visited Washington. He was convinced that the key to the negotiations was the makeup of the armed forces of an independent Zimbabwe. As our ambassador to Tanzania, Jim Spain was present rather

than I at the meeting with President Carter in the Cabinet room. Nyerere, who could be very persuasive, as every American ambassador who has served in Tanzania knows, asked Carter to meet alone with him. They went into the Oval Office and after some time came back, I am told, all smiles. Later, the President informed Dick Moose of the understanding which had been reached. Carter and Vance were strongly of the view that a settlement depended on Frontline cooperation. They believed the Frontline states led by Nyerere and Kaunda could deliver Patriotic Front cooperation in the agreement we had worked out with the Rhodesians which promised majority rule. However Nyerere and Kaunda were refusing to take responsibility for delivering the Frontline, and would not agree to participate in a meeting with the parties. So Carter and Nyerere agreed that if the U.S. (and Britain) would accept that the army of the newly independent country would be based on the Patriotic Front forces, the Frontline would participate in a meeting between the parties and cooperate in trying to reach a settlement.

We were surprised, to say the least, when we heard from Dick Moose of this agreement. The British were appalled when we told them. It seemed to those involved in the negotiations that this would appear to the Rhodesians to be almost tantamount to surrender to the Patriotic Front armed forces.

The Washington meeting between Nyerere and Carter took place just before Vance, Owen, Young and a whole plane load of others were due to go to Salisbury to present the published proposal to Smith and his government. We flew from London to Nairobi where it was decided it would be more appropriate to spend the night than Salisbury. In Nairobi we and the British were arguing over a detail in the proposal (I don't remember what it was). We only came to a final agreement at about three in the morning. Then we got up at four to go out to the airplane to fly to Salisbury. The Rhodesians in the meantime had held their federal, white only, elections the night before and they had been up all night awaiting the returns. The meeting which was held the next morning was extraordinary. People would periodically nod off to sleep on both sides of the table while we droned through the provisions of the proposal one after another. But we didn't inform the Rhodesians at that meeting of our agreement that the independence forces would be based on the liberation armies. That was left to Johnny and me at a smaller meeting with Gaylord and the technical officials that afternoon. To neither of our surprise, they went through the roof, saying they didn't think there was much chance of an agreement on that basis. However no one had yet rejected the proposals.

A few months later the British named Field Marshal Lord Carver to be British resident commissioner during the transition period and asked him, together with the newly appointed UN Special Representative, General Prem Chand, to go to Rhodesia to talk about implementing the proposal. The British thought that this most senior of British army officer would reassure the Rhodesians that the British military would see to it that the transition would be fair and orderly. I was asked to accompany him on the trip. I was the only American involved in a plane load (C-130) of UK officials. Johnny Graham in the meantime had been temporarily replaced by another fine senior British diplomat, Robin Ware who had not been directly involved in the previous negotiations. I was the only senior member of the group who had been. But I was very much an outsider. I didn't know the

Field Marshal at all and had hardly spoken to him prior to our arrival in Salisbury. There, he decided to get off the plane in full uniform. Had he asked me, I doubt that I would have advised him against it. His intention, and that of the British, was to demonstrate from the beginning that he was a military officer, not a politician, who would behave in a tough, fair and non-partisan manner. However, the Rhodesians interpreted his arrival in uniform, or perhaps more accurately, chose to take it, as the reason for breaking off the whole negotiation. They said his action indicated that the British were really trying to undo their unilateral independence and reassert sovereignty over the country. This, they said, was entirely unacceptable and they refused to engage him in substantive discussions. I think they refused to talk to him largely because of our agreement to base the independence army on the liberation armies, which they couldn't accept. They simply chose his action as a convenient excuse. However, again, they did not reject the proposals.

Owen and Vance had met with all the negotiators in London on the way back from Salisbury and decided to press on with an attempt to get all the parties together to resolve outstanding areas in dispute. The Patriotic Front, concerned to undermine the internal agreement in Salisbury, agreed to attend, but Smith refused. A meeting was held with the PF in Malta where my old car-pool friend, Bruce Laingen, was ambassador. As it turned out Cy Vance couldn't attend but Owen and Andy Young, backed by Dick Moose, Carver and Chand met and made considerable progress in outlining an interim regime which included PF participation in a Governing Council and a UN role.

The solution which was being worked out was second or third best to both sides. At that point, each thought it could do better either through continuation of the armed struggle or, in Smith's case, either war or the Internal Agreement. And so the negotiations were put in abeyance for a while.

Smith thought he saw a way to strengthen his hand. With the prospect of a British election the next year which might result in a Thatcher Conservative government already sympathetic to lifting sanctions, Smith thought that if he could get the U.S. Congress to drop sanctions, Thatcher would be unable to keep the conservative majority from doing the same thing. The lift that would have given Smith's internal settlement would at least have postponed a loss of power by white Rhodesians for a number of years. Had that happened, Mugabe and perhaps Nkomo might well not have survived. Their armed forces were already becoming impatient with their efforts to negotiate a settlement based on civilian political rule. Leadership of Zanu and perhaps, but less likely, Zapu, would have passed to military figures and the ultimate outcome would have been considerably different. Smith was encouraged to think he could get Senate support for lifting sanctions. A visit was arranged to the U.S. by Smith and his African colleagues in the Executive Council in October, 1978. He had public relations assistance arguing that sanctions should be lifted to give the internal settlement a chance. A resolution to lift sanctions, dependent on an all parties meeting and majority rule, was successfully passed in the Senate. But Smith and his supporters had not bargained with Congressman Steve Solarz, chairman of the Africa subcommittee of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, and a strong supporter of African independence movements. Solarz got the House committee to vote unanimously to reject lifting sanctions. The vote had been very close in the Senate. As a result the conference

committee struck lifting sanctions from the bill and Smith's effort failed. I think that was a turning point in the process of finding a settlement in Rhodesia/Zimbabwe.

In January 1979, the British wanted to resurrect the discussions. The prime minister sent the Speaker of the House of Parliament, Cledwyn Hughes, to determine whether an all parties meeting could be held and whether it would be successful. I was appointed to accompany him. We went all through the whole routine again and really made no progress at all. Both we and the British agreed that until the parties were willing to commit themselves to a serious effort to negotiate a settlement, an all parties conference would be fruitless. I made one further trip to Rhodesia in early 1979 together with a foreign and commonwealth officer, Robin Renwick, who later became British ambassador to the United States. We found no change in the situation.

Smith still hoped that the British elections scheduled for the spring of 1979 might help if the Conservatives won. In fact, the elections did result in a defeat for the Labour government. Margaret Thatcher came to power with a statement on record that she would lift Rhodesian sanctions and adopt a more understanding attitude towards the Rhodesian government. However, Peter Harrington was made foreign minister. He had visited Lusaka regularly during the time I was there and came to see me a number of times. At that point he was the Conservative's shadow foreign minister. I found him one of the most astute observers I knew and was under no illusions about the importance of continuing the negotiations, so I did not give up hope.

At that point we left Zambia for an assignment to Nigeria. But the process continued. A Commonwealth Conference was held in Lusaka. Margaret Thatcher came there with a changed assessment of the situation from the views she expressed before the election. Peter Harrington and her Commonwealth partners had done their work. It was quickly agreed to return to the negotiations but without formal U.S. participation, though we and the British understood that we would work closely to support the effort. Their negotiations were based on our modified Anglo-American Settlement Proposal. It was somewhat modified during the course of tense negotiations led by Lord Carrington at a Lancaster House conference attended by all parties and by December agreement was achieved. A British governor went to Salisbury in early 1980 and elections were held the middle of the year, resulting in a Mugabe victory and independence.

*Q: Going back to this Nyerere-Carter meeting, what was the rationale for Nyerere pushing for the Liberation Front forces?*

LOW: He was absolutely convinced that this was a *sine qua non* for the Africans. I don't believe it was Nkomo or Kaunda's view. I think he was reflecting Mugabe, but and I am not sure that even he felt as strongly as Nyerere. At this point, Nyerere and Kaunda were at odds. No African had expressed this view to me. On the contrary, it is not beyond imagination that the PF might have accepted was my impression that the Patriotic Front would have gladly accepted the existing Rhodesian armed forces which were very good and overwhelmingly black, replacing the white officers with their own as well as some of the troops. Whether they wanted to "base" the independence army on their forces is

something else. This was Nyerere's conviction, and his way of taking over leadership of the negotiations. He was an extraordinarily bright, analytical person with a tendency to attach himself to a point of view which was often peripheral in order to assert leadership of a process. He had done this before.
*Q: I had the impression that Nyerere was a very bright, very persuasive person who practically destroyed his country.*

LOW: He was certainly a very bright, persuasive person and there is no question that he always insisted that his own initiatives become the principal concern of the moment. He was sympathetic to Kaunda, but he could usually talk Kaunda into following his lead.

*Q: In a way, he was almost a meddler.*

LOW: Mischievous. In many ways, I think that's the case. I don't know what would have happened if we hadn't agreed to his point of view on the independence army. Things weren't ripe for a solution yet. Smith wasn't ready to negotiate a settlement. He hadn't played out the war effort, his internal settlement or his appeal to the British and American conservatives yet. So it may not have made much difference, but it did provide the Rhodesians with support to end the negotiations for the time being.

*Q: You mentioned that Ian Smith was following the usual two track policy: negotiate or fight.*

LOW: There were actually three tracks. The internal settlement was the third. Smith's preference would have been to defeat the armed rebellion and retain power for the white population with a few minor concessions to the Africans in the governmental structure. As a fallback he would have been willing to live with the internal settlement where he retained power behind the scenes. I think he considered our negotiations only a little better than complete defeat. The internal settlement might have worked, at least for a little while. But the question was, would it have resolved the war? I did not think it would. There was a lot of pressure in the United States to accept Smith's internal agreement. Not only did more conservatives in Congress take this position, but also those who did not think we should be involved in a problem in which we had so little security interest. Even President Carter wavered a bit, but Andy Young would have nothing to do with the internal agreement. We were trying to assess the chances of short term success. We knew it wouldn't work over the long term, but there was a chance it might for a few years. As expected, the Patriotic Front did not accept it, and announced that the armed struggle would continue. At first one couldn't tell which way it was going to go. Anybody who was at all honest at this point had to accept that it could have gone either way. I remember talking to a lot of people in Salisbury before and during the Vance/Owen visit there. My mother was ill, so I returned to the States with Vance for a few days. I had been going night and day for some time without help and was pretty tired. The Department agreed to send me back to South Africa first class. It was the first time I could take time to think things through, to consider and analyze my impressions. I remember sitting there outlining, essentially writing, a message in which I concluded that it had now become clear that the internal settlement was not going to succeed. It was a declining force, while the Patriotic Front was getting stronger.

We could not, at this point, weaken our insistence on a negotiated solution acceptable to the Africans. Had Smith made a real attempt to make it work, I think it could have developed considerable support and lasted a few more years. But he couldn't resist attacking and tearing down the people he had put in power. Muzorewa was a weak leader and Smith regularly undercut him. The Bishop lost the initial support he had received. Chief Chirau was completely out of his element. Sitoli was a spent force. Smith finally began to recognize the generally deteriorating situation in Rhodesia. The impact of sanctions was not determining, but it was important. The Rhodesians could sell their tobacco, but they got a little less for it than if there been no sanctions. And their imports cost a little more. They could still get embargoed oil through South Africa, but it cost more. Over the course of 10 years that margin began to add up and the economy was suffering badly. On top of that the internal security situation was getting much worse.

To give you an idea, on one occasion, Johnny and I in Salisbury were invited out to Mr. Norman's farm. He later became the only white minister in Mugabe's first government, so he was not unsympathetic to the Africans. He was a farmer and head of the Organization of Farmers in Rhodesia. I remember driving out to his farm one Saturday afternoon to have dinner and stay for the night. We changed and went down to the living room for a drink before dinner. In the corner was an arsenal of at least one automatic weapon for every one of the seven or eight guests. Each one of us took one and kept it within reach all evening. When we went from the living room to the dining room we carried it with us to the table, and we kept it with us when we went to bed. It was a very, very tense situation. In those circumstances, even though the Ndebele and the Shona were constantly at each other's throats, it was becoming an impossible situation for Smith.

In Lagos the Nigerians were absolutely convinced that the British were going to fix the elections and impose a solution. I spent a lot of time talking to Foreign Minister Audu trying to explain that the British wanted a settlement that was acceptable to the population so that they could get out of Rhodesia honorably. The Nigerian leadership was very skeptical. My long involvement with the situation helped convince them that the election would be fair and that they should back it, and accept the results. In the event, they were surprised that it was, indeed, a fair election, that the British accepted Mugabe's overwhelming victory and proceeded with the agreed transition which would result in turning the country over to him.

*Q: What was your impression of Ian Smith as a person?*

LOW: Our relations were always very civil, even pleasant. He was willing to listen, even though he didn't like what we were saying. Every time Johnny and I went to Salisbury, we met with him. Usually, there would be 10 or 12 people in the room. Occasionally, there would be a social event where we could have a private word with him. He was polite. He was clearly exploring all possibilities. There was not a lot of ego there. He was trying to find a way out and wanted to keep all his options open. Clearly, at his instructions, we had very serious discussions with Gaylord. So, my relations with him were relatively straightforward.

*Q: What was your impression during this period both as ambassador and also on the Rhodesian side of Kenneth Kaunda?*

LOW: My communications with him were fairly formal. I saw him frequently, and spent a week escorting him to Washington to meet with President Carter and then around the country visiting Texas and California. Still there was kind of a ritual to our meetings in Lusaka. Either he wanted to tell me something, or I had something I needed to pass on to him. There was rarely a great deal of discussion or give and take. From time to time he would invite me to a meal, always with others present. Usually the occasion was a visiting American official. He didn't like to discuss substance at a meal and when one of the visitors, I believe it was Congressman Solarz got into substance, he was not happy. The dinners were occasions of high hilarity, though the jokes were usually the same. I don't think he was that comfortable. He was even less comfortable with others who came to visit him. Usually I would accompany the Americans who came to see him, but some would insist on seeing him alone. I think that made him even less comfortable and was generally to the visitor's detriment. My predecessor had a run-in when Senator Clark of Iowa wanted to see Kaunda alone. This was during the Nixon administration and he was a Democrat. Ambassador Wilkowski was not happy with the idea and negotiated with his staff that she would come along only to introduce him. In the event, she stayed through the entire meeting. But I think that was one of the reasons she didn't get another embassy.

Kaunda had a great regard for President Carter whom he had met in Washington. He told me more than once, "Carter is too good for you Americans. You're going to reject him. I believe him but I don't think you support him." When Carter was defeated for the reelection, he told me "I told you so." Andy Young was the other American he had great respect for. Because of the two of them Kaunda trusted the U.S. more than most other non-African countries during that period.

But my real discussions, where there was a lot of give and take, were with his personal assistant, Mark Chona and later on with his replacement, the author and economist, Dominic Mulayisho. They were young, bright, talented and likeable Africans with whom I could be quite frank. They were a channel to Kaunda which I used instead of the Foreign Office at their request! During those three years I did not visit the Foreign Office often. Rhodesia/Zimbabwe issues were handled in the presidency by Kaunda and his staff. When Secretary Kissinger or the Department sent a message that was supposed to be given personally to the chief of state, as happened more often than it should have, I could often get to Kaunda, but sometimes I would have to deliver it through Chona or Mulayisho. At this later stage in his career, Kaunda was most comfortable with the people who had been with him from the beginning. Still he was often quite friendly and warm. On one occasion when David Owen, British foreign minister was visiting Lusaka. We were having dinner at the British high commissioner's home. In the middle of it, I got a call from Government House. President Kaunda wanted to see me. So, I excused myself and went over. Kaunda gave me a message for the British foreign minister. I was a little embarrassed vis-a-vis my colleague and friend, the British high commissioner who was sitting right there. Kaunda felt more comfortable dealing with us, and he wanted to be sure we got the message too. Like many Africans he had a love-hate relationship with the British. He was not fond of

them, but when Queen Elizabeth visited Lusaka, nothing was good enough for her. He turned everything inside out for the visit.

*Q: Speaking of having bright young Africans on the staff, this was not that racist a regime. It was different than one might think.*

LOW: There were no Africans in Smith's government or in any way involved in speaking for him until the internal settlement came into effect, and then Africans were appointed as Executive Council members or ministers but there were none at working levels.

*Q: Did you find that there were (one always thinks about the person who realizes they're in a losing cause), rabid whites who would come at you?*

LOW: No, I don't ever recall an unpleasant encounter. Not like the Soapy Williams affair when a white Rhodesian punched or slapped him when he arrived at the Lusaka airport. We would arrive, there would be a large crowd including both public and press to greet us and ask a few questions. Pictures would appear in the papers and occasionally they would publish a cartoon commenting on our efforts. Smith made it very clear that we were to be treated as serious people, seriously negotiating, so that virtually everybody we saw was respectful. We made few if any public speeches and no effort to appeal to public opinion. We obviously couldn't have done that. I did a lot of background press interviews. After each round of talks Johnny would do it for British journalists and I would do it for the American press. It seemed to me much preferable that the press have an accurate general impression of the direction things were going than to have them go off with some wild rumor that had no foundation. During much of the first half of 1978 there was talk of an all parties conference. We even had picked out a date and place at a meeting in London. The press was desperate to find out the details. We were all flying back to the United States on Vance's airplane with a press section in the rear. By the time we got to Washington, they had found out where and when it was to be held. In fact it never took place, but the ability of the United States government to keep a secret of this kind is not very high. The press is very skillful. They know how to weasel something out of a group of people. They will start out with a wrong statement trying to get you to contradict them and then build on small facts till they get what they want. It is kind of a game, and they are very good at it. It is particularly difficult dealing with the press when there is a specific fact like this that they are trying to get. We wanted that meeting to take place outside of the glare of publicity so that the Africans could concentrate on the substance of the negotiations instead of continuing their rival campaigns for public support.

*Q: How were they able to get a majority of the Senate to vote lift sanctions?*

LOW: There was strong support for lifting from the mining interests. Chrome was an important import and most of it is in Zimbabwe. Also, there was a lot of support from Senator Helms and many of the others for his point of view to lift sanctions to support the internal agreement. The others didn't feel strongly enough about it. The House did.

*Q: In 1979, you went to Nigeria. You were in Nigeria from 1979 to July 4, 1981. How did*

*this appointment come about?*

LOW: I had been a little over three years in Zambia. That was the normal length of an ambassadorial appointment. But there were other factors, too. My role in the negotiations was over. The close cooperation which had existed between David Owen and Cy Vance during the joint Rhodesia effort was gone. Carrington knew the Rhodesia/Zimbabwe situation intimately. The British didn't feel they needed us and made it clear they wanted to carry on the negotiations themselves. We certainly had no objection to their taking the lead. And we continued to back the effort fully.

I got a call one day asking if I wanted to go to Argentina. Frankly, that wouldn't have been my first choice, but one doesn't turn down an offer of that kind - at least, I didn't feel I could. I said that if that was where they wanted to send me, I would go. But I wasn't disappointed when the non-career officer who was there decided he wanted to stay another year. Then I got a call from Dick Moose asking if I would like to go to Nigeria. Well, Lagos wasn't considered the garden spot of the world, but it seemed to me to make sense. I felt more qualified to take it than Argentina. I knew something about the context. I had spent 10 years in African affairs either in Washington or in Africa. It was an important post and an interesting and challenging one. I said, "Sure."
*Q: How did you feel about the whole accords when you left Zambia?*

LOW: On my mission with Cledwyn Hughes we had both concluded that there was no possibility at that point of proceeding with the negotiations. The sides simply weren't prepared to make the accommodations that would have been necessary for a settlement. My feeling was that we didn't have much of a chance at that point, but I remember when I went to say good bye to President Kaunda he gave me a pretty copper tray and made a little speech. He kidded me about not spending a lot of time in Zambia. Then he turned serious and said that it had never bothered him because "You were working on the most important problem Zambia had, the search for a settlement in Zimbabwe." Then he thanked me, I believe quite sincerely, for my efforts and said he felt that we had done our best and that it had been worthwhile. I had always believed that it was essential for the U.S. position in Africa and more broadly in the world that we be seen to be making a serious and good faith effort to find settlements to the Southern African problems in Zimbabwe, Namibia and ultimately in South Africa. Because the Africans themselves could not force change, they would use all the leverage they had to get us to resolve these problems for them. Unless we were actually trying to do something about it, they would take it out on us in every international forum in the world. I further felt that you never knew when you were going to have a lucky breakthrough; when things were going to change as they inevitably would, hopefully for the better. Eventually, the people involved would recognize that neither side was benefitting from further violence, and that negotiation and compromise were the best way out. You have to have a framework set up and a basis for agreement worked out so that you are ready when the moment comes. I had no idea at the time that that is exactly what was going to happen before the year was out. Yes, it was discouraging at the moment we left, but I had no doubt that we had been moving in the right direction, or that we should continue. Eventually I knew a settlement would be reached, probably along the lines we had set out. I didn't expect it to be so soon.

So, I came back. We had a little vacation, then waited a few weeks because the departing ambassador in Lagos, Don Easum, thought it advisable to remain through the turn-over by the military to an elected civilian government. Then we then set off for Lagos. Just before we left, I was invited to a reception at the White House for Don McHenry, who had just been appointed UN Special Representative, taking Andy Young's place. I remember going through the receiving line and reaching Vice President Mondale. I guess I was introduced as the ambassador designate to Nigeria. He looked at me and said, "Young man, you've got to do something about the price of oil." I looked at him and said, "Yes, Sir" and went on. I scratched my head for a long time and thought "What in the world am I going to do about the price of oil?" The conversation was a good warning that something had to change. I worked hard on that.

At that point, we had a nine billion dollar annual deficit with Nigeria, second only to Japan, and Japan's was only 10 or 11 billion at that point. (That obviously changed greatly during the next few years.) Nigeria was our second largest supplier of petroleum products. The civilian government had just taken over in September. The President was an intelligent and able man named Shagari who was quite low-key. We had a very pleasant conversation when I went to present credentials.

After I was there three or four months, people coming out from Washington would say to me, "Steve, it's not a very satisfactory situation and people in Washington are expecting you to do something about it." I was in the undesirable position of representing the U.S. in a country which was very important to us, but where we weren't very important to it. Yes, we were an important market for them, but they knew that we were their prisoner; we had no other sources of oil as desirable in terms of quality and location. We weren't going to look elsewhere. They could treat us as they wanted. I needed to do something about it.

I traveled around a great deal. During the almost two years I was there I visited the capital of every one of the then 19 states. I think I was the first foreign diplomat to do that. Some of the states had been carved out in the last year or two. Each one wanted its perquisites: a state house, a building for its legislature, a university, etc. They were busy building all these things. The cost was enormous and not very economically sound. You had to spend a little time in each state if you were to understand the real politics that was going through the minds of the leaders in Lagos. If you wanted to talk to an Assembly member, a governmental official, a politician, or anyone else from the state of Benue, for instance, and you understood something of its politics, you had a basis to discuss things which were meaningful to him. You could make real contact that way. I found the travel a marvelous way of getting to know and understand the real dynamics of Lagos.

As I traveled around, I became increasingly aware of the problems and importance of Nigeria's failing agriculture. This was an oil rich country. It was being poisoned by oil and its related activities, as is so often the case. Oil and its related activities provided the easy way to make money and other pursuits were being abandoned. People were flooding to the cities. Agriculture was getting less and less productive. From being a rich agricultural exporter, Nigeria had become a net importer and the deficit was growing. People would ask

me, "What are you going to do about it?" My stock answer was, "WE'RE not going to do anything. This is an issue for the Nigerians to resolve. We'd be glad to help, but it's up to you to tell us how." While visiting our consulate general in Kaduna, I made a speech to open an agricultural fair and the question had been raised. We had a very bright and thoughtful consul general in Kaduna, Joe Lake. I wasn't satisfied with my answer and Joe and I talked about it at length that night. I woke up the next morning convinced that indeed my answer had been wrong. I realized that we had to take the lead with the Nigerians in trying to address the problem. And the way to do it was not with U.S. aid.

We did not have a foreign assistance program in Nigeria at this time. I was opposed to the assignment of an AID officer or initiation of any kind of foreign assistance program to a country with which we our second largest deficit. Loans or grants to it would be hard to defend before Congress. Though there was considerable poverty, Nigeria was comparatively better off than most African countries. This was something private enterprise could help with. Joe and I came up with the idea of forming a joint U.S.-Nigerian committee to facilitate private cooperation in agriculture. Americans had often come to me saying they didn't understand Nigeria and didn't know how to operate in it. These were Americans with a genuine interest in investing and with real know-how. It seemed to me that a tripartite organization made up of government, private business entrepreneurs, and foundations could facilitate joint projects in the agricultural field from seed production, to growing, harvesting, storage, marketing and transportation to market. Obviously, if this was to work; if American enterprise was to get involved in Nigerian agriculture, it needed funds, know-how, and a welcoming atmosphere, none of which then existed. The thing to do was to get together a group of people who could facilitate that kind of thing. I talked to the Nigerian minister of agriculture about it. He thought it was an idea worth exploring. Then I wrote the proposal up and sent it to Washington to be considered. Debbie Schwartz, the bright and active Nigerian desk officer took it and started moving it up in the African Bureau and into the Department of Agriculture.

*Q: Who was she?*

LOW: The last I heard, Debbie was DCM in Nicaragua. She had learned Chinese and become a China expert where she had served with her husband and two children for a couple of tours. Then I looked around in the private community in the United States. Somebody suggested Orville Freeman, former Secretary of Agriculture and Governor of Minnesota. I think he was then head of the Conference Board, in New York City. My idea was to get Vice President Mondale (a Democrat from Minnesota like Freeman) to ask Orville Freeman to take on the job of the American chairman. There were to be co-chairmen. The Nigerians were a little lukewarm at first. I couldn't figure out why they didn't jump on it. Then they came to me one day and said, "Fine, we like the idea but we want to name the organization," to which I readily agreed. I've always believed that you get an idea or project accepted by encouraging others to have an input, giving them credit, so that they become joint sponsors. So I asked what their suggestion was? When they came up with "The Joint Agricultural Consultative Committee (JACC)," I replied, "JACC it is." And JACC it remained from then on. They were pleased. President Shagari expressed his complete support and, after we got Orville Freeman to head it from the American side, he

chose a northerner, one of his most trusted and ablest colleagues, Al-haji Ahmed Joda, to be the Nigerian co-chair. So, we got high-level Nigerian attention and able leadership for the project. The two chairmen got together and we made steady progress organizing it. By this time, it was more than a year after I had arrived. It was a matter of great satisfaction to me that the last month I was in Nigeria, the Nigerian National Council, a high profile organization made up of the legislature, state governors, traditional chiefs, the presidency and ministers, in brief the entire political leadership of Nigeria, was having a one day meeting in Lagos at the same time as the JACC was there. Eight or 10 Americans had come, including Orville Freeman, and a similar number of Nigerians. In the middle of the meeting I got word that President Shagari would come over to talk to us. When I met him at the door, I said, "We're pleased and honored that you are taking the time to join us." His reply was, "Mr. Ambassador, this is the most important thing going on in Nigeria right now. Agriculture is the most important problem we have." He spent a couple of hours there in the middle of the National Council meeting. That gave me a very good feeling. We had made some progress towards changing our relationship with Nigeria so that the U.S. was becoming almost as important to Nigeria as Nigeria was to us. After I had left the country, and was “rusticated” to the University of California at Santa Barbara, the new Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, Chet Crocker, made his first major speech in New York. In it he said that he wanted to make projects like the JACC the model for building relationships with other countries of Africa. That pleased me very much.

Nigeria is a fascinating country with great potential. The people have enormous energy and are very capable and bright. We found it a very exciting country to live in. But my job was very different from that in Zambia. Here it was economic and bilateral; there it had been political and multilateral.

*Q: The Nigerians who have come to the United States... I have a friend who is a banker in Baltimore. He said, "My god, these guys can think of ways to get around the banking system." We're talking about illegal systems. They're much brighter and faster than the normal American banker. They run circles around us.*

LOW: That's true. They have two things going for them. They're very bright and they're very energetic. I remember that before going to Nigeria we were into a store in downtown Washington. The saleswoman was from Nigeria. We began talking, and she told us she was married to a Nigerian; had a baby; was going to school and had a full-time job at this store. The Nigerians have a way of sizing up a situation and moving into it with vigor and intelligence. They make it work. They understand the way things work in the U.S., and how to take advantage of it. Usually it’s positive but not always. Some of their mail fraud schemes have taken Americans for a lot of money. They have an impressive level of competence, too. Obasanjo, the former president, was the top student in his class at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth. One of the top students in his class at the Harvard Business School was a Nigerian. He became the head of Lever Brothers in Nigeria. When I visited the state of Ougun, there were, I think, five or six U.S. Ph.D.s among the state level ministers. When Pat Harris, Secretary of Health and Human Welfare, came to Lagos for a visit, we met with the entire medical faculty of the University of Lagos. There must have been 25-30 professors sitting around the room, all in their robes.

They were impressive older men. (There may have been a woman, though there certainly weren't many.) Every one of those faculty members was a British-trained doctor and had been practicing for 20 or so years. These were very competent and energetic people; perhaps more so than elsewhere in Africa as I knew it. It was impressive, but it was also turbulent, although without the level of violence that has appeared more recently. People would say that at any one moment, 40 million Nigerians were selling something to the other 40 million Nigerians. It certainly seemed that way. We had a lot of visitors from the United States; Congressional delegations, Naval ships, journalists, academics, businessmen who were interested in the new Nigerian democracy and considered the country important to us.

*Q: When you went out, besides the oil thing, to put it in context, President Carter had been hit by the energy crisis. There had been lines for gasoline. So, oil was very much on everybody's mind. Before you went out, were there any particular things you were given a list of to try to do?*

LOW: No, not that I recall. One wrote his or her own instructions. The overriding question was the unequal economic relationship.

*Q: From your observation in the 1979-1981 period, what was the oil impact on Nigeria? I've heard of stories of huge waiting lists of ships trying to get into the harbor, tremendous waste, corruption, and all that.*

LOW: The stories of all the cement they ordered sitting in ships waiting in Lagos harbor is from an earlier period. There was a lot of corruption without doubt. It was raw and rough. Five years before, it took six to eight hours to get from the airport into Lagos. By the time I got there, you could do it in less than an hour. They had built what they called "flyovers" (overpasses). In a number of areas, the worst inefficiencies had been worked out by Obasanjo and his predecessors. He was a very able president and who insisted on turning power back to the civilians.

There is a story told about Obasanjo. The Nigerian constitution required that the winning candidate receive a majority of the votes nationally and a majority in two thirds of the states. Shagari had received a majority of the votes, but exactly what constituted two thirds of states was left to the Supreme Court to decide. Had it decided that Shagari did not win in two thirds of the states, the election would have been thrown into the legislature where the Yoruba candidate, an old, probably corrupt, politician would have won. Obasanjo was holding a cabinet meeting when word (which turned out to be false) came that the Court's decision would be to throw the election into the legislature. Everybody turned to Obasanjo and asked "What are we going to do?" He is reported to have replied, "I don't know what you're going to do, but I can tell you what I am going to do. On September 7th, I am walking out of here and turning the government over to whoever is selected president." He had a very clear notion of his responsibility. In the event, the supreme court decided that Shagari was the winner. He was an impressive man but perhaps not the strongest leader. He had some able people in his government, but some were very corrupt. They were struggling, and I thought they were going to make it. I thought that Nigerians had learned the benefits

of remaining a single nation under civilian leadership from the experiences of the murder of their first prime minister, Balewa, their two military governments, and the 1966-69 civil war. I thought they were ready to settle down and create the conditions for steady growth which utilized their vast resources. It didn't turn out that way, unfortunately. But potentially it's a very rich country. It could easily be not only self-sufficient in food but could feed much of the rest of the continent. Its oil resources, which are considerable, are small compared to those of natural gas. Its population is industrious.

Then came the election of 1980 in the United States and Reagan came into office. Senator Helms, senior Republican on the Foreign Relations Committee, made clear that there needed to be some changes in the Africa Bureau. Initially the Senator held up appointment of the designated candidate for Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Chet Crocker, for over three months. I was also told that he insisted that two career ambassadors in Africa be replaced; Bill Edmondson, in South Africa and myself. The senator and his staff were strong supporters of Ian Smith in Rhodesia and were not happy with the thrust of our efforts to find a negotiated settlement acceptable to the Africans in Rhodesia. The Senator was a principal supporter of the bill to lift Rhodesian sanctions in the Senate and his staff was reported to have urged the British to do likewise and to take a tough line with the Patriotic Front. When I was in Lusaka one of the Senator's staff members had come through. We got no advance word of his visit, but he called me from the airport. I found him bright and pleasant and invited him to stay at the residence. He met with a number of people in Lusaka including the American desk officer at the foreign ministry. The Zambian official later told me that the staff member had urged the Zambians to stop supporting Zapu and predicted that the Republicans would win the election (of 1980) and change U.S. policy to throw our support behind Smith using the CIA if necessary. The staffer later became an Assistant Secretary of State for Economic Affairs. The Helms' staff had been particularly critical of me for a trip the State Department had asked me to undertake during one of my visits home which took me around the U.S. to explain to public audiences and newspaper editorial staffs what we were trying to do in Rhodesia. After I returned to southern Africa a question was raised in Helms' committee whether this was an appropriate thing for a career Foreign Service officer to have done. I saw no difference between what I was doing and many other State Department officers were doing to explain U.S. policy to the public.

In any case, after I had been in Nigeria about a year and a half out of the blue I got a telegram saying that I was being "rotated." The message suggested that a tour as diplomat in residence might be appealing and listed a number of possible universities I could consider. We had been through five years of pretty unremitting crisis in Africa. I was tired and was not at all unwilling to spend a year as a diplomat in residence. I looked down the list. Since we had never spent more than a few days in California, we picked the University of California at Santa Barbara and began packing.

*Q: I might point out that this diplomat in residence is a good thing. It's sort of a sabbatical, but it's also a place to put somebody who maybe has become controversial for a while, to put them out of the line of fire for a while and let that die down. Before we leave Nigeria, when did you arrive in Nigeria?*

LOW: The new government had been installed on Independence Day, the 7th of September, 1979. I arrived shortly after that and remained until July, 1981. I was there for about three quarters of the Shagari government's life.

*Q: Did the November 1979 events (Teheran), an Islamic type revolution have any resonance in Nigeria with its Islamic population?*

LOW: None that affected us. It's interesting and probably unique as a place where religious divisions do not follow political lines. For instance, the Yoruba states, while divided between Christian and Moslem, are united in their politics. Both Moslems and Christians support a single party. There was some Moslem militancy in the far north, but that was local and non-political. We were aware of no repercussions in Nigeria of the Iranian capture of our embassy staff. We followed the events, of course, very closely and were very concerned. I felt no particular personal threat but was always on the alert. From Brazilian days I had never driven to work the same way twice if I could help it. I always tried to figure out how to vary the route. And we improved security at the residence, building a wall around it. I believed one should take security precautions before they were needed because after a crisis starts, anything one does will aggravate the situation. I didn't have an armored vehicle.

*Q: While you were there, were you able and did you try to monitor the Nigerian military, looking to them as a possible threat to the civilian government?*

LOW: We had someone whom I thought was a great military attaché. He knew everybody. It was the opposite of the normal relationships between Washington and the field. I thought well of him, but the Pentagon didn't like him, and didn't think he was doing a good job. Every time I went back to Washington, I would go over there to tell them what a great job he was doing. I always had a comfortable feeling that his finger was on the pulse of what was going on. If something was happening, he would be aware of it. The Nigerian military not unlike many others, was not comfortable with civilian diplomatic contacts. Nobody as far as I knew in the diplomatic corps had military contacts. I did not, but my attaché did. I simply supported him in every way I could. He may not have been the best reporting officer. He didn't write a lot, but he knew the picture and was a competent man.

*Q: Both in the JACC organization and otherwise, were there any problems for you dealing with American commercial firms? If corruption is rife, was there a problem of American firms not being allowed to make payoffs while others did, and that sort of thing?*

LOW: That was an issue. The American firms didn't bring it up with me much, but there was no question that they felt they were having to compete with one hand tied behind their back because of the Corrupt Practices Act. I tried to strengthen our ties with the American business community in which oil companies were prominent. I don't recall whether it was once a month, but I met with them regularly. I knew them all. They kept us pretty much at arms length, although I would bring them in, brief them, ask them their problems, and socialize with them. I had a good relationship with the Gulf and Mobil people. I was a

personal friend of the head of Shell, who knew Nigeria well. We sometimes took trips with him and his wife in his plane inside Nigeria. It was entirely tourism - birdwatching for me. I didn't do anything substantively with Shell. It was a social relationship. Beyond that, most American investment was quite small. That's what encouraged me to move ahead with the JACC.

Speaking of the staff, I had another outstanding officer. That was the Foreign Agricultural Service officer, George Pope, who was one of the more competent officers I've met in any professional service. His chief function as the Agriculture Department saw it in those days was to get PL480 products sold. He was very active in that, and he was bright and competent. I always felt that he and the public affairs officer, Brian Bell, would be better charges than any of our Foreign Service officers, except the head of our political section, Kay Clark-Bourne, but she was not as senior as those two.

*Q: How did American agricultural expertise rank with other countries as far as competitors? I imagine there were a lot of people coming to Nigeria with all their oil money and they wanted to get in there.*

LOW: I never knew of any other diplomatic staff with George Pope's level of competence. In his quiet southern way, he knew everybody. He was a good diplomat.

*Q: With the JACC, were there other countries that were involved in agricultural developments?*

LOW: The British were involved in sugar production, and had been for a long time. That was a large, long-term investment. But they weren't as active as we were. They weren't building grass roots. The purpose of the JACC wasn't to have America invest in big food producing operations. The Nigerians were very clear that they didn't want big plantations. That struck me as a very wise thing. The whole purpose was joint ventures; to put Americans together with Nigerians to develop an agri-business; to get them together so that American expertise and funds with Nigerian energy could work together to produce things by Nigerians, not Americans. It seemed to fit in well. I think they saw it. They were very enthusiastic about it.

Then I found myself teaching in Santa Barbara in September.

*Q: You were there from 1981 to 1982. Here you had been in these other places. Santa Barbara is a delightful spot. How did you find the university?*
LOW: It was unlike any I had ever been to before. I didn’t find the kind of intellectual ferment I was used to in the east. It was a good university because of some very able faculty members. But it struck me that most of the faculty members came there because of the lovely climate, the beautiful facilities, and the charming town. They spent most of their time at home writing their books and appeared for class, but that was it. I missed what I was used to in the East and the Midwest; notices plastered everywhere about meetings, lectures, plays, concerts, demonstrations, etc. There didn’t seem to be a lot of excitement about what was going on. I remember trying during the course of the year to get together all the art,

history, political science, literature, people at the university who were interested in Africa. I never succeeded. There didn't seem to be a genuine interest in sharing the excitement of learning. But I did enjoy the teaching. I taught both undergraduate and graduate students and enjoyed the faculty members. I was in the political science faculty. There were some very bright, thoughtful, and interesting individuals. I found very little acceptance in the academic community to the idea of national interest, which always puzzled me. I had long debates with them on that subject. They felt that it was simply a stratagem of the government in place to excuse what it wanted to do anyway.

*Q: Did you run across the feeling that there are models and reasons with the government which for most of us... It's "What's on my plate today" practically and you try to do a little. But most of the time you're dealing with it not being that well-planned.*

LOW: There weren't profound ideological differences. It was an open, friendly group. I didn't feel any hostility. I was busy. As I learned later at Johns Hopkins where I was director of its graduate school in Bologna, that the great problem for a practitioner coming in to academia is mastering the literature in a field. I did two kinds of courses, one on the formation and practice of American diplomacy - a process course. The other was on the issues of United States policy in Africa. They're both big areas with a wealth of literature. The library was pretty good. I would spend long hours trying to familiarize myself with what had been written on the two subjects. I made some progress, but I certainly wouldn't say that I was able to master the entire literature of either subject. I had taken up the cello some years before when I was in the White House on the National Security Council. This was important to me while I was traveling in Zimbabwe. I would land in Salisbury and go immediately to the music school to rent a cello. Then I could sit in my hotel room and practice. Just playing a C Major scale gave me great pleasure and provided a great release. Some years later I learned from a book the chief of Rhodesian intelligence wrote about the period that he respected me because of my interest in the cello. He was a violinist! When I got back to Santa Barbara, I started lessons again.

It was a pleasant time, we traveled a little; I made speeches about Africa along the West Coast and in Hawaii. This was before the computer was in wide usage. We had heard about the Wangs that were beginning to appear in our embassies, but we knew little about them. So Sue and I took a one-day course at the University which had some pre-Macintosh Apples. We took a course on word processing which fascinated us. I remember having to write a memo to the Department at home which required seven copies and using carbon paper. Since I touch type, but not very accurately, it took hours. I was enthralled with word processing.

I took a trip back to the Washington in late winter and looked around for a new assignment but didn't turn anything up. But somewhere I had learned that the position of director of the Foreign Service Institute was vacant. I was fortunate because the under secretary for management, who supervised FSI, was Dick Kennedy. I had known him both when he was a colonel at the Pentagon and later when we were both members of the National Security Council staff where I liked him and respected his political and managerial abilities. When I went to see him about my interest in the FSI job, he told me that the position was open but

there were a number of candidates in line. He said that Secretary Haig was interested in the matter and would make the choice among them. As a good military man, Haig valued the importance of training and, wanting to be sure that the right person headed FSI, he interviewed all the candidates. I got an appointment and had a half-hour conversation with him. I always suspected Dick had something to do with it, but I got the job. They wanted somebody right away, but I told them I had a commitment to teach until the end of the semester in Santa Barbara and didn't feel it would be right to leave in the middle of the term, letting down the students who had opted for my course. Dick suggested I come back in April to assume the position and then return to Santa Barbara to finish the year. I did that, returning immediately to Washington to start at FSI on June 15th in the Rosslyn high-rise that housed it.

*Q: There has been another oral history interview on your time at the FSI, and particularly on how the new campus and buildings were obtained and built. We may be repeating ourselves, but let's talk a bit about this.*

LOW: I've always enjoyed the point where the academic and the practitioner's worlds come together. I felt that there was much that could and should be done to strengthen that connection and to open it up. We had all gone through the rather searing Vietnam experience when, among other things, feelings between the academic community and government officials were hostile and communication very bad. I felt very strongly that there should be some place in the government where the academic community feels comfortable and each side can express its views no matter how deep the disagreements over policy.

There was another concern. For a long time it was felt that, just as our military services carried out their own high level specialized training at their academies, there should be a Foreign Service academy where our diplomats could be trained. President Kennedy had been of this view. I felt quite strongly to the contrary, and I think many Foreign Service officers agree. It seemed to me that any university-like institution created for the purpose of training American diplomats would have great difficulty competing with academic universities. To build the kind of faculties needed for our purposes - political science, history, and economics - would requires a lot of money, high level leadership, and a long time and even then it would be difficult because independent minded academicians often feel their freedom to teach and write would be compromised by working for the government. It seemed to me that if we created a degree-giving institution to train Foreign Service officers, we would end up with a very mediocre institution, whereas we now had a training institution that was among the best in the country. It certainly was among the top institutions in language training. It was teaching some 64 languages when last I checked and had pioneered proficiency testing and was experimenting with combining language and area studies. In some other areas like spouse training, it was doing innovative work. Besides I thought it important that the Foreign Service remain open to entrants educated in different fields in universities and colleges all over the country.

I had always distinguished between education and training. The latter takes educated people and prepares them to perform a particular job better. Education provides a

knowledge base and analytical tools to live a life - both earning a living and dealing with artistic, cultural and philosophical sides of life. We couldn't do the latter well, but we could the former. A few people, like Deputy Secretary Whitehead, still support the idea of a Foreign Service academy. But no one raised it as a serious possibility while I was director of FSI.

When I came in the Service in 1956, the Institute was in an apartment building on C Street, which was pleasant and convenient, but inadequate. Then it moved to the garage at Arlington Towers, where we had no windows. It was really pretty awful. About 20 years ago, FSI moved to the present high-rise in Rosslyn which wasn't much more satisfactory.

*Q: We had to be evacuated from time to time because the carbon monoxide level got too high because of cars in there.*
LOW: The State Department had been training people since 1827. One hundred and fifty years later we were in a leased high-rise which was built as an office building. Its sanitary facilities were designed for offices. That meant a density of 20 people per floor. We were putting 150 people on a floor. Between classes, the sanitary facilities couldn't cope and would overflow. There were four elevators. When the classes began or got out, it would take 10 to 15 minutes to get an elevator. There were lots of internal, windowless rooms where people learning a language would sit for five or six hours a day, day after day for a year. It was very hard on their morale. We taught junior officers in a large barn-like auditorium decorated with a few posters of Greece and Canada with rather shabby rooms alongside. The first day in the Foreign Service for a new entrant was his or her first let down. Of 15,000 who took the exam each year, they were one of 200 or so chosen. It always seemed to me that this kind of treatment bred a mindset in the Foreign Service that led us to think of ourselves as mistreated and misunderstood. That's not a healthy attitude.

Another thing happened fortuitously at that point. When George Shultz became Secretary of State very shortly after I arrived, it became inconvenient for Secretary Haig's personal assistant to remain in the Secretary's suite. He had a Civil Service position which couldn't be broken easily. I was asked to take him and I agreed if he didn't count against one of our positions. We put him in our office and gave him odd jobs. He was a person of intelligence and industry. When he first came I listed a number of tasks he might undertake but asked whether he would like to look for a more appropriate site for FSI. He jumped at the idea and that started the events. He turned up a number of possibilities. We considered Mount Vernon College for women on Foxhall Road, but didn't have the money and they weren't ready to sell. I gather it has recently been purchased by George Washington University. Dick Kennedy left as under secretary and was replaced by a Chicago business man who only spent part of the week in Washington and soon left. I talked to the new under secretary, Ron Spiers, a career officer of remarkable ability who knew the Service very well and was one of the brightest people and best managers I ever worked with. I described to him our disreputable facility which I said hurt the morale of the Service. He looked it over and agreed with me wholeheartedly. One day he informed me that the first item of his "Goals and Objectives" which he had just submitted to Secretary Shultz, was to obtain a new home for FSI. Not long after that the Secretary called me in saying he understood our training facility was inadequate and telling me to find a new one; he promised his full support and

that of the counselor of the Department.

One of the little sidelights of the task I set out on related to a few shares of McDonalds stock which I owned. About this time I noticed in the company's annual report a picture of "Hamburger University," an impressive looking, modern facility set on a beautiful little island connected to shore by a bridge over a lovely lake. When I wrote the company asking for more information, they sent me a large picture of the facility which I had framed and hung in my office at FSI. I showed it to many of my visitors asking whether, if this was the way our country trained those who made our hamburgers, we couldn't do better than our current building to train those who were representing it abroad. It made a point.

In a separate oral history I have recounted the story of how, with Shultz's constant support, we were successful in obtaining a beautiful 70 acre site belonging to Army intelligence, which was only 10 minutes from the State Department, and how we started the process of building a fine new facility there. So I won't repeat it here. It served as an interesting example to me of how the bureaucracy, which is much maligned, can be a place where you can get a lot done if you are persistent. Some people come in from the outside and fight it and never get anywhere. But it can be very creative.

The lessons I drew from our successful effort were, first, that you have to have a conception of where you want to go. For FSI, that was clear. We wanted it to be a first-class training institution, a place where government people involved in foreign affairs could exchange views with knowledgeable people outside of government, and a place that would add to the pride of people in foreign affairs who serve us here and abroad. Clearly, we couldn't do that in the structure we were in. Everything that we did was diminished by that place.

Second, you have to have a lot of persistence. It isn't enough that you have an idea, tell somebody "Let's do it" and then you go about your business. You'll never get there unless you're prepared to make it a priority in almost everything you do every day, you push very hard in every possible direction, and when you can't succeed one way, figure out another. You have to be willing to work with people, accepting their suggestions for modifications in your idea, giving them credit, and getting them involved, so that they feel it's their project, too.

Last, you have to be lucky, particularly with timing. We never would have succeeded without Ron Spiers as under secretary and George Shultz as Secretary of State. Shultz had the same concept of how you get things done. He would start off completely unrelated meetings by asking "How is FSI coming?" That gets around the building quickly. People were accusing me of mind-washing the Secretary! Other key people were Congressman Frank Wolf of Virginia and a lot of hard-working people within the Department and FSI like my deputy John Sprott. So, we got it done. What we succeeded in doing was bringing to the Service (not just the Foreign Service, but everybody who is involved in foreign affairs in the United States government) a feeling that American society does care about what we're doing and is willing to provide an adequate facility to help prepare us to do the job. I think that's a terribly important attitude in terms of people's morale.

While, that was the most important focus during my five years my time at FSI, there were two other ideas I wanted to institutionalize. One was a Center for the Study of Foreign Affairs, intended to be a focus for people inside and a few outside of the government who had a research project in foreign affairs they wanted to pursue. It was mostly for people who had a three to eight month time between assignments and could do something constructive and useful. It would provide a home for them and encourage and assist them along their way. We had some very good people to head it: Hans Binnendijk, made it into something positive and useful. After I left, it fell victim to bureaucratic in-fighting and lack of funds, but I always felt that if developed it could played a useful and constructive role.

The third thing I worked on related to the fact that I knew that once we got our new facility, the government would never follow through with the funds or the interest to imbue it with the history of American diplomacy - to put in the halls the record of the people and places that enriched our diplomatic history over 200 years. I thought that probably the only way of doing that was to create a private, non-profit organization. I sent Ron Spires a memo describing such an organization and its uses. He approved it immediately. I found to head it a retired Foreign Service officer, Ambassador Dick Parker, a serious historian and fine intellect. Over the years it has struggled, but it continues to fill an important role. I guess you've heard of the Association.

*Q: Yes. We are now talking under the auspices of it. You were at the FSI from April 1982 to April of 1987.*

LOW: I think that was the longest tenure of any director of the Foreign Service Institute.

*Q: Could you talk about our experiences as the president of the Association for Diplomatic Studies? You were doing that from when to when?*

LOW: I retired at the beginning of April, 1987. It became clear that there might be a possibility of another African post. At one time, Ron Spiers had put my name forward as ambassador to Brazil. While that would have been interesting, the Secretary chose a first-class officer, Harry Shlaudeman, for the job. Friends at the Fletcher School put my name forward to be dean of the Fletcher School, succeeding Ted Eliot. Both Sue and I are graduates of the School. It got down to two people and they chose the other one. But the experience planted the idea in my mind of leaving the Foreign Service to do something else, and I had always found the academic area interesting. Then someone I had known for 40 years who had been doing research in Dakar when I was in the embassy there and is now a professor at the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) asked whether I would be interested in going to Bologna as director of the Johns Hopkins - SAIS graduate school there. I told him I didn't think we wanted to go overseas again but I would let him know in the morning. I discussed it with my wife and the next morning told him we would be very interested. I didn't know much about SAIS or Bologna, but the more we learned, the more interesting it became. And the idea of learning Italian - the only major Latin language (Romanian excepted) we hadn't studied. There were a number of candidates for the position. We went through the formal interviews, visited Bologna and ended up being

selected. For both of us, it was a brand new adventure to look forward to - somewhat like Kampala and Brasilia had been. So, I retired on April 3, 1987. On April 6, I was picked up by Johns Hopkins. I tried at age 60 to learn Italian, which I found more difficult than I had expected. Both Sue and I loved our five years in Bologna but when we had completed the five year contract we decided it was time to return to the States.

I had been talking with former Senator Mac Mathias about working as a consultant to his law firm, Jones, Day. After calling to tell me that wouldn't work, he put his partner, Herb Hansell, on the phone. Herb was a friend of my sister's in Cleveland whom I had known for years. I had gotten him involved with the Association for Diplomatic Studies which we had set up to support FSI. He asked whether I would be interested in coming back as head to the Association. It made sense to me. Sue and I discussed it and I accepted.

The name of the organization was a small problem which I looked at first. I have always believed that the name of an organization should describe, up front, what it does so that people understand it right away. It seemed to me that a broad, non-descriptive general title wouldn't tell people what we were about and we could detract from our effectiveness. So, I recommended, and the board approved, calling it the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training (ADST). There are those today who don't like the word "training." I think it's a very proud word which symbolizes our close connection with FSI.

The first year at the ADST was largely taken up with preparing for the inauguration of the National Foreign Affairs Training Center which was to be the home of FSI. There was to be a formal inauguration on the site followed by a reception which we (the ADST) put on and a formal dinner at the National Building Museum which was also our responsibility. We wanted to make a big splash, and I think we succeeded. Larry Taylor was then FSI director and we worked closely with him. With Herb Hansell's help we got Cy Vance to chair the dinner committee and Cy and I then got George Shultz to agree to attend. I believe we also got former Secretary Bill Rogers to attend so that we had four Secretaries of State with the current Secretary, Warren Christopher. House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman, Lee Hamilton, gave a splendid speech and we got around 400 attendees. In the process we made about $75,000 for the ADST endowment. Of course we had a professional events planner (Lansdale, Assoc.) to lead us through the process. I couldn't have done it without the help of Dennis Kux whom the Department assigned to ADST and Jane Smith who kept everything in order.

*Q: You did this from 1992-1997. How had it grown and how different was it from where you thought it would be? What did you see of how you molded it? How did you see it operating during that time?*

LOW: Dick Parker, the first ADST president, had done something which had never occurred to me. You may have heard of a field of activity called oral history. Dick met a recently retired officer you probably know by the name of Charles Stuart Kennedy, who was working with Victor Wolf. I guess you were looking for some kind of a way of continuing.

*Q: We had been at George Washington University. They were very nice, but they had expected us to raise money and we hadn't. There wasn't a great deal of interest in diplomatic history at George Washington.*

LOW: The idea struck Dick as important. You know better than I how you got together. By the time I came back, oral history was the principal activity of the Association for Diplomatic Studies. The organization was raising money essentially to fund that project. While I thought that was great, it seemed to me that the ADST had a broader purpose. I and others also saw ADST in connection with the new FSI campus, which we had not yet moved into when I came back, both in terms of creating an atmosphere there of awareness of the history of American diplomacy and assisting FSI to develop a climate of interest in study of U.S. foreign policy, making use of the oral history collection. The Center for the Study of Foreign Affairs at FSI had met what I considered an untimely death just before I arrived. I saw a lacuna arising from the fact that there was inadequate attention being given to stimulating discussion of foreign affairs issues between the private sector and the government. It's done around town, but there is a difference between having to go outside and being able to remain inside the government. The Council on Foreign Relations, the Center for Security and International Studies, the American Enterprise Institute, the Carnegie Endowment, and many others all provide forums, but they aim mostly at the Assistant Secretary of State level. There are many people inside the government writing memos that create the basis for the policies who have too little opportunity to become exposed to the outside people and ideas. I remember one of the first conferences we had. It was on Macedonia. There were 60 people in the room. Thirty or 35 of them were dealing with Macedonia inside the government in DIA [Defense Intelligence Agency], CIA, the National Security Council, and INR. There were other similar conferences in this series which ADST sponsored with FSI. Usually the participants had never met the authors or outside experts who knew more about the subject they were working on than they expected. I found these exchanges to be wonderfully fertile and useful. People also exchanged cards and talked about getting together in the future. The private sector people were impressed at how much people in the government knew and visa versa. There was not a lot of posturing because the meetings are closed. They were unclassified, and not for attribution. I was impressed that people were listening to each other and replying rather than trying to make rhetorical points. On a number of occasions, policy decisions were based on what came out of those meetings. We got private funding first from the Institute for Peace, then from Carnegie, and then from the Cox Foundation to keep them running which we could do very inexpensively, partly because of the ability of the person at FSI who organized them, Fred Hill. We simply provided the encouragement and the focus. These programs would not have happened without us though much of the work was done by FSI. Both sides felt that it was a happy collaboration.

We did some other things. When we moved into our new quarters, the idea was to provide research facilities for people both inside and outside the government. Then we got involved in a number of other areas. We suggested to the Department of State and then helped it transform an internal area into a small museum on the history of American diplomacy. That worked because of the energy and intellectual vitality of the Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs, Nick Burns.

We were able to raise enough to increase our activity from $50,000 to about $150,000 a year. But there is still a long way to go.

*Q: We're here at the FSI. The Association is moving along - not only the oral history, but we have what amounts to this museum or exhibit group, which is now being absorbed by the Department. We are an integral part of it. I haven't kept up with the government, academic, other world's types of meetings.*

LOW: That continued. We got another year from Cox. But they have made it clear that this is the last year. Ed Rowell, my successor, will have to find funds for next year. But that activity continues.

*Q: One of the things we have found is that money is not the easiest thing to raise. Unlike other government institutions, we don't really have people who supply big equipment items like tanks, airplanes, agricultural products, or what have you. The State Department is not much of a consumer of equipment. That means that it's hard to find support.*

LOW: Diplomacy is well-known for its lack of constituency.

*Q: Quill pen manufacturers haven't done much for us.*

LOW: Right.

*Q: But it's an ongoing thing. An accolade at the end of this is that you got a new Foreign Service Institute which is very important and you have a booming Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. They're well on their course.*

*End of interview*