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

DONALD LYMAN

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
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Ingram Micro 1999-2000
GM of Miami Export Office
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2009 to present
President, Peregrine Security Inc., Manufacturer's Representative for JCI/Tyco and other major security brands in Northern Latin America.

Publications:
"US-Mexican Relations: Time for a Change," in Susan Kaufman Purcell, ed., Mexico in Transition: Implications for U.S. Policy, NY: Council on Foreign Relations, 1988.

"Astute Diplomacy: US Policy for a Bilateral Subsidies Pact and Mexico's entry into GATT," in Blanca Torres and Pamela Falk, ed., The Adhesion of Mexico to GATT,
Mexico: El Colegio de Mexico, 1989.

INTERVIEW

Q: Let's start at the beginning. When and where were you born?

LYMAN: I was born in Brooklyn, New York, 1946.

Q: Well, I'd also like to get a little background of the family. What do you know about, say, the Lyman side of the family?

LYMAN: Not a lot. My father's family had a few stories, but not sure where fantasy ended and reality started. I'm uncertain back beyond a generation or so, but probably they were Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe, in the late 19th century. My grandfather on that side was once prosperous, but was ruined in the Depression. That part of the family hit hard times. My father went in the Navy for about ten years when he was young. Other than that, I don't have a lot of history about them. Allegedly they came originally from Spain; there are some Spanish names in the family, Lyman was spelled Limon. Ancestry.com didn't show me with any Spanish origins, so those stories were probably apocryphal. My father's parents died when I was young.

Q: Okay, how about on your mother's side?

LYMAN: My mother's side had a bigger influence on me. My grandfather came over from Lithuania when he was about twelve, a refugee from pogroms. He came up the hard way, walking across the bridge every day from Brooklyn into Manhattan, going to work and university. He graduated from City College studying business, worked his way through, and started a successful business from scratch. He was always interested in foreign affairs, diplomacy, public affairs, and he got me very interested in that as a child. He died when I was 21 so I was able to spend a lot of time with him growing up. We had family houses together in the Hudson Valley where we spent summers until I was about 8 years old; my grandfather bought the property and he had a house there as did my mother and her brother.

Q: Well, let's move to you. First place, what about your mother?

LYMAN: My mother was an artist and an advertising copywriter. She was interested in government and public affairs, just as a voter, but not ever involved personally in anything involving government. My father worked in the family insurance business, and then had his own insurance business.

Q: How long – Did you grow up in Brooklyn?

LYMAN: No, the family had a typical pattern for those years.
We moved from Brooklyn to Queens, which was the next borough out, and then moved to Long Island, to Nassau County,– for a middle class, Jewish family, that was a typical migration path. Long Island was different then. There were dirt roads and potato fields. A bit further out on Long Island, Levittown had just started.

Q: As a small child, where were you as a kid sort of allowed of the house to run free? Was it Long Island, or was it before that?

LYMAN: I only remember life on Long Island, but I do remember that from age six, we were free to do as we wanted. We would get into some mischief. Some of the things we did then would probably be inconceivable now, because kids just wouldn't have the time or freedom to do those sorts of things now.

Q: Well, what – at home, where did your family fall politically at the time?

LYMAN: Parties were very different then. There was less partisan focus on the left to right spectrum since Republicans in the northeast were generally liberal. My grandfather was extremely liberal, read a lot of liberal publications. Not a leftist, but definitely on the liberal side. My parents were moderate. I think the family split between Nixon and Kennedy; there wasn't a clear line there.. I don't remember '56 very well, I just remember they weren't that excited about Eisenhower, even though they were golfers, too. They were interested in what was going on. *The New York Times* was in the house every day, usually one or two other newspapers.. They also read magazines, and I

wouldn't say it was a great intellectual dinner table, but there was still quite a bit of talk about politics and foreign policy and wars and all that.

Q: How Jewish was your family? Religious observance, Israel, and all that.

LYMAN: Not very. My mother had been very religious as a child, sent to a religious school where only Hebrew was spoken, and I think she reacted against it and raised my sister and I differently. I wasn't even bar mitzvah-ed. I was raised with no religion. I was always taught to be proud of being Jewish – I *am* Jewish – but there wasn't really much of a religious content to it.

Q: What did the kids do for playing around? I mean –

LYMAN: It varied with age, but elementary school, middle school it was mostly sports and board games. We lived near a golf course, and the golf course had a construction section with trenches. We used to go to the trenches and have war games, throwing rocks and dirt clods at each other, which sometimes got painful. It was a good learning experience. Later on, I wanted to be a career military officer; maybe that had some influence on me. It was a lot of fun, and occasionally painful when you got hit by a rock or something.

Q: Oh yeah, well that appeals for me. I was very into war games. It was also sort of an introduction to history, too. I mean, reading. What sort of books did you like to read?

LYMAN: At that age, pretty much eclectic. But I liked reading history, I liked reading books about adventures at sea, mountain climbing, in the jungle. I read a lot of the novels my parents were reading; some were good, some weren't. I read the whole Horatio Hornblower series. I also read a lot of magazines in those days. We used to read *The Atlantic* and *The New Republic* and, of course, *Life* and some of the other more popular magazines that came out all the time, and then a lot of newspaper reading.

Q: Well, a lot of us did read magazines. Magazines are part of the media – there were usually quite a few articles on what was happening around.

LYMAN: I think we talked a lot more about politics and public affairs in middle school and high school than my children and their friends seem to do. They seem to be more nonpolitical. I don't know if that's a valid generalization, but it seems to apply to most of the kids now. We would talk often about politics, and in high school we got very involved in village politics in where I lived in Long Island, where there were controversial things going on. We'd go to the meetings, not protesting but observing and then talk about it a lot. We seemed a lot more politically aware and involved then compared to kids are now.

Q: Did you find – this was an early age – but did you find yourself particularly attracted to one side of studies rather than another? You know, like math.

LYMAN: I always liked history. Didn't really like math; I came to like math a lot later. But the math then was very much rote teaching, and I didn't particularly enjoy it. I kind of enjoyed science when I had a good science teacher, but I enjoyed history and I kind of liked English. A lot depended on the teacher.

Q: Ah, yes. Well, high school. Where'd you go to high school?

LYMAN: I went to high school in Rockville Centre, New York, a school called South Side.

Q: What was it like?

LYMAN: Highly rated, great reputation. I would say somewhat mediocre and uneven in reality. But adequate

Q: What sort of things did you get involved with there?

LYMAN: I got involved a little bit with sports. Track team, golf team. Participated, but not a star. I was editor of the yearbook one year; I wrote articles for the school paper.

Q: Did you feel you were pointed toward anything? Was your family pushing you towards any particular field, or not?

LYMAN: Not much towards a specific field. My dad was pushing me towards a military career; I was very interested in that. My grandfather was encouraging me to do something, at least for part of my life, tied to government and public service. Neither of my parents had finished college; They were both intelligent and they were both voracious readers. It was assumed I would go to college. But I don't think they were like the parents of today, carefully studying the possibilities for their children, making very detailed plans and recommendations. It was much more a general thing of, "Hey, why don't you look at the military? Why don't you think about public service?" But it was pretty unstructured and informal and not very consistent.

Q: You graduated from high school when?

LYMAN: 1963.

Q: Were you pointed towards anything?

LYMAN: Yes, I was. I had a Navy and NROTC (Naval Reserve Officers Training Corps) scholarship, and I thought at the time I would have a military career. I'm not sure how well thought out or thorough that decision was, but it was my goal. The NROTC program was a great one. It was four year of college completely paid for, tuition and books, plus an allowance every month, and then summer cruises, or summer training every year, some of them in wonderful places. And then a four-year commitment to the military afterwards. So it was the same commitment with which midshipmen came out of

Annapolis, but I was able to study at a public university with much more personal freedom and academic choice than at the Naval Academy

Q: So where did you go to college?

LYMAN: Undergrad, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Q: Why there?

LYMAN: I wanted to get out of New York. Also, my father had been stationed there during the War and had always talked about how nice it was. I went down there for an interview, and I fell in love with the campus and the atmosphere. Chapel Hill was and is a beautiful place, especially in the fall and spring. It was very different from New York.

Q: At Chapel Hill, coming from New York, were you an outsider?

LYMAN: I wouldn't say I was a complete outsider, but I was a Jew and a Yankee at Chapel Hill in 1963 and I'd say both weren't exactly mainstream. The first time someone asked me where I was from and I said, "Rockville Centah, New York," I remember getting a lot of comments. I dressed differently than they did, I talked differently than they did. A lot of them had never met a Jew before; it wasn't as cosmopolitan then as North Carolina is now.

But on the other hand, UNC was more advanced than a lot of other schools in terms of having different kinds of people on the faculty and at least fifteen to twenty percent of the student body was from out of state. So, it was different than if I'd gone to Mississippi or Alabama.

Q: Well, how about – What was the situation regarding segregation at the time?

LYMAN: It was still – '63 was a sensitive year. There were a lot of sit ins and demonstrations, and some of them were ugly demonstrations in and around Chapel Hill. There was one in particular where the owner of a segregated motel urinated on the demonstrators, which made the national news, especially since she weighed about 400 pounds and I think they got a picture of her, so the whole scene was pretty unattractive.

There were a lot of businesses in town that still had black and white sections. There was a filling station with black and white water fountains. So there were some pretty distinct segregation issues in the town. The University had in theory been integrated, I remember, but it was a token integration. So, it was a turbulent time. I wouldn't say it was having a huge effect on the University or on most of the students. But it was certainly visible.

Q: Well, what was your major?

LYMAN: I majored in history.

Q: Did that involve a particular history or was it sort of in general?

LYMAN: It was varied, mostly European, American. The course that had the most influence on me in my senior year was diplomatic history. I came to like that the best and it had a lot of influence on what I did later, in graduate school, and of course the decision to enter the Foreign Service. There was an excellent professor of diplomatic history who made it exciting and relevant.

Q: It certainly was not up there among the top majors, was it?

LYMAN: It was. History was popular then. There were a lot of good professors in the department. If I had to do it all over again I wish I'd majored in computer science, but not many people were doing that back in the early sixties.

Q: Yeah, there wasn't really much to deal with at the time.

LYMAN: Big mainframes and punch cards and that's about it.

Q: When you were getting ready to graduate, what were you thinking of doing?

LYMAN: I had the four-year military obligation for either the Navy or the Marine Corps. And before my senior year, I chose the Marine Corps for reasons I don't really remember. I went to Quantico for summer training. At Quantico, I hurt my feet and legs, and the Marine Corps said, "Well, if you can't run, you can't be a Marine." Which was kind of ironic, because I'd been on a track team in high school and I'd run one season of track in university. I wasn't good; I was the slowest person on the UNC track team. But I could still run faster and longer than Marine Corps standards until I got hurt.

And then to my surprise the Navy said, "If the Marines don't want you, we don't want you, so we'll pay the rest of the scholarship but we're not going to take you for your active service because of your injured feet and knees." So all of a sudden my plans for a military career were gone, and I hadn't really thought about doing anything else. I started the testing process for the CIA, but I didn't finish the process – I wasn't quite ready to do that – and I ended up going to graduate school while I decided what I wanted to do with my life.

Q: So where'd you go to graduate school?

LYMAN: I received a scholarship to go to UNC's MBA program, which was a brand-new 2 year MBA program, but it really wasn't very well formed yet and I wasn't very happy with it. Midway through the first year I switched over to the history department to get a master's in diplomatic history.

Q: Were they concentrated on any particular area in history?

LYMAN: Yes. With the master's you could focus on whatever you wanted, but I chose diplomatic history as a focus and then I did my master's thesis on the U.S. and Cuba back in the early 1930s, which was pre-Bautista, when there were a lot of interesting things going on in terms of U.S. policy towards Cuba. I would say it wasn't a scintillating master's thesis, but it was an interesting period. Little did I know that I would spend most of the rest of my life working with Latin America; I just happened to pick that topic by chance.

Q: Well, what about on the campus? Was your campus particularly active? I mean, this was a time – it was still the 60's, wasn't it?

LYMAN: Yes, it was '67. Chapel Hill was a few years behind. There wasn't that much going on that was typical of the 60s. people were going to a lot of concerts and smoking marijuana and having fun. There were some small demonstrations, but I wouldn't call it a really active campus that early. I'd say the next year or two it got quite a bit more active in terms of protests.

Q: Did you get interested in this?

LYMAN: In the protests? No. Looking back 40 years I wish I had, but the fact is, I didn't. I was going on with my life and my plans and I wasn't really involved. I wasn't against the protesters, it just wasn't something I was involved with.

Q: . As you were finishing up at grad school, what were you looking at?

LYMAN: After I finished my masters at Chapel Hill. My advisor felt like it would be ideal for my career to finish up my PhD somewhere else since I had done undergrad and the masters at UNC, so I went up to New York to Stony Brook, which was a brand-new state university that had been formed a few years earlier. The school had some good professors, but the place was a mess. Demonstrations every day, the students burned some police cars. It was in turmoil. And the PhD program hadn't really taken shape yet; I was having some career doubts.

So, I stopped grad school after a semester, and I got a job in New York in a training program and executive development program in retail. It was the polar opposite from grad school, I just wanted to try it and see how I liked it.

Q: And what happened?

LYMAN: I liked it, but was starting to get a little more politically conscious. It was 1970. I remember Earth Day and Kent State that spring, and I began to think, "I'm working in the most exciting retail store in the world," which was Bloomingdale's. "I love my work day to day, but is this what I really want to do for the rest of my life given what's going on in the world?"

And my answer to myself was, "No." So I called the professors back in Chapel Hill that I had worked with, the department chairman and my advisor, and I said, "I'd really like to come back. Will you have me?" It wasn't time to experiment with a grad program elsewhere and it was already late in the spring, so looking elsewhere probably wasn't practical.

They asked me to come back and gave me a nice fellowship. I went back to get my doctorate in diplomatic history. I was more inclined at that time to focus on U.S.–Asian relations, just because of what was going on in the world in 1970.

Q: This is sort of an aside, but you said that Bloomingdale's was very interesting, that things were happening there. What was going on in Bloomingdale's?

LYMAN: Well, the person who was running it at the time, Marvin Traub, was a legend in retail. He was probably the most creative retailer in the world the 1960s and '70s. The store was a place where people of all ages in New York went, because there was always something going on, a spirit of excitement about the store. There were celebrities there often, there were promotions, there was sometimes music. There was a lot going on in terms of the way the store was decorated that people found interesting and exciting.

From a social, cultural standpoint, it was important at the time, and from a business standpoint it was a cash and profit machine. The vendors paid a lot of the expenses just to be in the store, and the store made an enormous amount of revenue and profit. In those days, it was part of Federated, which was much smaller than Macy's today, and Bloomingdales was the most profitable store in Federated.

It was an exciting place to be. A lot of ideas, a lot of young people, and a lot of pressure. One thing I liked about it was that it was in a way similar to consular work. Which was, every day you knew how you did. My boss would call me every afternoon at five o'clock and he'd say, "How did you do?" And then he'd say, "How did you do versus last week? Last month? Last year?"

So, there was a lot of day to day pressure for results. But when the day was over, you went home and you knew how you did. You could think about how you could do better. It was pretty clearly focused on daily results, and it was in a way satisfying when you knew you'd done well, worked hard and gotten good results. I found consular work to be a lot like that. It was a lot more immediate satisfaction than sometimes, doing political or economic work.

Q: So you go back to Chapel Hill, and what are you up to?

LYMAN: I had to take a certain amount of courses for the doctorate, had to take an oral exam and a written exam. So it was an intense two years. I also started taking Japanese. There was an exchange program where UNC taught Chinese and Duke, which was ten miles away, taught Japanese. I took a lot of Asian history courses, as well as the core required diplomatic and American history courses.

It was an exciting, challenging couple of years there to get ready for my orals and my written exams. Japanese was, for me, a tough language. It was difficult, but also enjoyable, because I was developing a lot of interest in Asia and the professor at Duke, who became a friend, was lively and excellent. The Chinese history professor at Chapel Hill – there was no Japanese history taught there then –was very strong and I really got deeply into that.

Q: What were the difficulties that you found with Japanese?

LYMAN: I picked Japanese, not Chinese, because I'm not very good with tones, and China seemed closed at the time. But I knew what I was getting into, and Japanese, as expected, was hard. You've got all the characters, not as many as Chinese, to learn, and if you wanted to research an earlier period, which I did, you have not 1,800 but 18,000 characters to deal with. And then the grammar, the structure of Japanese is complicated. Unlike Chinese there is a very complicated grammar and rules, but there are a lot of words that if they're changed slightly, change the meaning of a sentence completely.

There used to be a lot of jokes in class that the teachers would tell us of people who'd make a mistake with one word and then they'd create a horrible family incident. I wish I remembered the details. But it's just a difficult language that I think evolved over many centuries, and layers of complexities kept getting added to it.

Q: During this time, had you thought about the foreign service at all?

LYMAN: I was starting to think about it. I'd done some teaching assistant work both during my masters and doctorate, and I loved teaching, but I wasn't sure if I wanted an academic career or a government career. I had thought about the CIA a few years before and now I was definitely thinking about the Foreign Service. I hadn't taken any active steps yet, but I found out about a great program called the American-East Asian Relations Fellowship, that would take American diplomatic history students like me, and fund us for a year to study Asian history, political science, economics, and language, either in Asia or in a university in the U.S.

Given the size of the grant, it wasn't that feasible to go to Japan, so I used it to spend a year at Harvard, and it was a terrific program, because I could take whatever I wanted. I took Japanese language, which was much more intense than the beginning courses at Duke, as well as less enjoyable. The language classes were much larger and more impersonal There were some amazing experts on Japan at Harvard during that period. Ambassador Reischauer was there, Albert Craig, Don Shively, and Ezra Vogel, who was an expert on China and Japan, mostly on economic and social issues. There were quite a few others who were leaders in the field and also great teachers. It was a year spent away from finishing my dissertation, but it was just such a good program I just had to do it.

Q: Were you looking towards teaching at any particular place?

LYMAN: I would have loved to teach at one of the leading schools in the country, but there were very few jobs available in that period in the early '70s. I remember the first promising offer I got was from a branch of a Midwest state university that I'll leave unnamed, in a small, rural town, 100 miles from anywhere, and it was a one year untenured position, and I remember thinking at this time, "This isn't really a path I want to get on." Also, I think I really picked a lousy dissertation topic, for which I only blame myself, and it certainly was not the sort of topic to establish an early reputation in the field.

At the same time, more positively, I was thinking about the Foreign Service, kind of taking me back towards the path I'd been on earlier of sort of government service and public service, which started out towards the military. I liked the idea of getting back on that track, and I felt like having under my belt by then two or three years of Japanese and all the Japanese contacts I'd made the year at Harvard would really prepare me well for maybe getting assigned to Tokyo. A lot of Japanese politicians, journalists, and businessmen had come to visit the Asian Studies department at Harvard while I was there, and quite a few of my friends there went to work or study in Japan, many becoming journalists.

China was just opening, but I was quite anxious to go to Japan. I thought the Foreign Service would be a good route to get there and what I'd picked up at Harvard might be useful. So I started thinking about it, but I really wanted to finish my dissertation, so I started in '75 looking at both paths simultaneously, taking the Foreign Service exam and still trying to finish my dissertation.

Q: What was your dissertation? What was the major theme of your dissertation?

LYMAN: Well if you have trouble sleeping I'd be glad to send you a copy. Somehow, I had three possible topics and I think I picked the worst one. I wrote it on Woodrow Wilson and Japan. It was an important period with the Paris Peace Conference, and a lot of the discord with Japan during that period helped set the stage for what happened in the 1930s.

So, it's not an irrelevant topic, but the other topics I looked at were the atomic bomb decision and then how the occupation handled the large Japanese companies after World War II. For both of those I was a little worried about sources. But the one about Wilson I think, in retrospect, was a fairly dull topic to pick. I'm glad I finished it, but as I said, if you have trouble sleeping I'd be glad to send you a copy.

Q: Well, I have to say, you think of Wilson and Japan, and the two don't quite seem to fit together very well.

LYMAN: He went to the Paris Peace Conference determined to keep the Japanese out of China, and they were very determined to take permanent control over parts of China. And they had just intervened in Siberia, too. We sent troops there to discourage them. So, there was a lot more low-key conflict going than probably most people would realize

today. But it wasn't front page stuff in most cases; it was more important for the effect it had on what happened later – the mistrust and feeling that we were standing in their way on the mainland of Asia, that we shouldn't be trusted; we were the enemy – rather than what seemed like earth-shaking events at the time. Japan had already tried settling in the US, only to be discouraged by racist sentiment in California and storms and mosquitoes in Florida (ironically, they tried colonizing Boca Raton, where I now live). They felt they needed expansion room in China and or Siberia to survive and prosper as a nation.

It was a mildly interesting topic and what was going on in Siberia was the most fascinating; there were all kinds of White Russian generals with trains of gold rumored to be moving around and a lot of different factions,. The Paris Peace Conference was an important event, although in retrospect I think my dissertation sucked the life out of it. The dissertation just wasn't that exciting to me, and I think probably not that exciting to other people. But I did it, and I finished it, and I'm glad I finished it.

Q: Well, you know, maybe I'm wrong, but I sort of have the feeling that the dissertation should sort of fill in the gaps. I mean, Truman's decision on the bomb, other things of this nature, yeah, those are sort of the highlights, but a historian really should be getting into other areas.

LYMAN: They should, but to really succeed in that field you really need to write a big book, and to write a big book, you probably need to start getting into it in your dissertation, and I wrote on something that probably at best could have been a chapter in a book, not a book in itself. And probably, it just was not a good choice. On the other hand, I spoke to Ambassador Reischauer quite a bit about the atomic bomb when I was at Harvard; he used to host his students every Saturday morning, which was wonderful, and just have a relaxed discussion about Asia.

I asked him about the atomic bomb decision because there has been a lot of controversy about whether Truman dropped it to scare the Soviet Union or to end the war. The revisionists said he dropped it to scare Stalin. I asked Ambassador Reischauer about it, because I think he'd been on the Policy Planning Staff or its predecessor during the war, and he said that other theories beyond ending the war were nonsense;
Truman decided to drop it during the war and he saved millions of lives. That led me to feel that maybe it was a dead end as a topic. In retrospect, I still think Ambassador was right. The other topic would have been interesting, but I don't think I could have found the sources forty years ago for how the Occupation handled the big companies.

Q: Wasn't it called a dibitsu or something like that?

LYMAN: zaibatsu.

Q: Well, on the Truman decision, I was right. I was just turning eighteen when he made that decision, and I would have been obviously cannon fodder for that thing but I expected a million of those.

LYMAN: I think you're right. I think Iwo Jima was costly, Okinawa was costly, and why would he want to see that keep happening with the Japanese culture when they would have defended the homeland vigorously?

Q: Yeah. But anyway. So you've finished your dissertation, and what are you up to then?

LYMAN: The timing was excellent I took the Foreign Service test in '75 or '76. Then I had an oral exam – you were on my panel, I'm 99% sure – sometime in '76, and then around November, just as I was finishing my dissertation, I got a call that I had been accepted and my A-100 class would begin in January '77. So I finished the dissertation, got my degree in December, and in January I was in D.C. I guess I couldn't have timed it better. It was good luck.

Q: Well, do you recall any of the questions that we asked you at the time?

LYMAN: I remember talking about photography. I can't remember if it was you or one of your colleagues who asked what my interests were, and I was very interested at the time not only in doing photography, where I didn't do anything special, I just enjoyed it, but I really loved looking at different photographs.

And I remember having a lengthy discussion – someone on the panel was quite knowledgeable about photography and asked really good questions. I remember that, and then some questions about Asia which I think you might have asked, because I know you served there. But I can't remember too many details about it beyond that.

Q: And that was classes before things got much more organized later. I mean, I had to be sure we weren't showing prejudice by asking about background or something, which struck me as – I mean, if we knew something about somebody, we'd say, "Okay. He's been going to University of West Virginia. He's not going to be probably as up to date on current events and things, as involved as if he were at Columbia." And we'd take that into account. But later they fixed it up so you didn't know who was coming from where or what your background was.

LYMAN: I'm sure it's changed a lot. But I think you did a good job picking my A-100 eight or nine people ended up as ambassadors. So it was quite an amazing group of people.

Q: You came in when?

LYMAN: January '77.

Q: Okay. What was your A-100 course like?

LYMAN: The course itself was mediocre. And it's funny; I can remember my Area Studies class, I can remember individual Area Study sessions, who came, what we talked about. I can remember consular training, I can remember almost every course I've had in

business since I left the Foreign Service, and my memory of the content in the A-100 class is almost zero. I remember lunches and dinners and parties with my class, I remember conversations, but not the course material, except for one exercise we did in the beginning for remembering people's names, it's a complete blank in my mind, which is odd, but maybe indicative that it was a really poor course.

Q: Many people have told me over the years that too much of that period was talking heads and telling you who did what in different parts of the State Department, which is not the most exciting introduction to Foreign Service work.

LYMAN: I had great people in my class, and it was really exciting just talking to the other people; some had come from other branches of government. One had been working on the Hill and he got us together for lunch with the senator he worked for – that was fun – and introduced us to a lot of his Hill colleagues. And some of the other people had worked in other federal agencies. I had other friends in D.C. at the time. It was the first month of the Carter administration. At the time, everyone was excited about having a new president, a few years after Watergate. What an exciting time to be in Washington, or so we thought at the time.

I think we were all happy to be in the Foreign Service, and there wasn't a lot of skepticism or cynicism in the group. As the placement process started we got a little more anxious, but all of us came in, I think, strongly motivated and focused.

Q: I ask this question, and it's not always easy to answer, but did you at all feel that you were a part of – and I hate to put it – a missionary movement? I mean, the United States was an important player in the world of maybe bringing peace, or –

LYMAN: I had some consciousness of the human's rights issues there. I think having written my dissertation on Wilson, I was a little weary of true missionary zeal in the United States because I thought that it got Wilson into some trouble. But I still think we all felt, especially with Carter coming in on the right moral side of things, that the U.S. was really going to take some strong positions against some of the worst tyrants and dictators, and that the Department would play an important role in that.

There was a lot of change going on in the world, many revolutions. We heard of changes in Africa – some of the more Africa-oriented people were excited about that. China was starting to open up; that was exciting. I think there were a lot of things going on that were, in retrospect, promising in terms of the U.S. and in terms of the world. But I wouldn't say "missionary zeal," exactly. But again, I had become kind of wary of that feeling.

Q: Also, when I say "missionary zeal," I have to be careful, because I don't really think it. But I think sometimes people feel a little that we've got the answers to things when often we don't. But –

LYMAN: I think when you're young and you've come out of grad school, you probably think it's easier to solve problems than it really is; probably we all shared a little of that, although there were some people in the class who were much more experienced than others. There was probably some idealism and some naiveté, but I didn't detect a deep sense that most people in the class were going to change the world, just sort of a good feeling that it was a new president, a new administration, and a good time to be a U.S. diplomat.

Q: And they were.

LYMAN: Yes it was great.

Q: Where did you feel you were pointed towards?

LYMAN: I was in the consular cone at first, but I was more oriented towards economic work. I knew I would have to do some consular work in the beginning, and that was fine. But I was interested, maybe because I'd spent a little time in business, in trade and finance and eventually wanted to work there. But what I wanted to do was get to Japan while I still remembered my Japanese, and while I still had a lot of contacts that I'd made with a tremendous amount of visitors the year I was at Harvard, because of Ambassador Reischauer.

There had been visitors from the LDP, Japan's main political party at the time, journalists from Japan, as well as some businessmen. And I thought I'd be going over there with a head start on being an effective diplomat. So, that was where I was, in my own mind, but obviously it didn't work out that way, which isn't bad in the long run because I've really enjoyed my career, which has mostly been focused on Latin America. But at the time, I was really focused on getting to Japan.

Q: So, what happened?

LYMAN: At the time, if I was smarter or more clever, I probably would have spent some time at the Japan desk or trying to find ways to talk to people at the embassy in Japan and trying to lobby my way in. But I let the placement process run, and I ended up getting assigned to Bogota.

Q: What was your job in Bogota?

LYMAN: I went there as a consular officer, and I spent the first year in the consulate. Luckily, the Consul General, Dick Morefield, and the DCM, Bob Drexler, really believed in rotational assignments, so he rotated me within the consulate, and then I spent a year in the economic - commercial section, which was one section at the time, before the Foreign Commercial Service was formed. The Embassy was small and junior officers were treated well, included in most social activities, encouraged to make contacts in the Colombian Government and business community, and given real responsibilities in the Embassy, once those of us required to do visa work had completed our rotations there.

Q: So, what was the situation in the country when you got there?

LYMAN: It was in transition, I would say, to some of the problems that developed later. The guerrilla problems already existed. The FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia, revolutionary armed forces of Colombia) was controlling a substantial part of the country. The ELN (Ejército de Liberación Nacional, National Liberation Army) was active in a small part of the country. And then the M-19 were more urban guerrillas who were just starting to get active when I got there. Then there was a lot of kidnapping for ransom just by criminals.

The narcotics trade was beginning to get some attention, but the country was relatively peaceful. It was a two-party system and the Colombian elite had been trading power back and forth for a few hundred years, while letting the peasants kill each other over mostly imaginary differences between the two main political parties. . The country had a history of violence; Colombia had a civil war around the turn of the century that killed over ten percent of the population. Colombia again had terrible violence from 1948 to '64, and there was just an underlying sense, I would say, of potential violence and instability in the country, aside from the day to day crime rate, which was high. But in 1977 and 1978 it was not very violent except for the criminal kidnappings.

Q: Within the embassy, were they trying to explain why there was so much violence and crime in the country?

LYMAN: I don't know if we had to look very hard –the fundamental causes were cultural and historical and economic. There was and there still is tremendous inequality in the country, especially in the rural areas. So, everyone knew about that, and I'm not sure at the time what we could have done about it. We had Peace Corps programs and aid programs and all that, but those were only having a marginal effect. I don't think anyone said at the time, "Let's try and fundamentally change Colombian society, or the Colombian economy, or implement some kind of massive development program."

It was much more tactical: "How do we deal with the growing narcotics problem? How do we encourage the Colombian government in dealing with the guerrillas?" There was a problem of a Peace Corps volunteer who'd been kidnapped before I got there who was a hostage for about a year. It was much more, how do you deal with the issues coming out of these fundamental problems than how do you really attack the problems?

There was a great embassy team, and it was a tremendous place to work. Getting assigned to Bogota in some ways was the best thing that could have happened to me, even though I wanted to be in Japan when I first learned about it.

Q: What particularly interested you in the area, particularly in Colombia?

LYMAN: I think probably the most interesting challenge was trying to understand the country. Why was it so violent? It has wonderful educational institutions, a lot of

Colombians are really smart and well-educated, great businessmen and women, some great companies, a lot of natural resources. It was challenging to try and understand why the country had such serious problems, and then trying to figure out the extent of some of the problems was interesting.

When I went into the economic section one of the first tasks my boss asked me to do was to try to size the narcotics trade – this was in 1979 – and I talked to bankers, talked to a lot of Colombian government people, and I came up with a number. I wanted to write the report, and the CIA and the DEA people at the Embassy told me my number was way too high, and the cable I drafted couldn't go out. I didn't make a big fight out of it or send it the dissent channel, I just dropped it, but it was a learning experience. Based on what happened in Colombia in the '80s and '90s, I probably underestimated the extent what was going on, because it very quickly became a major source for drugs coming into the U.S. My experience with drug enforcement being so political and having my report suppressed made me realize that wasn't an area I really wanted to focus on much anymore. When I worked on the Mexico Desk and the Embassy in Mexico I stayed as far away as I could from narcotics issues.

In Bogota, I worked on commodities for part of my tour. The Economic Counselor, George Thigpen, was an expert on coffee, and I learned a lot from him. He liked to teach and develop junior officers and to delegate. Colombia was an important coffee country and mining and oil were becoming more important. And then I got involved with some aviation negotiations, and they were really fun, but for me the most interesting experience (and I won't give you a lot of detail on it because you have all the detail in Bob Pastorino's oral history) is that we were in a battle to get Colombia to choose the technology for their color television system. The U.S. had lost the last few battles in other Latin American countries to the German and French standards, and we were determined to win this one. My predecessor in the commercial section and Bob Pastorino, when I rotated in, made sure I worked on that. And for me, it was a great experience. Bob was wonderful to work with, and Ambassador Asencio gave us tremendous support, as did Ted Briggs, who was by then the DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission). With terrific support from Washington and from the US television industry, we won.

So, it was the first time in my government career that I'd worked on a true commercial issue and had the pleasure of winning. That had a lot of effect on what I did later on in my life. It was a turning point for me in terms of what I found I enjoyed and what I did after I left the Foreign Service.

Q: Were you there during the kidnap – well, kidnap's not exactly the right term, but whatever you want to call it –

LYMAN: It was a kidnapping. I was in the Operation Center when that happened. I went from Colombia to the operations center in the summer of 1979. That was the year of Diego Asencio's kidnapping, the year of the hostages in Iran, and about four other embassies being taken. So, it was a difficult year for the Department.

Q: Well, before we leave Colombia, what was life like there? Were you having to look over your shoulder all the time or –?

LYMAN: It was a little bit strange. There were tragedies before the Ambassador was kidnapped. The Jewish community was targeted. Anytime a Jew was kidnapped the papers would report that an Israeli citizen was kidnapped, as if they weren't truly Colombian. The Jewish community there was visible and successful, and a lot of them were targeted. I think the DCMs ' house was rented from a Jewish family; after a failed violent kidnapping attempt, they pretended the head of the family was dead, shipped a casket out, and all left for the US.

But day to day, life was not disrupted. I took public transportation; we went often to the center of the city for concerts and meals. We were able, at first, to do pretty much what we wanted. In the countryside, we could go to certain parts that were absolutely safe, but there were certain parts of the country we just couldn't go near, either for guerrillas or for just common bandits. Being such a mountainous country and, at that time, with not very good roads, it was easy for bandits to set up ambushes on the highways.

So, we travelled quite a bit around the country before our daughter was born, and we enjoyed it, but as I said, there were certain places we couldn't go. My wife took a course at a private university downtown, and her car was sabotaged once, but we don't think it was by terrorists. It was probably just by students who weren't that comfortable having an American taking class with them. No major incidents, but by the time my daughter was born things had deteriorated. The week she was born, the M-19 , the ones who later kidnapped Ambassador Asencio, broke into an armory near our house and stole 6,000 weapons. The police started searching in the city for the weapons, and in the process, a few of the hostages kidnapped earlier were killed, including the closest friend and cousin of our pediatrician, was the head of Texaco Colombia.

So, it was a turbulent time around the time our daughter was born: there were soldiers on every corner, there was all this concern, our pediatrician disappeared for a week because of the death in his family. From that time through the last eight months we were there, there was a sense that the M-19 was in the city and active and bad stuff was going to happen. But the really bad events, such as kidnapping the ambassador, didn't start to happen until after I'd left.

It was a tough assignment for my wife. She was an attorney; she'd been general counsel at the largest hospital in Florida, and all of a sudden, she was a Foreign Service wife. It was quite a big change for her.

Q: Well, let's talk a little about her. What was her background and how did you meet and all that?

LYMAN: We met in Chapel Hill when she was in law school. We got together through a fraternity brother to play bridge and we hit it off, got married, and we've been married for 46 years. She practiced law, got off to a very good start in her career, spoke fluent

French. She has a lot of language ability. She did try, at that time, to get into the mid-level program at the Department, but she had a horrible experience, which in retrospect I wish we'd handled differently.

She went for an interview for the mid-level program, and the clown who interviewed her said, "Oh, well, you look qualified. You're general counsel at a huge hospital, you speak good French, you have good language ability. But to get into the program you're going to have to come spend an afternoon with me at my apartment."

Q: Good God.

LYMAN: And we agonized over it: should we turn this jerk in, or should we somehow protest, or should we just say, "To hell with it." We decided I think, wrongly at the time, to say, "To heck with it."

Q: Well that was more or less the common experience, unfortunately, at the time. That's why Mr. Trump was able to be a predator.

LYMAN: Yes, there have always been predators, and I guess there will be. But the harassment was an awful experience for her.

Bogota was a mixed experience for her. She ended up as president of the Embassy Women's Club in Bogota and that kept her quite busy. Then we had a child there that kept her even busier. Our personal possessions and car arrived very late, almost 6 months after we did, so the first months in Bogota were hard for her. But she got through it.

When she took the baby out in the stroller--she has very blond hair and blue eyes-- she had to kind of camouflage herself a bit, not for terrorism but just more to avoid street crime and things like that. The last six or eight months we were there the city was becoming more uneasy, but I don't think anyone expected what happened with the Ambassador being kidnapped. We were quite surprised.

Q: When you left Bogota, you went back to Washington?

LYMAN: Right. I went back to the Operations Center.

Q: This usually is considered a real step up professionally, because these people are picked particularly.

LYMAN: I guess it was. I was anxious to do it, because I had heard it was a good job to take in terms of a career and a good way to find out how the Department worked, because in the A-100 we really didn't learn much of anything except for organization charts and mission statements.

So, I went in there pleased to be there. Yet it was the only Foreign Service assignment I didn't enjoy and was glad to escape from as soon as I could, which isn't really a criticism

of the Operations Center, but it was a combination of the schedule and the nature of the work. I think I learned a lot in the six or eight months I was there, and I'm glad I did it, but it was shift work. Two days of one schedule, two days of another schedule. I had a six-month-old baby at home. I really wasn't getting any rest at all.

I found the work was at two extremes: on the days when nothing terrible was happening, it was really boring work. You'd take incoming cables and sort them and distribute them for an early peek throughout the Department. So. you'd get a bird's eye view of what was going on, and there was a little judgment involved in how cables were routed and on which might be truly urgent, but it was really kind of rote mechanical work.

But one can learn about the Department doing it.

And then the opposite extreme was when the crises happen, and that was a year of a lot of crises: November was the embassy seizure in Iran. Dick Morefield, who'd been my boss in Bogota and to whom I was quite close, was one of the hostages. Then the embassy in Pakistan I think got burned, the embassy in Libya got destroyed. In El Salvador, the embassy was shot up. It was a wild year. Although those were huge learning experiences, one could not call them enjoyable. Still, it was useful to see how the most professional officers- people such as Hal Sanders—handled crisis situations.

Q: Did you ask to get out of there or did you just finish it up?

LYMAN: I didn't finish it up; I had a couple of things that turned me off. One of them was described in someone else's oral history, and I forget whose, but there was a massacre of the Korean cabinet

Q: Oh yes, in Burma.

LYMAN: No. In South Korea. I wrote the Secretary's evening summary that night and I called it "The Gunfight at the ROK Corral." After the movie "Gunfight at the RKO Corral "And I got a note back from Ray Seitz, on the Secretary's Staff, about two days later: "The Secretary is not amused."

And I thought to myself: "Uh oh." And then about two days letter, they used the same headline in *The Economist*, so maybe my sense of humor wasn't that awful and tasteless. That experience was minor, yet the whole tone turned me off.

But I had what they used to call the Bogota Mafia – a lot of the people from Bogota stuck together, and Bob Pastorino as well as Ted Briggs were on the Mexican desk. I saw them both often, and they asked me to come work on the desk, and I was a lot more interested in doing that than staying in the Operations Center. So, probably after about eight or nine months, which was a few months early, I left and went to the Mexican desk.

Q: You were on the Mexican desk from when to when?

LYMAN: From March or April of 1980 until August 1981.

Q: Okay, well let's talk about your time. What were you doing on the desk?

LYMAN: Mostly economic and commercial work; a lot involved tuna negotiations, trade issues. A little bit of everything. There was so much going on with Mexico at the time. At the time, Carter had just appointed Robert Krueger as Special Ambassador for Mexico, and he brought in a bunch of people with him from Texas politics, they all worked as part of the Mexico desk with us. There was an attempt going on to create a framework, for relations with Mexico, I think they called it the Consultative Mechanisms for U.S.-Mexican Relations.

It generated a huge amount of work and a lot of meetings, so I got involved with quite a bit of that. I'm not sure how much real progress it generated in terms of the relationship with Mexico, but it was a pretty busy time. The consultative framework at least made it easy to meet with the Mexicans and to make progress on day-to-day non-controversial issues. There was also a new ambassador to Mexico, a guy named Julian Nava, and I spent some time, preparing him for his hearings, going around with him to some of his meetings in Washington. He had a non-traditional background for being an ambassador, and he knew little about the issues, so it was challenging. Having two Ambassadors for Mexico was ridiculous. Ambassador Krueger, a former Shakespearean scholar and then politician, seemed to have limited ambitions for his role, mainly to try to improve the relationship slightly and to ensure border issues with Texas, his home state, were managed. He brought in a group of political employees who worked as part of the Mexican desk, and while most of them were nice people, they contributed almost nothing.

Q: What was Ambassador Nava's background?

LYMAN: He had a PhD from Harvard, and then I think he'd been an educator and then a member of the Los Angeles school board. But he was an unpolished person, to say the least, not an unpleasant person but an unpolished person. He didn't seem very issue oriented; he seemed more to be going down there to be the ambassador, to have that on his resume, but not necessarily to accomplish anything very specific to U.S.-Mexican relations. It was also fairly close to the end of the Carter Administration, so it was apparent he was going to be a short-timer there.

But I did learn a lot about the process and the views of other departments by taking him around Washington to hearings and high-level meetings.

The Mexico Desk was a great place to work; Ted Briggs was an amazing leader and Bob was a wonderful person to work for again; it was a terrific short-term job. But I was still at that point thinking about leaving the Foreign Service.

Q: Why?

LYMAN: I loved the Foreign Service; I don't think I've ever enjoyed the work I've done more. But life overseas seemed more difficult than it should have been: in Colombia I felt as if there was an attitude on the part of most mid-level officers, especially the ones whose careers weren't going anywhere: "We don't take care of you in terms of your household goods or your housing. You must pay your dues." That meant difficulty finding housing, lost or damaged household goods, delays in arrival of cars.. I also had the feeling, which wasn't a criticism of the Department but more a statement about me, that I'd taken the time to change careers a couple of times and get a doctorate. I was 31, 32 years old. I wasn't ready to go through what I saw as a long process to get to the higher levels in the Department, that even for someone who was on a fast track took years and years.

And then there was the question of my wife's career, which – if she'd been in a mid-level program we probably would have felt very differently, but she was looking forward to getting back to work once our daughter went to school. So, we felt overall, that I didn't want to commit to a twenty, thirty-year career in the Department, which was partly a statement of where I wanted it to be within the next five or ten years, and what my wife wanted out of her life.

I was muddled about it because I loved the work and I enjoyed the people; it was not, "I have to get out of here," but more "I hate to leave, but I really can't commit to the Foreign Service career track. We can't go overseas again and again to a few more countries and then come back and keep going with our lives." It was too long a path and too difficult for my wife in terms of her career. So I made a decision to leave and I started looking for jobs in Washington.

Q: This might be – Because you've moved to the Mexican stage, you get much more involved in that a little later. So, I think maybe this would be a good place to stop.

LYMAN: I think so, too, because Mexico was very different, and I think probably, as an oral history, it's more interesting to people than what went on in Colombia or in other early parts of my career. What went on in Mexico has real historical significance. I kept a diary off and on for most of the period, so while I don't remember everything perfectly from 30 years ago, the diary is a good refresher and I think I have a pretty clear perspective of what we were trying to do, what we did accomplish, what we didn't accomplish, and why. So maybe we can talk about that again next time we talk.

Q: And people don't write diaries much anymore.

LYMAN: No. I found a few – Edward House, who was Wilson's main advisor in Paris, kept one, and quite a few others kept them at the Paris Peace Conference. The entries were often written late at night, however, and often read as if they were half-bombed or exhausted. You can't always tell what they meant. But an oral history, especially some of the ones you did where people were only a few years away from the events I think are great. I wish I'd had that tool when I wrote my dissertation. .

Q: Today is November 8th, 2016 with Don Lyman. It's Election Day. We've got you now as a desk officer in Mexico, and the story sort of goes from there. So, you've done an outline. Do you want to start talking about the appointment of John Gavin and all that led up to that?

LYMAN: I had been at the desk a year and a half, and thinking about leaving the Department. I was negotiating some jobs at Commerce, because we didn't want to move again for a while, and I wanted to focus on trade and economics. While in San Diego for US-Mexico tuna negotiations, people called me from the Mexico Desk and from the Department, passing on rumors that John Gavin, who was famous as an actor, had been appointed Ambassador to Mexico by Ronald Reagan. I didn't know anything about Ambassador Gavin at the time, but people were saying terrible things about him in the Department, the Mexican government and in the Mexican press, slander and awful personal attacks. It was a very strange sort of response to what turned out to be one of President Reagan's best appointments.

After a few days, I came back to Washington, where Ted Briggs, who was my boss at the time, said, "I want you to work with Ambassador Gavin and coordinate his Washington schedule and his briefings and his hearings." I had done that for his predecessor, which had been a bad experience, because Ambassador Nava wasn't at all knowledgeable about anything related to Mexico and didn't really know how to behave.
So, I said, "No."

Ted said, "You should really do it. Ambassador Gavin is different from Nava; I've been working with him for a few days and he's smart; he has spent a lot of his life in Mexico on business and family matters. His Spanish is perfect. His mother is from Mexico. He was head of the Screen Actors Guild after Reagan, and he's a well-educated person. Just do it and you'll be glad you did."

I did some research and found out that Ambassador Gavin was an honors graduate of Stanford, with a focus in Latin American studies, had been a naval officer in Panama, traveling all over Latin America as an aide to the famous Admiral Miles, had been a consultant to the OAS, and knew many key Latin American businessmen and politicians in Mexico and elsewhere in the region. He had been on a path to Stanford Law School after the Navy, had been accepted there after his junior year at Stanford. He had grown up in the LA area, and people in the film industry started offering him starring roles, so he shelved his law school plans. He was a serious person, whose Hollywood career, while successful, was more a diversion from his main path in life. He knew more important people in Mexico when he arrived than most Ambassadors have known when they left. In comparison, of his two predecessors, one spoke no Spanish at all and the other didn't speak Spanish especially well, at least from a Latin American perspective. Neither had strong contacts in Mexico before they went or a long history of time spent in Latin America.

So, I started working with Ambassador Gavin and enjoyed it from the start. He knew a lot about Mexico. He was smart. He had a great sense of humor. He was not only well-connected in Mexico, but well-positioned in the Reagan Administration.

He had gone to prep school in California with William Clark, who became Deputy Secretary of the Department under President Reagan, and later was National Security Adviser and Secretary of the Interior. Ambassador Gavin was close to a lot of members of Reagan's California Cabinet.

He seemed to like the way I worked. It probably helped that we had a few similar things in our background, although most of our experiences were dissimilar: we both went through Naval officer training programs in university; he had spent three or four years in the Navy; we both knew how the military command structure worked as well as the military style of briefings. He liked organized, focused information, not rambling discourses, and I knew how to do that.

He was very interested in economic and trade issues with Mexico, and I'd been working on these issues for a couple of years, so I had value to him there. And since I'd worked in the Operations Center and been in an embassy, I had some knowledge of how the Department worked.

The first few weeks working with him were focused on getting things he needed done in Washington: his schedule, preparing for his hearings. Hearings could be easy, but sometimes they weren't, because of Jesse Helms being on the Foreign Relations Committee, who had been known for giving some appointees a hard time. Ambassador Gavin prepared probably more than needed, as he already knew the issues well. Meanwhile, during this period, all of the criticism had kept up in Mexico that the US was sending an actor, and that was a big mistake, they said. They complained that he was still doing ads in Mexico, which wasn't true; they were old ads that were still running. Most ludicrously for anyone who really knew him, they railed that he wasn't going to be a serious person.

There were a few people in Mexico and the US saying, "He's very close to Reagan," and that is good," but mostly it was negative commentary. People in the Department who started to work with him began to appreciate him more, but there was still bad-mouthing going on, which was unfair and improper.

After I had worked with him for about a month, he said, "Why don't you come to Mexico as my special assistant?"

While I was flattered, I said: "I was planning on leaving the Department and I don't want to go overseas again for a lot of personal reasons. I want to focus on opportunities outside of the Department."

And he said, "Why don't you look at coming as a Schedule C appointment and come in at a higher level; you'll have a lot of responsibility in Mexico because there is a lot the President and I want to accomplish there."

He explained, but not in much detail, that he wanted someone who worked for him, reported to him, but also knew their way around an embassy and knew the Department and Washington. He wanted someone who was his appointee, but who was not new to working in the Department of State or the Embassy.

Q: Did you, at this point, feel that he had picked up these stories that are going around and in a way, have turned him against the Foreign Service establishment?

LYMAN: No, I don't think he felt that way at that point, because he had a great experience working with Ted Briggs and Bob Pastorino. He heard some of the noise, some of the bad-mouthing, and had seen that many of the people in the Department were patronizing. But I think his concern was more focused on the team specifically in the Embassy. Obviously, with Judge Clark as Deputy Secretary, I think he felt that he could get the help he needed from the Department. He had heard that the team in Embassy Mexico had some real weaknesses. He heard a lot of that in the Department and the White House, not just from the Mexico Desk.

Q: How about his hearings in Congress? Were they patronizing? Did they give him a rough time or not?

LYMAN: Not at all. It was a smooth, easy, cordial hearing. I remember that morning everyone was – not apprehensive, but a little bit concerned about what the Senators would ask or do. You never knew when there could be an odd question or someone could give you a hard time. But the Senators were very professional and supportive , seeming to focus more on the positives in his background than some of the negative things that had been in the press.

Q: By the way, for my timing, had Ambassador Lucey come and gone already?

LYMAN: Yeah, Lucey was gone. Lucey had gone, and Julian Nava had been there after Ambassador Lucey, but I can't remember exactly when Nava was told to clear out. I think it was soon after Reagan was inaugurated, likely in January. I think he tried to stay for a while, but he was told, "You're done. Time to leave."

Q: Well, okay. I just wanted to check that out. In a way, he went out with a very positive attitude toward the State Department apparatus.

LYMAN: Yes, definitely. I think his initial experience especially with the Mexican Desk, was good. A few things happened that gave him a pause – people gave him an especially hard time about appointing me, but I told him to expect that since we were going outside of the system. That's what Ambassador Lucey had done with his special assistant. His special assistant was appointed outside the system, but I think he had been in the State

Department before, so perhaps my appointment directly from being a junior officer was a little more complicated; probably a little bit more emotional for people. The Department suggested a few other candidates for the job I was taking.

One of the candidates later was thrown out of the Department because he and his wife had starred in a pornographic movie. So, we got a laugh out of that a few years later.

Q: Well, then, how did this – Had you sort of prepared yourself for a stint there and then off to somewhere else; Commerce or something like that?

LYMAN: That was what I was thinking. At that point, I was open minded; I committed to him that as long as it was fine with him I would stay for probably two or three years. Remember, I was taking a substantial risk. I was giving up my Foreign Service protected career status. I could have gone down there and, a month after I'd been there, if he wasn't happy with my work, he could have said, "Thanks but I'm sending you back."

I did ask Ted Briggs about that, and he said, "Check on Ambassador Gavin's friends: his real friends in life are people he went to prep school or college with, people with him in the Navy, people he grew up with. Some of them are famous, some aren't. But most of them have been his friends for 25, 30, 40 years, since they were kids, and he keeps those friendships; he's an incredibly loyal person. So, you've got to do your job, but I wouldn't worry about anything capricious coming out of a moment's decision or frustration. He's a solid person with solid personal relationships."

Q: Let's sort of divide into two things: one is the embassy, and then relations overall. Why don't we talk about the embassy? How did you see it and how was it when you got there – organization, strengths, weaknesses, etcetera?

LYMAN: Part of it – To give you some background, the Ambassador went down there in probably June – I think it was early June – and I didn't go right away. My paperwork didn't get finished until late July, early August. So, he was down there for a couple of months before I arrived. He was starting to get frustrated because the Embassy was a mess. It was a huge embassy. There were ten consulates or twelve, at that time. There were dozens of departments, all of whom thought they reported to the ambassador. There were well over a thousand people in Mexico City, plus the consulates, and I think at the time it was the biggest embassy in the world, not counting military or Peace Corps, which were small or non-existent in Mexico, but huge in some countries.

In the beginning, people were just deluging him – with paper, suggested calls, and suggested meetings. I had mentioned his background in the military, and he preferred to work with orderly chain of command. He had a real sense, too, of how an ambassador should work, that he should not be seen as a messenger only-- running too often into the Foreign Ministry, the Foreign Relations Secretariat as they call it in Mexico. He knew he needed to work the big issues and the important ones, or else he was going to be seen as a messenger and a pest.

So, he had a very well thought-out view of what his role should be, and he also saw himself, which I'll discuss more later, as the representative of the President, working through the State Department in many ways, but as the President's representative in Mexico. He had the country team deluging him with, "Do this, do that." He had a DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission) who was very good in a lot of ways; a Foreign Service Officer named John Ferch. John was extremely personable, bright, and energetic. He was good with the junior officers at post and had a solid understanding of economic issues.

But John was impulsive most of the time, and he came too often into the Ambassador's office, saying, "I've got this for you from the Department; you need to go down right away to SRE (The Secretariat of Foreign Relations)." The Ambassador felt as if he needed to push back on that. The requests were well-intentioned, but differed from Ambassador Gavin's concept of how he should work.

Before I arrived, the Ambassador had chosen a junior officer for the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) team to help him with his paper flow and calendar. He was a smart young guy, but he wasn't really managing the paper or the calendar well. So, the Ambassador was sitting there, looking at a desk piled with paper, a calendar filled with meetings or calls he really didn't think he should be doing, and by the time I got there, his frustration level was high. His discontent, at this point, was probably more process than substance.

Ambassador Gavin already had some issues with the press, and he was putting pressure on the PAO (Public Affairs Officer), to help him work with the press. But, generally, I don't think he was frustrated at first from substantive observation or evaluation of the Embassy. It was more that he processes weren't working right so it was making it very hard to get into the substance.

Q: What did you do?

LYMAN: The first thing I did I probably should have done differently in retrospect, which was, after a few weeks I sent the CIA officer back to his regular job. It was the right thing to do, but I probably could have handled it a little more gracefully. He was a fine person and deserved to be moved out in a more face-saving way. But he had to move on. How people perceive actions is important and I think people perceived that I wasn't fair to him. Later on, we rotated junior officers in to help with processing paper and managing the calendar. Some of them were outstanding, including Frances Jones, a talented consular officer, and Roman Popadiuk, who went on to the Operations Center, then the White House, where he eventually became Colin Powell's press secretary at the NSC and then the first US Ambassador to the Ukraine. He spoke fluent Ukrainian, Russian, Spanish, and English; he had a Ph. D in Soviet studies. We only had one bad experience with a junior officer helping us; one very smart, but insecure junior officer continuously gossiped about the Ambassador's office around the Embassy; much of the gossip got back to us and she was transferred back to the consular section.

What I tried to do was understand what the Ambassador wanted in terms of how his office worked. Working with him in the Embassy was a bit different than working with him in the Department: we didn't have Ted and Bob there; we had them in Washington, although Ted was moving on to be Deputy Assistant Secretary in ARA. But what we tried to do first was get control of Ambassador Gavin's schedule. We tried to get the DCM to function the way the Ambassador wanted, and I think John Ferch caught on eventually. In the beginning, on substantive issues, Ambassador Gavin first needed to understand what the resources were in the Embassy; who was strong, who was weak, who was dependable, then to decide what issues would take priority.

I didn't really, at that point, understand how far reaching the Ambassador's goals were. I knew he was coming down there to have a real impact, not to say three or five years later, "Hello, I'm John Gavin. I was Ambassador to Mexico."

He had certain goals in mind that had discussed with President Reagan. I think he was developing those ideas fully in his first couple of months down there, and the way he was attacked helped to formulate what became the key to those ideas, which was that Mexico had to change substantially the way it behaved towards the United States. Not change 180 degrees, but stop scapegoating and criticizing the US, while still asking for understanding and support. I'll talk about that more when we get to U.S.-Mexican relations.

I found I was in a difficult position, first in terms of process, then substance, because we were changing the way the Embassy worked. Everyone used to pass papers and meeting requests to the DCM, who would go right to the Ambassador. Paper would pile up on his desk, unprioritized.

Some officers in the Embassy not surprisingly resented that I'd jumped up to an FSO-3 level, and more than that, had substantial responsibilities in the Ambassador's office. They saw me as a gatekeeper and obstacle at the start, which wouldn't have been the case if they had been thoughtful and careful in what they brought to the Ambassador. After a few months, I became more involved in substance and managing high-level visits. What a lot of people misunderstood was that my job wasn't to keep people away or to reinforce the Ambassador's views, but to ensure, like any good staff assistant or special assistant, that he received a proper flow of information and that the important was separated from the trivial, that he reviewed decent options and solid information before he had meetings or before he had to make a decision.

A few people who served in the Embassy then later mentioned in their oral histories that my job was to tell him what he wanted to hear. In fact, my job was often to tell him what he didn't want to hear. It's a lot easier to tell someone what they want to hear, but telling someone what they perhaps don't want to hear is sometimes hard and stressful work. Also, much of my role on visits and substantive issues came because of certain weak spots in the country team and a vacuum that needed to be filled. If a Bob Pastorino, or someone like him, had been in key Embassy roles from the beginning, I think I would have had a lot less of a vacuum to fill.

The first Economic Section chief was weak. He had some good ideas, but his leadership, management, and reporting were sub-par. Trade issues were crucial. The Political Section was adequate. The DCM was good on substance, especially on economic issues, but not good at visit logistics, setting priorities, or on overall process.

There was one officer in the Economic Section who, when I had come in as a junior officer to visit the Embassy, he'd kept me waiting for an hour and a half while he built a model boat in his office. He was still in the Economic Section when I arrived as special assistant. There was a mid-level officer in the Political Section who sunned himself on the fifth floor outside the Ambassador's office every morning for two hours. He had a good tan, but didn't get much else done. No one on the Country Team seemed to care. The Ambassador noticed him right away and insisted he be transferred out of the Embassy.

There were three groups in the Embassy: one group of bright, strong people, which was a small group; a large group of people who were solid professionally but hadn't been well-managed or well-led. They hadn't been given a good sense of the mission of the Embassy, or f U.S. interest in Mexico, or even of what their job should or would consist of.; and then there was a group more like the guy who had been building a model boat at work or the one sunning himself who there more as tourists. It took a while to sort out who was strong and who was weak, but it became clear, especially the first group and the last.

Vice President Bush came in September, 1981, after I'd been there about a month, and planning for the meeting was sloppy, so the Ambassador became quite frustrated with some of the senior people. He then asked me to take a more active job working on future visits. We had numerous high-level visits, and I'll go over them more later, and we had dedicated visit support staff; we even had an officer in the Embassy, a civil service officer, mandated by Congress, whose only job was to handle CODELs. That was his full-time job, I think he had a couple of local admins working with him. We had an enormous amount of super high-level, cabinet-level and presidential visits and meetings, and then many visits from working-level, mid-level people from the Department and other agencies. So, visits were a huge opportunity and an enormous burden for the Embassy. It was an opportunity to educate people about Mexico and about what the Ambassador was trying to accomplish, as well as to get them on the side of what he wanted to do, but it was a tremendous burden to host so many visitors all the time.

Q: I've heard people talk about my interviews – this goes back some time, but there was a woman who was British at our embassy in London, who was a name to be conjured with, who could get you anything, arrange things, and she was there for years. But an embassy such as Mexico City or London needs somebody like that.

LYMAN: Yes, we really did. But still, when they came, the more senior people always wanted to see the Ambassador; the requests for local meetings took time for the Embassy

team. Often, the CODELS set a very ambitious schedule for Mexico when they were starting their trip in Central America; by the time they got to Mexico they would claim to be exhausted so they'd cut it back, but by then many of the meetings had been set up and had to be shifted or cancelled. Then there were dinners for them, and lunches, sightseeing, shopping. the Cabinet visits were more serious; two thirds of the cabinet had been there, by the time the first year had ended.

The Ambassador was ambitious to accomplish certain goals in the relationship: he especially wanted to make the Embassy very supportive of the American business community, not just the ones already very active in Mexico, but the large U.S. companies that had either present or future interests in Mexico; most important, as mentioned earlier, he wanted to change the essence of US-Mexican relations so that it wasn't insults and complaints from Mexico, while professing friendship mainly when US financial or trade help was needed.

I was lucky in that I had worked for two Ambassadors – Ambassador Asencio and Ambassador Gavin—who were very supportive of US business interests. As a businessman after I left Mexico, I saw many instances where ambassadors and embassies didn't do anything to help US companies.

Given the ambitious goals, much of the effort in the beginning went to finding out who was strong, who was weak, and then strengthening the Embassy team.. A lot of the strongest criticism of the Political Section actually came from ARA over the first few years. I think some of it was unfair, and I think a lot of it was coming from their frustration first with Mexico's Central American policy and then with the changes in Mexico: President Lopez Portillo turned to the left, nationalized the banks, and increased the rancor of his rhetoric against the private sector. His Foreign Minister, Jorge Castaneda, had always seemed anti-American, and the tone of the whole Lopez Portillo team seemed to shift left in 1981 and early 1982. Some of the moves, such as nationalizing the banks, came as a surprise, which increased the pressure from Washington for better reporting.

High-level officials in ARA, especially Frank Crigler on the Mexico Desk, scapegoated the Political Section, which wasn't extremely strong, but was adequate, with a few strong mid-level officers. In the Economic Section, Helen Lane, a mid-level officer, was capable, but the rest of the section was weak; the first counselor finished his tour early, his successor was so weak that he was quickly sent home, and most of the other senior and mid-level people in the section just weren't doing a good job of economic analysis and reporting.

Fortunately, there was a capable Treasury Department representative in Mexico. He had very good connections in the Bank of Mexico and the Ministry of Finance; he wasn't a team player and didn't work too closely with the rest of the Embassy, but at least he did solid reporting and had good contacts and information. Nevertheless, he was surprised by the nationalization of the banks. Unfortunately, he saw himself as working only for the Treasury Department, not for the Ambassador or the President.

The Admin Section , especially GSO, was a disaster. The Ambassador's residence was a mess, physically and in terms of how it was run. The furniture was dowdy and the small, old State Department furniture didn't fit the large rooms and open architecture. There was little art. The staff was ill-trained, even in basic hygienic food preparation practices. It was an embarrassment. With little help from the Department or the Admin Section, Ambassador Gavin raised money to re-build the residence, to decorate it, and to obtain fine American art on loan. He also trained the staff on how to properly prepare food.

LYMAN: The Embassy itself was a beautiful building, but the Ambassador's office was poorly furnished and dingy. Also, the location and architecture made the building a huge security risk. It was not well-suited to one of the most polluted cities in the world. The Embassy is still where it was then, on the main street in Mexico City, Reforma, the equivalent of Broadway or Fifth Avenue, and the building is set back only about five feet from the street. When Mexico City was a small city in the '50s, that was fine. But now it's a metropolis, and the Embassy building is five stories, with an open courtyard in the middle, which was safe when nothing was around it, but even in 1981 it was surrounded by high buildings that were actually looking down into the Ambassador's office, which had an outside entrance, and the CIA station. The walls were thin marble, which was beautiful as light came in, but a bullet could have easily pierced the walls.

Across a narrow street was a multi-story hotel and on the other side was a new multi-story parking garage, looking into the building. Given proximity to Reforma and the thin walls, a car bomb would have been a disaster. Meanwhile, visa applicants queued up in the warren of nearby streets.

At the time, Mexico was one of the most polluted cities in the world, but the Embassy wasn't air-conditioned. The first time the EPA put sensors on the Embassy, they thought the sensors had broken. Subsequent sensors showed some of the worst readings in the world for pollution, including a lot of human waste that had dried in the open sewers of the slums and been blown by the wind into the main part of the city. We wore white shirts in those days, and our collars would turn black every day. Friends of the Ambassador in Congress authorized spending for air-conditioning the Embassy, but the Department never utilized the money. The Ambassador also explored finding a new, safer site for the Embassy. Finally, a new Embassy is being built in a safer location, with a safer design, but this is more than 30 years after Ambassador Gavin left Mexico.

Overall, Admin did a poor job of maintaining the Embassy and the numerous residences owned by the Embassy, as well as arranging for temporary lodging for newly-arrived officers. The GSO team was a disaster, mostly remembered for one mid-level officer being caught having sex with a cafeteria employee on one of the cafeteria tables.

Q: Again, looking at the inner structures of things, how did you get along with the ambassador's secretaries? Because these are often key people in guarding the gates and all that.

LYMAN: It varied a lot, because we first had two Foreign Service secretaries one who really didn't get along with anyone, and one who seemed to resist the Ambassador's emphasis on organization and solid processes. One finished her tour early and the other left after perhaps 6 months. . Then for a while we had two part-time embassy wives helping, which worked fine. After that, we had a team of two Foreign Service secretaries one of whom who I had worked with in Colombia, in my previous post, and had stayed friendly with. We brought her in, and she got along well with everybody. She left soon after I did; I remember I had dinner with her a couple of years later in Bogota, where she had returned with the Foreign Service

Q: How about Washington as support, administratively?

LYMAN: Well, administratively in what sense?

Q: In other words, if you had a problem, could you go to Washington? Were they sympathetic?

LYMAN: It depended who we were dealing with and at what level. I would say it depended – The desk went from being a great help to becoming a problem when Frank Crigler came in.

Frank Crigler replaced Ted Briggs on the desk when Ted became DAS (Deputy Assistant Secretary). Bob Pastorino luckily stayed on the desk. Frank was difficult to work with from the beginning; he wasn't especially supportive on admin or substantive matters. He had been Ambassador to some tiny African post with 5 officers and always thought of himself as the peer of other Ambassadors such as Ambassador Gavin. On substantive issues, working with ARA Assistant Secretary Tom Enders was a challenge. He was bright and forceful, some considered him the smartest person in the history of the Department in terms of pure intellect. But he had certain ideas on Central America that were a bit different from the Ambassador's. They agreed on the goals– but not on how to get there and whether you use the Mexicans to help you get there or get them out of the way.

So, there was some tension back and forth on Central America.

On trade issues, relations with Washington were very good. The Ambassador had solid ties to US Trade Representative Bill Brock . He was very close with Mac Baldrige in Commerce, and he had support from the White House and from Bob Pastorino on the desk. The Department was generally unhelpful on the administrative and security issues.

I don't think the Department personally singled out Ambassador Gavin on the Admin issues, but, in my opinion, they just didn't take well to the idea of an Ambassador

working with Congress and getting appropriations for embassy buildings and improvements that the Department hadn't approved.

So, a lot of his ideas on moving the Embassy and air-conditioning it later went nowhere. But again, I don't see that as personal warfare with him, just as bureaucratic infighting. The main battles, I'd say, in late '81, '82, were with Crigler and to a certain extent with Enders. Crigler and Enders weren't working closely together (I don't think they got along), but they each were a challenge to the Embassy in certain ways.

Q: How about the consulates?

LYMAN: In those days, my memory is that the consulates at first reported to the DCM, not to the Consul General. The Consul General oversaw consular issues – visas, American citizens issues. But overall, the consulates reported to the DCM.

I remember we had a strong Consul General in Monterrey; a very strong Consul General in Tijuana, who still owes me a favor because with the Ambassador's support I helped get him a job as Consul General in Paris after he left Tijuana. But I don't remember any specific admin or security issues in the consulates; they were a bit vulnerable, some of the smaller ones in terms of security, and the bigger ones had some serious responsibilities, given the huge number of American citizens in Mexico, and they had substantial reporting responsibilities.

I don't recall anything coming up much as a major problem until Guadalajara got in the news after I left, when two DEA agents were kidnapped, tortured, and murdered when Dick Morefield was Consul General. There were some political incidents in 1983 or 1984 , when opposition to the PRI got more active and some political officers, some consular officers, attended some meetings of the opposition in southeastern Mexico. I remember being chargé and being called in by the Undersecretary of Foreign Relations and being almost yelled at for almost an hour for allegedly interfering in Mexican politics. We denied interfering, of course, and maintained we had the right to understand what was happening.

We had a very good Consul General in Mexico City, and I think for specific consular work, he ran the consulate in Mexico City extremely well; he made sure the consulates were doing the right things in terms of their consular work. I'd say probably in retrospect, we should have pushed the consulates a little harder on political and economic reporting earlier, but generally they were doing fine. Eventually, we had the consulates report in the Consul General, not the DCM. Does that answer your question?

Q: Yes, it does. You know, one forgets as time goes on that you were in the middle of a war zone, almost like the Middle East, on the periphery but an important player. What was happening in Central America? How did Gavin view the thing, sort of in private? Did he have a feel for this, or what?

LYMAN: The Reagan Administration believed that we needed peaceful, stable regimes in Central America. Sandinista control of Nicaragua or leftist control of other parts of the region was not acceptable. I think, however, that Ambassador Gavin's main focus was on Mexico, and changing Mexico's attitude toward Central America.

I'll set the groundwork a little bit with what he wanted to do about Mexico's role in Central America, which is where he was the main player in trying for change. Central America gets very tied up with the whole question of U.S.-Mexican relations, so maybe we can talk just a few more minutes about the Embassy and how it was organized. After a while we tried to reorganize it and I'm not sure it worked. Maybe there are some interesting lessons for others to learn from our experience. We learned the hard way how hard it was trying to organize or reorganize a large embassy with an entrenched bureaucracy that had its own ideas of how an Embassy should work.

Q: Yeah. Okay. Let's talk about that.

LYMAN: So Ferch left as DCM and he was replaced by George High. George was a pleasant, intelligent officer, but disorganized and he tended not to make decisions. While Ferch had pushed everything to the Ambassador, George was going the other way and bogging everything down; it didn't really work. So, the Ambassador tried first making me economic coordinator in May of '83, when I had been there almost a couple of years; all the economic-related counselors reported to me, which didn't work because George still behaved as if it were a dual reporting structure to him, which wasted a lot of time and bogged down decisions on many issues.

George had been Tony Motley's DCM in Brazil, and Motley had recommended him to Ambassador Gavin, which seems puzzling in retrospect, given George's performance as DCM in Mexico. So it was fair that Ambassador Gavin sent him back to be the ARA desk officer, replacing Crigler, when Motley became head of ARA, replacing Tom Enders. George did much better on the desk managing a small team and with a limited role. He was intelligent, he knew the issues, he was conscientious, and he didn't really have to make the same kind of decisions on the desk that he had to make as DCM.. He played a very important role on the desk for the next couple of years, making it much more key in the Embassy's relationship with Washington than it had when Crigler tried to counter or contradict everything Ambassador Gavin tried to do.

Then the Ambassador surprised me, the summer of '83 as George was leaving, he said, "Why don't you be acting DCM?" I had thought he was just going to get through a few months without a DCM and I would fill in some gaps as special assistant. Despite some discussions in other oral histories about me maneuvering to get him to put me in the role instead of other officers at post, I really don't think he considered anyone else there for the position after his experiences with Ferch and especially High. The Political Section chief was barely strong enough to run his own section and his deputy was more of tourist than a serious officer, someone who could not have run the section even adequately if his boss were to be promoted, so a move for the Political Counselor to be Acting DCM was unlikely to have been considered.

We'd already talked about bringing in a different kind of DCM, and I'd recommended Morris "Buzz" Busby to Ambassador Gavin. Buzz was an FSO (Foreign Service Officer) but he was different in background from most FSOs. He'd come in at mid-level, he'd been in the Navy and worked on fisheries issues in the US Government. I had met him when I was working on tuna issues, and I was impressed with him. Not only was he a good negotiator, but he was a fine leader, making everyone, including Junior Officers, feel part of the team. He wasn't pompous. He seemed a little ambivalent about the job in Mexico at first, because he hadn't been overseas as an FSO.

He came down to Mexico to take a look, stayed with us at our house, and although we had known each other for a few years, we didn't really get along well with him or his wife during the visit. They acted a bit strangely. I would say that of the dozens of guests we had in those years, they were the worst in terms of rudeness. In retrospect, since he did well when he finally came down to Mexico, had a good career, and that I had enjoyed working with him before his first visit to Mexico, perhaps he was uneasy about coming down or about something else in his life. He did, however, accept the position.

We ended up putting his arrival in Mexico as DCM on hold for a few months, mainly because of his strange behavior on the visit, and I stayed as acting DCM for about, probably, nine months or ten months in total.

The Embassy had improved its work, and we had a stronger team, but it still wasn't working the way the Ambassador required: the quality of the reporting was not that good; the preparation and execution for high-level visits was sloppy, and some major visits were coming up; Admin was still weak.

So, we tried having some of the stronger people among the senior leaders lead functional groups made up of a few sections, so that instead of having 25 direct reports as DCM, I would maybe have six or seven; Drew Arena, who was the legal counsel to the Ambassador, would have four or five. We had some strong senior people at this point; we had Cal Berlin, who was probably the senior officer in the Foreign Commercial section, he was a genius for admin work; he was a clever person, very practical and detail oriented, an excellent manager. So the Admin group reported to him. The Defense Attaché was a Brigadier General with good judgment. I think he nominally reported to me, but didn't need or get a lot of management.

John Montel, the Agriculture Counselor, was one of the senior people in the Foreign Agricultural Service. He was an experienced manager and extremely knowledgeable on trade issues.

We organized it so that different groups reported up to stronger people. I remember asking the stronger ones what they wanted most from me, because I was conscious that I was young, I was acting DCM, and that my main leverage in the Embassy was that I knew what the Ambassador wanted.

So I said, "What do you want? What can I deliver for you?" And they said, "Decisions." They had been going nuts for over a year where they couldn't get decisions; they either were bogged down with DCM High not making a decision, or were sent back for more information for him. They needed me to make decisions, or to get decisions from the Ambassador, or we would make team decisions. Indecision wasn't an option.

So, did it work? It was more streamlined. We did a better job on visits. We improved reporting substantially. Decisions were made quickly. Admin improved somewhat; Cal Berlin did good work with Admin. We had a new Admin Counselor, Doug Watson, and he had some strengths, some weaknesses, but was a big improvement over his predecessor. He at least brought some positive qualities and enthusiasm to the job, although GSO was hard to bring around. There was still a lot of resistance to change, especially by the weaker or more insecure section chiefs and Doug and some mid-level officers. almost killed two of my houseguests. I'm not sure you even want to hear that story.

I had friends from Florida staying with us during the Christmas holidays, and the very cold day they were set to arrive, we had problems with the furnace in our. So, I called GSO – it was an embassy house – and they came out to fix it. Doug checked their work later that day, which I appreciated, but that night, while my friends' two children were sleeping in what was the lower corner of the house, the furnace exploded and filled the house with smoke and some flames. Everyone escaped without injury. There was damage to some of my personal effects that I kept downstairs. My friends' children were fine. Both of them went on to be really outstanding human beings and professionals; one is a well-known attorney, one is now the Acting U.S. attorney in Florida's Southern District – I hate to think back on what would have happened if they had been killed in my basement. The careless repair and sloppy follow-up were symptomatic of a dysfunctional GSO team and an overall weak Admin function at the Embassy.

GSO gradually improved with help from Cal and Doug. The Economic Section improved. A new Treasury representative, Jack Sweeney, came in and he was a team player. When we were without an Economic Counselor for about a year, mid-level officer Helen Lane took a much bigger role. She did a solid job.

Then, in the spring of 1984 Bob Pastorino came in as Economic Counselor. He was terrific. The Ambassador trusted him. He knew all the issues from his years on the Mexico desk. It was a difficult time for Mexico. An economic crisis had begun in '82, so we needed strong reporting from the Economic Section.

Reorganizing the Embassy had probably helped a bit, at least streamlining the amount of direct reports and giving more power to stronger officers. But real improvement came mainly when better people took the senior positions.

Q: There's a tremendous difficulty of trying to mold an embassy into a good machine when people are being transferred every few years; the situation that you're dealing with is changing. It's a moving target, and you're moving.

LYMAN: The fundamental answer is getting great people. With Bob Pastorino there, I didn't need to play a substantive role in economics or trade. Bob had been my mentor. He was well-trained and knew US-Mexico trade issues thoroughly; I didn't need to manage him. He also knew what the Ambassador wanted. He understood how Washington worked. As more strong people came in, the need for me to play a major substantive role or to have an alternative organization lessened with time, but there was a transitional period from '83 to mid-'84 where we had some real gaps, just when the situation was difficult economically, diplomatically, politically, and in terms of law enforcement in Mexico

There was Central America, then the narcotics and corruption problems worsening in Mexico. Then, the nationalization of banks, a tremendous devaluation of the peso, Mexico seeming to almost run out of foreign exchange and there were many real food shortages.

Being acting DCM was a great if intense experience. I entertained over a thousand people at the DCM house over the 10 months. I maintained many high-level contacts in the Mexican government; I had to entertain a lot of US visitors and there were many substantive responsibilities that the Ambassador gave me. Visits went better, including a few Presidential meetings. Reporting improved. Progress was made on trade. The Ambassador's calendar and paper were managed in an efficient way.

A lot of Embassy people still resented me. And judging by some of the oral histories, they resented me years later. I don't blame them for resenting me because I took an unusual path to the position. I had been in the Department for 6 years when I became acting DCM. Many of them had waited thirty years for much less important jobs. But it was what it was. The people who worked with me, and performed, like the Consul General in Tijuana and the stronger counselors, ended up doing very well. Other officers did not do well, but it was their own fault, not mine. Generally, my approach, and Drew's, was to give people advice on how to present to the Ambassador, how to make requests for meetings or decisions. If they repeatedly didn't listen and came in unprepared or thoughtless, then the Ambassador 's displeasure was their own fault, especially since we had told them numerous times how to prepare. People tend to forget that if I didn't perform to the Ambassador's expectations, I would be gone, with no safety net.

I don't think my experience was that unusual in terms of working around the personnel system. Several people have become colonels, or generals, because they worked in the White House for three years. Roman Popadiuk became an Ambassador early in his career after working in the NSC. Sometimes people get moved up by circumstance, and sometimes people get penalized by circumstance. It's not always fair. But it was what it was, and most people in the Embassy and Washington had the sense to work with the reality of it. The people who were conscientious FSO's and senior people in other agencies did the right thing, trying to work through the system we established and get things done.

Q: Were you able to reach out to the – you might say the officer corps; you had a lot of officers there, and so did you explain what you were doing and get them to come along, or not?

LYMAN: I think we communicated. We tried as a leadership team to set weekly and monthly goals, so everyone knew what we were trying to accomplish. I found sometimes people were working hard, but it wasn't necessarily helping what we wanted to do. For the first few months, goals weren't clear.

For example, a couple of political officers came back with an expensive lunch tab, and they'd had lunch with the chargé from Norway, and I said, "What were you doing? What were you trying to accomplish?"

And they said, "Well, we were briefing him on our Central American policy," and I said "there's nothing wrong with that, but it's not exactly a high priority" And I wouldn't say I criticized the officers, but I just said, "There are some other things to do here that are more important and a better use of time and money ."

Then they asked, "Well, isn't that what ambassadors and diplomats do?" And the answer is, "Yes, and no. Sure, you want to have contacts, you want to talk to other embassies. But what are our priorities? What are we really trying to accomplish?"

So, this weekly and monthly goal process was designed to have everyone working towards common goals. Now, how well were those goals communicated and passed down? Given my later experience of thirty years in business and seeing how good corporations over-communicate with mission statements, and team meetings, and still how much miscommunication there is, I have to say if I had to do it all over again, I'd probably say we should have communicated ten times more than we did. But I have copies of many of the goals we set, and they looked clear and achievable. Many were achieved. Where I think the process didn't succeed completely was in getting the buy-in of the more reluctant participants.

Q: I think we should turn to what we were doing policy-wise, and – Immigration is always a major issue.

LYMAN: I was less involved with immigration. Drew Arena, the legal counselor to the Ambassador, focused on that. I think the best sort of backdrop for talking about specific U.S.-Mexican issues is to talk first about U.S.-Mexican relations in general and what the Ambassador was trying to accomplish, as well as what he did or didn't accomplish.

Then it will be much easier to talk about trade or financial issues or Central America or even a little bit about migration, although the two issues I didn't get very involved in were migration and law enforcement issues.

When I worked for IBM (International Business Machines), after leaving Mexico, I worked in IBM Latin America, and I used to give a lot of talks when I first came around IBM about U.S. relations with Mexico, because IBM was investing there in a major way. And the first thing I would always do would be to put up a map of Mexico before 1848, or before 1836, and then a map of Mexico after 1848.

Mexico lost most of what is now the southwest United, and for the three years I lived in Mexico, I must have been asked a hundred times, "Do you remember what happened in the 1840's? Do you know about Woodrow Wilson? Do you know about General Pershing ?"

And luckily, I'd done my graduate work focused on Woodrow Wilson, so I could answer – it's really the only use Woodrow Wilson's been to me since – but this was still on their minds in the 1980s, and the first year or so I was there, it came up at every lunch, every dinner, every breakfast. "Do you know your history? Do you know why we feel this way?"

And that was fine; what happened, happened. They had a strong feeling that the colossus of the north had screwed them once and was always going to screw them, so that gave them the feeling that they couldn't ever appear to be too cooperative with us. For both their own emotions and the realities of Mexican politics, they had to publicly stick it to us on certain issues, and scapegoat us a bit, even when asking for help or favorable treatment on other issues.

Sometimes they would scapegoat us, and then ask us for cooperation and help the next day. The message from the Ambassador was, "Don't forget the past, but let's not let it get in the way of the present." He was half-Mexican; he knew the past. His mother grew up in the north of Mexico. He knew the issues. But his approach was, "You can't just beat us up, hug Castro on a Monday, criticize us as the imperialists to the north, and then two days later ask us for help on trade or loans."

He said that privately, and he said it publicly. What he was trying to do was not just get them to cooperate with us on individual issues, but to change the way the two countries fundamentally related to each other. The Mexicans accepted his message reluctantly, but President de la Madrid and senior people in his government got it. So did his successors. Fifteen years later, I'd run into Mexicans whom I knew from that period. Many of them had been either undersecretaries or private secretaries to cabinet secretaries when I had been in Mexico, and quite a few later became cabinet secretaries.

I would see them on visits to Mexico or when they were in NY for the UN General Assembly meetings, and with the benefit of their career progression and the way relations improved even more in the next twenty years, many said to me, "Gavin was right, but we hate him." They said it with a smile; I don't think they really hated him. But he knew how to pressure them, and he knew how to squeeze them. It was a very subtle mix of public, but mostly private pressure, and then there were real consequences for Mexico when they acted badly towards us.

Ambassador Gavin made it clear that Mexico has to treat us in a mature way as a partner on diplomatic, political, and economic issues, or we're not going to go out of our way to be helpful. His message had a big effect on how he wanted to manage Central American policy. While Crigler, and to a certain extent, Enders, wanted him to go in and hammer the Mexicans, even publicly, on some of their Central American statements. Ambassador Gavin didn't want to openly do that. It would have reinforced their views of the US to do so and would have backed them into a corner. Privately, he made strong points about Central America. Ambassador Gavin was more focused on lasting changes in their behavior, rather than getting them to say a few cooperative words about Central America in meetings and then go do what they were going to do anyway.

Q: Sometimes the source of difficulty with Mexico might rest in the school system, as we found with the Muslim schools – Saudi schools particularly. What was being taught in the school system about the United States?

LYMAN: That's a very good point, Stu. A lot of the textbooks were very nationalistic. A lot of attention to the invasions and the wars. The keepers of the conscience were leftist and nationalistic Mexican intellectuals – not all of them, but many of them – and the Mexican press, and even, to a certain extent, some of the international press at the time was quite captivated by the Mexican leftist view of the United States as an imperialist oppressor with Ambassador Gavin as the "pro-consul" of imperialist power.

It was a ridiculous position, but two-thirds of the Mexican press would write stories almost daily that supported that view. At one point the Mexican newspaper Excelsior, accused the Ambassador's 80 year-old mother, who lived in California, of planning the secession of part of northern Mexico to join the United States. Then, the Mexican and even the international press reinforced those views. Alan Riding, the NY Times correspondent in Mexico, attacked the Ambassador often, seemingly well coordinated with attacks on Ambassador Gavin from the Foreign Relations secretariat and the Mexican press.

Their view of the past was real, but this was 70 years after Pershing had invaded Mexico. It was 140 years after the Mexican War, where we took a lot of their territory. It was time to move on. We were going to be and already were important trading partners, we were inextricably bound by this huge border. There was a lot of useful cooperation going on that people didn't even know about along the border, water, a diseases like screwworm.

Q: Oh God. Well, what you're saying reminds me: My particular specialty was the Balkans, and I served in Yugoslavia for five years, and everything went back to 800, when there was the slip between Orthodox and Catholics in that area, when the Turks took over, and the Turkish rule and all. And those things were more important than anything that happened in the modern era.

LYMAN: I think you're right. Korea and Japan had a lot of historical tension, there were destructive wars in South America in the early 20th, late 19th century. But I think the U.S.-

Mexican relationship is special because of that huge border, and it's a shame to see all of this getting inflamed again right now.

Q: Well, there are a whole series of relationships which are almost sort of beyond the Embassy. In other words, water and border things that – A lot of the states have been able to work their own relations with Mexico. Did you get involved with this?

LYMAN: Yes. I'm glad you brought that up. It was always an interesting point; certain states have an office in Mexico City, and most of it was tied in with trade and investment promotion, really, both ways, but it was an interesting phenomenon. You had the governors working across the borders, and some of the state offices worked a lot of issues, and then you have a lot of state weigh-in on issues like water, because the water issues were so sensitive on both sides of the border. Not just water pollution, but water flows and the availability of water.

So, the state involvement was good. Sometimes you had governors who maybe got a little over the line on trying to actually get involved in foreign policy issues more than commercial or specific state border issues, but still I'd say overall the level of state interest and involvement was something that was very welcome and positive.

Q: Did you and the Ambassador get involved in relations say with Texas, or California, or New Mexico?

LYMAN: I remember a lot of meetings. I don't remember any huge issues that came up, but there were issues they would raise; they'd have trade events some of us would attend. But I don't remember a huge amount of big, big policy issues coming out of border states particularly.

Q: What about corruption?

LYMAN: I developed much more awareness of it years later once I got involved in business. I began to appreciate how truly pervasive it was. The Ambassador developed very early a sense of not only the existence of corruption and *narco* (drug trafficking) corruption, but the dangers it posed to the Mexican state. And I know he raised those issues to the Government of Mexico in those years when I was there – I left in the summer of '84. He raised those issues privately, but very strongly, to Mexican leaders: if they let this narco-corruption continue it was going to have a very corrosive effect on their society; obviously, he was right.

Q: Did this corruption cause problems in the running of the embassy? Pay-offs to people, or –?

LYMAN: There were a few minor scandals in the consular section, but I guess the same thing had happened in Bogota. The temptations are very high given that the rewards are high and the pay for national employees isn't always super high. But there was also some corruption I think the Regional Security Officer found in one of the Embassy sections

that one of their Mexican employees was running a business and using Embassy trucks to deliver furniture he was manufacturing.

So, there were a few of those scandals found, and then there were other areas that were just questionable, such as the place GSO was using for temporary housing; it was just dreadful. I know; when we stayed there, all of my wife's family jewelry was stolen. It was such a sub-standard place, and there was no need for it, so why was the Embassy exclusively using it? I'm not going to say Embassy officers were corrupt; I don't think they were, but the whole arrangement doesn't make sense. I was in Mexico City last month and passed by the temporary housing facility; it still looked like a dump.

I don't remember any major corruption in the Embassy. Where the Mexican Government dealt directly with the Embassy, however, developments were more worrisome, The Mexican government provided two intelligence officers to be the Ambassador's bodyguards. We know the Ambassador was careful and acted at the time as if they were there to spy on him, but I understand later one of them got caught up in some sort of corruption. That was after I left, and I really don't know the details.

Q: Did the ambassador travel a lot?

LYMAN: He did and I think it added to his effectiveness. After I left, he determined to visit every state in Mexico, and he did that. Only one previous Ambassador to Mexico had done that; Mexico has a lot of states. I used to know the number, I don't remember, but he visited everyone, even the very remote ones. He did travel to Washington, and he travelled to California. He was criticized for traveling extensively, and that was really unfair. Most of his trips were working trips, and he stayed in very close contact. Even when he was in California, he was often meeting with people who really mattered in the United States and in U.S.-Mexican relations.

He received some very unfair criticism on US television and in the New York Times, but then we put all the numbers together and they really weren't all that unreasonable. That was kind of a bum rap, I know when he went to Washington he used his time very well. He saw the president just about every time he was there. Of course, he saw Judge Clark, Secretary Baldrige, Transportation Secretary Drew Lew, Ambassador Brock, and Secretary Shultz. He was very good at cultivating those kinds of relationships, which I think helped resolve tough issues, especially in trade policy, which I'll go into in a few minutes if we have time. Trade was a real victory, a substantial accomplishment. That came because he did his work in Washington, with Secretary Baldrige and USTR (United States Trade Representative) Brock as well as Secretary Shultz.

He travelled a lot, but he travelled well and used the travel productively. People have to remember, Mexico is an easy trip to D.C. or California or Florida or Texas. It's not like you're in Indonesia and running back to spend a week in California, then two days to get back and a day to recuperate. When I worked for IBM during the Mexican crisis of 1994-95, I never moved to Mexico, but I was in Mexico 45 times in 52 weeks. I spent

weekends with my family in NY and work-weeks in Mexico. The analogy isn't perfect, but I think people today are more used to a mobile lifestyle than they were then.

Q: How did the Spanish press treat him?

LYMAN: You mean the Mexican Spanish-language press? Pretty poorly, with a few exceptions. He didn't have the benefit of the free Mexican press that exists today, with financial newspapers and independent newspapers. The Mexican government controlled the newsprint and controlled a lot of what the press said. His TV treatment was a little bit better – much better, really – from the private networks like Televisa.

When his press treatment from the written Mexican press was poor, a lot of the U.S. press picked up on it. Not all of it. I think people in the US, as a result, misconstrued what he was doing in Mexico, what he was trying to accomplish, and what he actually did get done.

The press can make anyone look bad; you write stories about someone and you can ignore the accomplishments and focus on the challenges and difficulties and make anyone look like they're having a tough time. And in this case, they really tried to do a job on him. The Mexican press is very different today. There are still vestiges of it, but it's much more an independent press in 2016 than it was in 1982, '83, '84.

Q: How did the fact that he was a movie star play? Was this positive or negative?

LYMAN: I think at the beginning it was taken as a negative, but a few smart people realized, "Hey, guess what, President Reagan was a movie star, too. Maybe there is an affinity there, both in ability and in their relationship."

That became clear later on because President Reagan was very astute in showing his support for his team. President Reagan often appeared during meetings in Washington when the Ambassador was with Mexican officials; he would often appear unexpectedly and put his arm around him Ambassador Gavin, or call him in to his office. He made very clear that Ambassador Gavin was his Ambassador and spoke for him.

The other positive development was that people began to understand the facts about Ambassador Gavin's intellect, his deep knowledge of Mexico and Latin America, and his many contacts there and in the US.

When people realized he was bright, serious and well-connected, and partly because of his relationship with President Reagan, that Hollywood experience became a positive. Plus, having been a movie star, he had a major sense of presence. When he walked into a room – he was very tall, 6'4", 6'5", he was handsome, well-dressed, self-assured, all of which is important to an ambassador or diplomat. He was a good speaker and his Spanish was perfect. While the positives of his background far outweighed the negatives, his somewhat unusual background gave people something to attack, although many learned they had mischaracterized or under-estimated him.

People learned a lot about the Ambassador from Henry Kissinger's visit. He had a special portfolio for Central America and came to Mexico to understand how Mexican policies were affecting the region. He had known the Ambassador for years and treated him with tremendous respect.

Q: How about with somebody else who was very much connected with the movie industry and Ronald Reagan: Charlie Wick. Did he play much a role there?

LYMAN: He came down a few times, and I think the Ambassador engaged him when the Ambassador was having some problems with the press and some of the people from USIA (United States Information Agency) didn't try to help quite a bit with those problems. But I don't remember Charlie Wick playing a major role; he came down at least once, and once with Charlton Heston, who knew the Ambassador well, too. There were a lot of visitors from the movie industry, some fascinating, some not.

Q: Well, was the ambassador able to use his Hollywood connections? I mean, it can be quite an asset.

LYMAN: Down there he didn't play it up. But he did utilize his family and friends in Mexico.. Carlos Fuentes, the famous Mexican writer, was his cousin, so he had a lot of ties through him to the intellectual community, too. There were many Mexican intellectuals at his dinners, from mostly the center and right of the political spectrum, but occasionally from the left. Many from the left were invited, but didn't come.

Ambassador Gavin utilized the Embassy Residence to create a positive impression. He raised substantial private money to improve the Embassy Residence What was a dump when he arrived, with terrible, outdated furniture, outdated designs, small, ugly rooms, was transformed – not a tear-down, but taking out most of the walls, removing most of the furniture, raising private money to rebuild it from the inside out. This was a potentially magnificent property in a great location, and it turned out wonderfully. It became very useful for entertaining.

He also obtained wonderful American art, borrowed from the U.S. government and museums, and then served California and other U.S. wines – mostly California wines. He had a lot of big events at the residence, including obviously the July Fourth every year, also a lot of large receptions smaller dinners.

Q: At that period of time, how did relations with the PAN (Partido Acción Nacional) (National Action Party) and PRI (Partido Revolucionario Institucional) (Institutional Revolutionary Party) – I mean, the PRI was fully in control in those days, wasn't it?

LYMAN: The PRI was at their height then. There was Lopez Portillo, who went out at the end of '82; de la Madrid who finished his term in '88; then Salinas to '94; and then Zedillo to 2000. So, there was really another 19 years of PRI rule from when the Ambassador arrived. But the PAN was starting to get more active, and as I mentioned

earlier, when we tried to send people to observe some of the public meetings – not private meetings, public meetings – we were given strong warnings by the Mexican government, and again it was the harshest session I ever had with a Mexican official while I was there, where I was totally reamed out for one of our mid-level political officers attending a PAN public meeting. But we didn't stop. The Ambassador often reminded them that they were able in the US to freely deal with both parties and to attend their events.

We were careful in what we did, and of course we wanted to make sure no one got hurt, but it was a period of tight PRI rule. The PAN wasn't yet well organized. There were clever and charismatic PAN leaders at the time, and some of them were in the business community, so we had ties with them in their dual role as PAN leaders and business leaders. But it began to get more polarized when Lopez Portillo nationalized the banks, and turned on the private sector in August, September 1982. The private sector was not necessarily fully aligned with the PAN, but very uncomfortable with the PRI from that point on.

So, you could say it might have been a turning point, because Lopez Portillo's rhetoric was harsh, and he even talked in a meeting with Judge Clark and the Ambassador that I attended about hanging the bank leaders in the main square in the city. I don't think he meant it, but he said it as a way of using harsh words to make a point. If one looks for a turning point when the private sector gave up on PRI in their own minds, even if they didn't take action right away, it might have been during that period.

Q: Well, Don, I have not served in Mexico. I've only followed it from outside. But are there any other issues that are themes we might pursue?

LYMAN: One of the most interesting issues involved trade. I wrote an article on trade issues with Mexico in a book published by Columbia University in the 1980s. Trade is an example of an issue that was potentially explosive, because Mexico in 1980 decided, under pressure from the left, not to join GATT (General Agreement on Trades and Tariffs), and there were many bilateral trade issues because the Mexicans were giving many subsidies to their industries. They also wanted to regulate foreign investment. There was US congressional pressure, especially from Florida, on Mexican tomato exports, a potentially very volatile issue. I once had a US Senator from Florida, whom I knew somewhat, ask me if I liked to have the Mexicans defecate (he used another word) in my face. I didn't know quite what to answer. But he went to tell me at great length that was what the Mexicans were doing in exporting tomatoes to Florida.

With them not joining GATT, a lot of people in the Congress and in industry incited us to go after the Mexicans. But someone came up with a better idea, and I can't even remember who initiated the concept, whether it was Bob Pastorino or the Ambassador or someone in USTR or Commerce. But everyone came together on "let's get Mexico to agree to a very technical subsidies pact," which I won't even bother to explain. The details of countervailing duties and subsidies are very technical and most people don't understand or want to understand them.

The strategy was to pick this dry but important area, reach a bilateral agreement, and by the time that's done, it's virtually the same as joining GATT, and then they'll end up finding it politically easy to join GATT. But do it in a low key manner. And the Ambassador drove this strategy, very strongly, with a lot of cooperation from USTR and Commerce and Secretary Shultz.

It ended up taking about three years to get Mexico to sign up for these agreements. I think they signed the subsidies pact in '85 and joined GATT shortly after, and then eventually NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement.

Meanwhile, negotiations also led to diffusing a lot of potential foreign investment issues, especially in the automotive and pharmaceutical sectors, that came up around the same time. All of this was done on a backdrop of the U.S. providing tremendous help during Mexico's financial crisis. It was not an easy atmosphere because Mexico had nationalized the banks. But Mexico needed exports and foreign investment.

Mexico was in terrible economic straits: they were signing an IMF (International Monetary Fund) deal. But it was a very sensitive time politically and for the relationship. So these quiet negotiations on subsidies ended up bringing Mexico into the international trade structure, which made a lot of other positive changes possible down the road.

The other issue that was handled in a way similarly was energy. In 1981, I think, or '80, Mexico raised oil prices, right after world oil prices went down. It was a disaster for Mexico and for their customers. In 1983 we had a U.S. DOE (Department of Energy) team, the smartest energy market experts, privately have three or four briefing sessions with the Mexicans where they explained to them briefly how oil markets work. They also set up an informal communications structure for the future. The Mexicans never again made a mistake in oil pricing and more importantly, although they're not members of OPEC, they were able to avoid disrupting oil markets, either by price drops or price increases, and became a very responsible player. Plus, it raised mutual confidence in both governments that some issues are best are best handled privately and almost secretly.

So, on the trade side, on the energy side, some good things quietly happened, and on the financial side, U.S. help got Mexico through the worst of the crisis. Ambassador Gavin played the key role in that, arranging for the U.S. to pay Mexico in advance for oil for the Strategic Petroleum Reserve in 1982. That became tied to some bank loans for the private sector, and Mexico got the foreign exchange it needed to get through the crisis. We obtained oil for the Strategic Petroleum Reserve, and a lot of trust and progress toward the mature relationship that we talked about I think came out of the cooperation during the crisis. A lot of what happened was done behind the scenes, sometimes by linking issues, sometimes not. The Mexicans complained about some of the terms of the agreements, often in nationalistic terms, but gradually the rhetoric died down.

Q: Was there much – You mentioned this raising the oil prices when it didn't make sense. I would have thought that the bureaucrats in Mexico were meeting quite often with our

people and with others. They were sophisticated people. Was this a political thing, sort of beyond the field of the experts, or what?

LYMAN: I think a little bit of both. I think on the one hand, it was highly political, but on the other hand, I don't think the right experts were in place yet or that there was much contact of our experts to theirs. A few years later there were people like Adrian Lajous, who later became head of PEMEX and then a cabinet secretary, from a very politically involved Mexican family. His sister was head of North American relations at the Foreign Relations Secretariat and later became an important Ambassador. His sister was in Congress. Experts like him later had big roles, but at this point, Lopez Portillo had a political hack running the oil company and making these kinds of decisions, so even if the professionals knew better, I don't think their voice was heard.

What we tried to do was give information to the professionals, even some of the senior policy people. Adrian Lajous had a major role in energy policy even then and he sent his best people. He got all the information from them, giving him the ammunition so that later they could resist any political pressures to do something that was economically unfeasible. And they never made the mistake again.

Q: Okay. Today is the 17th of November 2016, with Don Lyman. Let's see: before we leave Mexico, your ambassador was a well-known movie star on TV and all that. Did you find that he put an emphasis on public appearances and used that to his advantage?

LYMAN: He used that to his advantage especially probably two or three years into his role in terms of speeches he made and points he got across in the public eye. In the beginning he was a little bit cautious, because the press reaction to him, especially in Mexico, was hostile. He used appearances with President Reagan well, and he used his meetings well,

He became most effective making speeches, especially about the relationship with trade and investment issues in 1983, 1984. Then I left in '84, so I don't know about after. But know he made an especially effective speech to the American Chamber of Commerce in Mexico about trade and investment that I think had a lot of impact on both sides. On the other hand, he did a couple of TV shows, and some of them, I think ABC (American Broadcasting Company) especially, edited it in a way that it was prejudicial and didn't get him or his message across very well. So, I think he was still careful, but the speeches seemed probably to be the best medium. He was a very good speaker, in English or Spanish.

Q: Did you help write speeches?

LYMAN: I tried not to. That was a real weakness of mine. I'm not a good speechwriter. The Ambassador wrote well, but didn't always have the time to write his own speeches. Sometimes at the beginning I did, but when he ended up with some people in the Embassy who were pretty talented speechwriters, he didn't need any help from me. A

few of the mid-level officers, one in particular, were really good. She helped a lot. She later became an Ambassador, so I guess her talents showed early.

Q: Well, by the time you left did you find you were having problems at the Embassy by being close to the ambassador?

LYMAN: I was getting my job done and the Ambassador was pleased with my work. But I think when you're more tied to the Ambassador than to the Foreign Service, and considering the role I had to play especially my first year as gatekeeper, some people were resentful. When I became acting DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission), some people resented that; I was in my-mid 30s and had been in the Department for 6 years. I was Acting DCM for almost a year at one of the largest posts in the world. One person who was especially resentful ended his 35 year career ten years later as Political Counselor in Mexico. So I had gotten to a high-level position fast, outside the system, if only on a temporary basis. We were doing things differently than most FSOs expected. So it wasn't surprising that there was resentment focused on me. Some of those who later made it clear that they resented me were butt-kissers while I was there, so I only realized their true feelings when they provided oral histories. Others were more open about their resentments, which in a way I respect more. Nevertheless, we still were able to form a cohesive management group and we got quite a bit done. I stayed in contact with many of the senior team members for decades after. They were some of the best people I've ever worked with, anywhere.

Q: Well how did you feel, particularly when you were in a DCM job, of the role of the consulates?

LYMAN: I didn't get that involved with the consulates. I think before me, the DCMs had the consulates reporting directly to the DCM and dotted line to the Consul General and dotted lines to the section chiefs for their reporting. My memory – which, again, it was 30-something years ago – my memory is, we changed it to the consuls reporting directly in to Larry Lane, and not to the DCM, and then dotted a line more to the section chiefs. When they'd come to Mexico City, I'd meet with them, but I don't remember having them reporting to me. We had a close working relationship with most of them – obviously the consulates in Mexico were really important, and we were lucky enough to have good people in just about all of them. So, there weren't a lot of management issues, but even in those days it was kind of a tough territory for the consulates.

Q: What was happening regarding tourism, for example? One hears concern about attacks on tourists. Was this a problem?

LYMAN: Not in those days. There were occasional incidents, and there were safety incidents: At least two embassy employees died in accidents when I was there, which was awful, and a number of American tourists had auto accidents. One professor from Thunderbird was murdered, and there was a very messy handling by the Mexican police of his murder. I think it's mentioned quite a bit in some other people's oral histories. There were incidents that got publicity, but it was nowhere near the trouble and violence

that you have now. This professor had driven through by himself in the most dangerous part of Mexico, which I don't think anyone would attempt today, but in those days, some people did it. It was already dangerous. I'm not blaming him for what happened to him, but he went through a very lawless part of the country, came across the wrong people, and they killed him, took everything, and burned his car.

But it wasn't frequent. I would say that that changed much later. Tourism probably wasn't anywhere near in numbers what it was before the recent problems. Cancun was a small town; I stayed in a house in Cancun in 1983 that seemed to be way out on the edges of Cancun, and when I went back five or six years later, people told me, "Oh, that house is downtown." Cancun expanded tremendously, Ixtapa expanded, and then a lot of new resorts were developed. So, I think the Mexican tourism scene at the start of the millennium was very different than it was in the '80s.

Q: What did you want to do when you left?

LYMAN: When I left, I was torn between working in government or business– I had an offer from the Department of Commerce to be a Deputy Assistant Secretary focused on Latin America, working mainly on trade issues, and that was an attractive offer. But I was leaning towards working in business. I had done a quite a bit of economic and trade related work in Bogota, on the desk, and in Mexico, and I liked the challenges I saw for international business working with or dealing with in Latin America.

I did find, when I started looking for jobs, that I had much to learn about the corporate world and how it worked. Ambassador Gavin suggested I meet with a friend of his, who was a very well-known headhunter, search firm guy, and a very blunt one. I met with him in New York, and he said to me, about two months into my job search, "How many resumes have you sent out?"

And of course, this was in the days when you mailed letters, so it wasn't applying online or sending out emails, it was sending out real letters. I proudly told him that I'd sent out ten letters. He looked at me and he said, "You're an idiot."

Like I said, he was a very blunt guy. I said, "Well, I didn't really think of myself that way, but tell me why."

And he said, "By this time, you should have sent out a hundred letters. If you sent out a thousand you're an idiot in a different way. But don't you know how companies work?" And I think this is important still in today's job market, and it's relevant to people leaving the Foreign Service today, which is one reason I'd probably want to put it in the oral history.

He said, "Companies are forever having job freezes, they're reorganizing, they're moving people around from job to job, so you don't know. You could be the perfect match for a company, and they could think you're great, but a week later they could be under a job freeze. And it could work for you, too: they could say this week that they're not

interested and then a few months later, they could call you for an interview. The only way to make it work for you is to get a reasonable amount of letters out, and then let the math work for you." It was interesting how that worked. Once I was in the corporate world, I realized that he was exactly right.

LYMAN: So what happened was, initially– around March, April of 1984 – I received a wonderful offer from a pharmaceutical company in Miami to manage their government relations in Latin America. And I already knew one person in the company from Bogota, they'd had a good reputation, and this person was a great guy. He wasn't in charge, but I really relished working with him. They made me a good offer, and I went and started house hunting in Miami. Took a long weekend to do it. .

All of a sudden, I got a letter from them saying, "Our Latin America division has been abolished. The head of it, who made the job offer to you, has been fired. We'll be in contact in about a year when we figure this out."

This was the negative side of what the headhunter had told me. On the positive side, which kind of worked out in a strange way. The Ambassador had written IBM on my behalf, and IBM had written back saying, "We don't hire people like Don. We hire people when they get out of college and they start working in a branch in Hartford or Baltimore or Buffalo, and they work in a branch for four or five years and then they move into other jobs at IBM. We don't hire people from outside for mid-level obs. People start, and then they work for us for their entire careers." It was a lifetime employment type of company, they said.

I said, "Okay, fine." I'd wanted to work for IBM (International Business Machines) almost my whole life, because I grew up in IBM territory in the Hudson Valley, and a lot of my friends had worked for IBM. I always thought it was the kind of company I wanted to work for. But after I got that letter I forgot about it. Two months later, IBM called me up for an interview, and they said they were getting more interested in Latin America. They weren't sure what their plans were, but they wanted an interview. I went up and did that, and again I didn't hear anything for a month or so.

Then all of a sudden, I got a call saying, "Hey, we're forming a new Latin America division at IBM, and we've been having terrible problems working with Latin American governments. Would you come up to New York tomorrow and have an interview? We'll also give you a physical." A lot of companies gave employees physicals before hiring in that period. So, I figured if they were giving me a physical, they were probably pretty sure they were going to hire me.

And sure enough, I went up there, did the interview, and a week later I had a job offer. A few months later I ended up working for IBM in New York. I personally think what people do in the Department of State, whether it's political, economic, consul, or admin work, is tremendous preparation for business. But many businessmen didn't realize that, and there weren't that many people then who had come from State and made successful careers in truly a business job. There were people who'd come in to State after working

as lobbyists or attorneys and resumed that work; some Ambassadors have been on boards or been consultants, but there wasn't a long history then – which I think has changed a bit – of people going from the Department to actual business-related jobs.

IBM did get more open, mainly because they had had some very bad experiences in Latin America that showed them they didn't have a clue how to deal with governments, and in the '80s, governments were highly regulating computers, pharmaceuticals, autos, and all of the other foreign-owned business in Latin America. So, around '84, '85, it was really important that companies deal effectively with government. I think the pharmaceuticals were the first to realize that, and IBM wasn't too far behind.

Q: So, what was your experience with IBM? When did you start? Let's talk about that.

LYMAN: It was an interesting cultural experience. I joined in the summer of 1984. IBM in those years, as you can probably tell from my earlier remarks, had a very insular culture. They almost spoke their own language. They had probably a hundred times the acronyms we had in government. They even had an online acronym dictionary in those days. It was all mainframe-based; there were not many personal computers yet. Everyone there had worked there for their whole careers. Almost no outside hires. So, when I was first there, some of the more parochial employees would say something like, "Wow, can we talk about this in front of Don?" Which wasn't personal mistrust of me, but it was the feeling that I was the guy from the government. They'd never had to deal with outside hires before, which was kind of mind-boggling to me.

What I did find at IBM was a mix of people, with a range of abilities very similar to what I saw in the Department. There were some people with incredible intelligence and skills and energy. There were other people in the middle who were good if they were managed well or directed well, and then there were some people who probably didn't belong there, but in a full employment company, they were carried along. Some of them were more interested in their frequent flyer certificates than in their business performance. The other thing that surprised me a bit was, I had worked a bit in retail when I had taken a break from grad school, and retail didn't have a lot of politics. It was number-driven. But I found in IBM there were a lot of politics. Again, it was a full employment company, it was hugely profitable in the early '80s, and results were important, but the results were almost a given. So, I don't know the cause and effect. But there were a lot of politics, a lot of fiefdoms. People had relationships going back to when they'd served in the Buffalo branch together. People from the Cleveland branch dominated a huge part of the company. It was really almost like medieval fiefdoms.

It was hugely profitable. It was very customer-focused, very ethically oriented. A lot of focus on training employees, developing employees, keeping employees happy. The only way a manager could get in trouble, besides stealing, was if their employees survey was negative, if their own employees didn't think they were doing a good job managing them. If a manager got that, they were put through hell on Earth, which was kind of admirable in terms of forcing managers to improve and to change any kind of negative behaviors.

So, there were a lot of great things about IBM, and I was there for 16 years. I learned an incredible amount. I started out in government relations, stayed there for about four years, and then I switched over to the business side. The government relations part was some of the most interesting work I've ever done in my life, and was very involved with the Department of State, with USTR (United States Trade Representative), with the Mexican government, the Brazilian government.

So, I felt like I was using my experience in a productive way. And I wasn't using it much in term of leveraging relationships, although that's a part of anything you do, but what I was trying to use was the knowledge I'd picked up in my years in the Department. And, I think we made some progress on some really important issues for IBM. Looking back on it years later, I'm really proud of what I did and what we did as a team. I could tell you about a couple of those issues; both of them have had articles written about them.

Q: Could you tell me them?

LYMAN: Yes. The first one that hit was just as the personal computer was just starting to take off in late 1983, '84. Even within IBM it wasn't used very widely, as I found when I arrived. But it was starting to take off as a business and it was going to be the future of computing. To penetrate the Mexican and Latin American markets, and to have reasonable labor costs. IBM felt that it was important to manufacture the personal computer in Latin America. They selected a site in Guadalajara, Mexico, and came up with a seemingly attractive proposal for the Mexican government in late '83 for creating thousands of jobs, developing Mexican suppliers, and most important perhaps, exporting thousands of these PCs (Personal Computers) from Mexico to Latin America and even to the U.S. So the proposal created jobs, raised skills, and increased exports, all desperately needed by Mexico in 1984.

Going against the backdrop of Mexico not yet agreeing to a subsidies pact, going through all the political turmoil in this period in Mexico, instead of the Mexican government going, "Great, this is what we need," they were rather reluctant. No one at IBM could quite figure it out, and frankly in the Embassy we had been having a little trouble figuring it out, too. But right around the time, about a few weeks before I joined IBM, they got the approval from the Mexican government, they thought.

They received a letter that sounded very positive, so the head of the Latin American division, told me as I started , "Don't worry, Don, you won't have to work on Mexico . We know you've been there three years and you probably want to get into some different issues. We are getting the approval and it's fine." About a week after I joined, it was very clear that the Mexican government (GOM) wasn't approving it. The GOM never really said why.

It took about another three or four months of conversations back and forth, and the message we finally got from the Mexican government was, "Look, we really want this. But politically, it's kind of tough for us, because you're an American company." You know the history, and as I mentioned in our other discussions, history went back to the

1840s. There was this real fear of appearing to get taken advantage of by American government, American companies, American individuals. There was a feeling that even if they knew it was a good deal, it was too risky in that it could be construed on the left as taking advantage of Mexico or being one-sided.

So, what the Mexicans finally did was, they finally said to us, "Look, you're a very active, positive corporation. We know you do a lot of charitable activities, you do educational activities, you do a lot of human resource training and development. Why don't you take all that you plan to do over the next two or three years, that you planned to do anyway, and put that into a proposal. And the other element we want you to put in the proposal is, we want you to put a semi-conductor plant in Mexico." The Embassy had helped us try to understand what was going on and to tell the Mexicans privately that if they didn't approve IBM, other potential foreign investors would be discouraged.

That set off a lot of fireworks, because a semi-conductor plant in those days was at least a billion-dollar investment, and you needed a lot of high-level skills in the country to make it work properly. It just didn't really make sense, given what IBM had elsewhere, to put that in Mexico. So, what we tried to do in IBM was take a creative look at what they asked, and this was an exciting kind of thing to do.

We took a look at Mexico, where it was in terms of development and training in the high-tech sector, and said, "Where could we add to our proposal some really aggressive training programs that would help Mexico develop a competitive tech sector?"

What we came up with were three types of training. We said we'd do some semi-conductor design and teach people how to do that in Mexico, we just wouldn't manufacture semi-conductors there. That at least gave them something in the semi-conductor area, which was hot at the time, Intel was making buckets of money and it was something everyone wanted to be in. Second, we said we'd do was what we called a scholarship program working with Monterrey Tech, which was the best technology university in Mexico. I think it had ten or fifteen campuses and was a really fine engineering and science-focused, university. We worked with Monterrey Tech on a scholarship program where people would, while they were at school, do internships at IBM and be on a fast track to be hired by IBM. Third was a promise that if the factory was implemented, we would truly train the workers of the factory. They all wouldn't be only assembling pieces without picking up marketable skills. There was a real effort to train the people not to be engineers but to be skilled technical workers.

And then there was also some discussion of, if it worked out, future IBM manufacturing missions could come to Mexico. So finally, I think it was probably early in '85 or mid '85, Mexico approved the factory. This turned out to be a real success story. Not only were most of the people who had been running IBM Mexico the past ten or fifteen years from the scholarship program, but the factory ended up being a tremendous well-rounded, effective factory that ended up with probably, at one point, I think, employing twenty thousand employees and got other missions for IBM that exported over $10 billion dollars annually all over the world.

Ten billion dollars in the late 1980s or early 90s was a lot higher share of Mexico's exports than of course it would be today after NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement). The factory ended up with a tremendous amount of skilled factory workers. Eventually, many years later, IBM sold the plant to a third-party manufacturer, but I think that was well after 2000, when IBM was getting out of manufacturing.

Q: People used to say IBM stands for "I've Been Moved", that there's a lot of shuffling people around. During your time there, was that a –?

LYMAN: When I first joined IBM many of my colleagues had moved many times, but by the late '80s, that started to go away quite a bit. I did move with IBM. I moved from New York to Boca Raton, where there was a large IBM presence in the late '80s. But the moving really slowed quite a bit. When I started IBM had about 20 office buildings in Westchester and in Connecticut. They had a bunch in Wallingford, a few around New Haven, some in Stamford, and then all over Westchester. But by the time I left, most of those buildings were gone and there was just a headquarters building and a few others in Westchester.

After 2000, a lot of people started working at home for IBM, and of course if people were working at home, they could be anywhere, unless they were assigned to a particular customer. But the customer base had moved away a bit from Aetna and the big banks and where people would move to Hartford to work on Aetna or move to New York, and the customer base became more decentralized. A lot of people worked at home and traveled. So, I'd say probably around 2000 or 2005, people spent a lot more time either traveling or on conference calls, but didn't move nearly as much.

Q: How did you find the structure of IBM?

LYMAN: I found it a little confusing at first. When I joined, it was 435,000 employees. It's around that size now, but ten or fifteen years later it dropped down to around 200,000. The structure was a bit complicated; it was heavily matrixed, where you might be reporting to one business solid line and two other units dotted line. It was really quite confusing. Government relations were a bit complex because IBM had a very powerful and effective government relations unit in Washington, but there were also government relations units in the geographic business units that didn't report to Washington, but were dotted line to Washington.

The next major issue in which I was involved became very complicated within IBM. There were different views within IBM how the problem should be handled.

I gradually became comfortable within the structure, and one thing you learn in the State Department is how to think about a decision-making structure and work within it and deal with where people are coming from and what their motivations are and what the politics of a situation are. But I would say the extent of the internal politics at IBM did surprise me. At the beginning, at least, I didn't see as much of, "Hey, what's the right thing for the

business?" or "What's our bottom line?" or "What's best for the shareholders?" I heard that a lot, but I also heard a lot of, "You can't do this because so-and-so did something different and they're important," or, "If you do this it will make so-and-so look bad."

So, there was a bit of politics and bureaucracy, but over time as IBM came under more pressure on the margin side, and laid off thousands of employees, and even lost money for a few years of the '80s, the business focus came back and much of the politics perhaps went out of it.

Q: Looking back on it, it was a different area, but the role of women – I mean, one, on the job, and two, the fact that this was an outfit that was moving people around. How did this work, in your impression?

LYMAN: When I joined IBM in Latin America there were quite a few women in important jobs. There was a woman from Argentina who was assigned as a trainee in New York, and she actually worked with me for six months. She returned to IBM Argentina, eventually left, became head of the Telecom company in Argentina, then became one of the top people at the UN (United Nations) and now she's Foreign Minister of Argentina. So, she was a success story. I'm sure moving to NY with her husband was not an easy decision, especially for one year, but it probably broadened her perspective and helped her in her career.

Women were starting to emerge at IBM in the lower and mid-levels earlier than in some other companies, which is probably why IBM has a CEO now who began her career in the '80s. So, IBM was progressive in that way. But in some of the countries in Latin America, there was still a strong anti-woman attitude, and even some anti-Semitism, which I found kind of remarkable. But it disappeared over time, and the people were gradually moved out who had those ideas.

Q: How did they treat the wives of the people who were being moved around?

LYMAN: I only did one move. But IBM was very family-focused, then, in maybe paternalistic ways. The moves were done in the most supportive way possible, with sponsors at one end, at least for a time. The moves were done first class in terms of moving companies, valuing one's personal effects, very different from the Foreign Service experience. There was a real effort to make employees who moved whole financially. IBM has changed a lot. Few moves were paid after 2000.

I'll give you one example of how IBM changed even while I was there.. The first year we were in IBM, they had a Christmas party for employees and their families at the Rye Town Hilton, which is a very nice hotel in Westchester. I would say this was probably a lunch for 1500 people. They had the Vienna choir boys performing at the lunch. They gave every child who was there a present worth $20 or $25.

When I left IBM 15 years later, after the company had begun to lose money, the Christmas party in Boca was one of the more portly employees dressed in a Santa suit,

handing out twenty-five cent trinkets to all the children in the cafeteria. So, things changed, but it was the difference between a company making 65 or 70 percent gross margin, and a company 15 years later that probably the margins were had tanked by 20-something percent.

Q: Well, as I recall – and I may be way off on this – wasn't there a problem about IBM not moving from the mainframe to the desktop computer?

LYMAN: That's a good backdrop for the other big issue I want to discuss, which was a USTR 301 case against Brazil. But what was happening then was, the personal the computer was starting to emerge. Mid-level computers were starting to become more important, and the mainframes were still key, but the feeling really was in the industry that over the next 10 or 15 years, this was going to change, which was why it was so important to have the PC plants in Mexico and to gain access to markets like Brazil, where IBM had a tremendous share in the mainframe business but, was legally kept out of the mid-range and the PC business,. Argentina was starting to put restrictive regulations on IBM and other foreign computer manufacturers.

These were regulations that would affect the future products that were going to be important, rather than the mainframes and large storage and other large-scale products that had been so important historically for IBM. So, the feeling was, the technology was changing, and combined with the fear that outside the U.S., governments would over-regulate the business that were the future of IBM. Ironically, quite a few of those "businesses of the future" have since been sold off, including the PC business and the low-end server business, and most of the storage business, and IBM is still in mainframes, but much more of a software and services company than it was in the 1980s. The judgment about the future of technology was correct, but it was very hard to make money in personal computers and small servers, especially when IBM virtually gave away the operating system software and then the application software to Microsoft.

In those days, the feeling was, if we can't be in the PC business or the mid-range computer business in the rest of the world, we're really going to be hampered in the 21st century. In Brazil, ex-military people were controlling the personal and mid-range computer business with government regulations, and setting up their own business, and – this became very important – also taking intellectual property, actions that offended IBM and later on, which became important, Microsoft, which was just starting to emerge as an important company.

There were a lot of conversations back and forth between the computer industry with USTR representatives, not seeking retaliation, just pressure, and then out of nowhere, in the fall of 1984, a few months after I joined IBM, USTR filed a 301 case against Brazil, against what Brazil called their informatics policy, and demanded that Brazil not only protect intellectual property, but also open up that sector to foreign imports and foreign investments. At first at IBM we thought, "Well, in a way, this is good, but we would have preferred to work it out behind the scenes without a 301 case." 301 cases are trade cases

pursuant to US law that have set processes for investigation and retaliation against unfair trade practices.

Our worst fears were almost realized about six or eight months later. The U.S. Government put out a retaliation list of Brazilian products on which they were going to impose high duties. Some of them were products that IBM was actually exporting from its factory in Brazil or suppliers there, and it seemed as if the case was getting very emotional and very political on both sides. Then there was probably a year and a half of IBM, Microsoft, the electronic industries, computer industries, trade associations, working closing with USTR (United States Trade Representative) and Commerce and with the Embassy in Brasilia, seeking a compromise.

The compromise that was worked out pleased everyone. Brazil opened the sector up to imports and investment over time, they protected copyright and gave more patent protection to IBM and others. Copyright was especially important to Microsoft. The case was solved without retaliation, but I remember spending literally hundreds of hours on the phone or, one year from Westchester, I made over 40 trips to Washington to work on this issue with the IBM Washington office and with people at State and with USTR (United States Trade Representative) and Commerce.

Q: Well how did you find that people at State and Commerce – Did they understand your position at all, or not?

LYMAN: I think State was especially helpful. Commerce was fairly helpful. USTR was helpful but a little tougher, because they were more anxious, I think, to slam Brazil. This was where there were some differences between the Latin American Division of IBM and the IBM Washington office, because I think our Washington office and USTR thought this was a chance not only to slam Brazil, but to make some worldwide points on intellectual property and trade and investment restrictions. IBM had a multi-billion dollar business in Brazil, so at least to the Latin American Division jeopardizing that didn't seem worth making an example of Brazil to other potential trade practice violators.

So, it was a juggling act, even within IBM. Ken Dam, who had been Deputy Secretary of State, and was very knowledgeable as a law professor on trade and investment issues, luckily came into IBM at that time and the Washington office reported to him. He was a positive force for working out the issue in a way that satisfied the needs for progress on intellectual property and opening up the markets, but at the same time didn't slam Brazil and achieve a Pyrrhic victory that would have destroyed IBM's business in Brazil. So, it wasn't as much of a win-win on the surface as the Mexican deal, but I think it ended up well for everyone involved.

Ironically, the week before I finished my tour in Mexico, Ken Dam had visited with his family, I think on a vacation, not in his capacity as Deputy Secretary of State. During the July 4 reception at the Ambassador's residence, our families sat together and I mentioned my plan to join IBM. Ken responded by saying IBM might be more bureaucratic and bogged down by tradition than the State Department. I was disconcerted by his comment,

which I thought was an attempt to be negative about my career move and to diminish IBM. When he joined IBM about 6 or 8 months later, I realized he had been already negotiating his own move and was probably joking. Also, I realized later that in some ways he was right.

Q: Did you ever feel sort of like throwing your hands up?

LYMAN: If I didn't have sleepless nights I had a lot of restless nights. Going from Westchester to Washington 40 times a year isn't the hardest travel, but I sure remember sitting in the fog at the airport for hours and thinking, *what am I doing here?*

Sometimes the competing interests seemed very complicated: there was Microsoft, which was flexing its muscles as a newly important company, and then there were differences within the U.S. government, there were differences within IBM. But at the end, I think all that made it more satisfying when the case actually worked out. As a person who is now outside the Department, it made me appreciate the skill of some of the best people in the Department who were a positive force in working this out, even though USTR really had the lead.

There were some people on the Brazil desk and in EB (Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs) who were tremendous at understanding the different forces at play and how complicated it was. I give them the most credit for the final, happy resolution of a very potentially nasty issue.

Q: How did you find the role of personalities?

LYMAN: Can you explain that a little more, Stu?

Q: Yeah. I mean, were there difficult people within the system or did the system move easily to bypass them or bring them around? How did this work?

LYMAN: No, I don't think people were necessarily difficult as individuals. People had different agendas and different roles to play. USTR was, then, a relatively small organization, organized mostly by geography. There was a clear direction coming from the top, and that direction had a certain worldwide agenda on trade and investment and intellectual property.

People weren't being difficult just to be difficult, but I think they and the IBM Washington office had more of a worldwide agenda, and our agenda was, "We don't want to undercut your worldwide agenda, but let's not make an example of Brazil unless that is unavoidable."

In most cases, their positions were professional positions and agendas rather than personal ones. The Washington Government Affairs office at IBM was both powerful and very territorial, probably to excess, and there was a difficult person running that office then. Once that person reported to Ken Dam, the Washington office was more

rational in working with what was important for IBM and Brazil, as well as the worldwide agenda, which weren't necessarily in contradiction.

Q: At that time, was Microsoft seen as the enemy or the competition or –?

LYMAN: No, IBM and Microsoft were close, then. We were working together on an operating system. Later on, that diverged, and Microsoft developed Windows, and IBM did OS2, which was a good operating system, but wasn't well marketed or well packaged, and it disappeared.

We worked very closely with the Microsoft corporate and Latin America teams. We met often with their head of government affairs and legal at the time, and they were tough. Their view was that if Brazil doesn't protect copyright and stop pirating their software, they need to be slammed, and they were not going to agree to any deal that didn't protect them there. Microsoft, even though they weren't huge at the time, was seen as strategically important by the U.S. Government, and they were so forceful and focused that it made them extremely effective.

Q: How did you view the Brazilian government at the time? It was a military government, wasn't it?

LYMAN: The military had just left, but the civilian government was in disarray. The ex-military were dominating the personal and mid-range computer industry. I'm not sure if it was financial corruption or if it was influence in politics, but the ex-military seemed to have not only regulatory roles, but ownership of most of these computer companies that had sort of materialized out of nowhere. There was even some government ownership at first, open ownership of some of them.

It was a pretty messy situation, almost like China now. You didn't know who really owned what, and it made it a bit hard to deal with the situation on the Brazil side. Then, similar to Mexico at the time, you had different factions within the Brazilian government. There was the military, whom you couldn't call leftist, but they were very nationalistic in terms of the computer industry. There were leftists who were uneasy about foreign ownership from the political perspective of the academic and intellectual world. Then there were some pragmatists.

The Brazilian Foreign Ministry, much like the Department of State, was probably a voice of reason, and an official from their Foreign Ministry became their main trade negotiator. It has been such a long time I don't remember the exact names and faces, but I think that's one of the reasons State was effective. They were dealing with an effective group of diplomats in Brazil who wanted to find a way to resolve the issue, but it took them a while to find a way to do it.

Q: Well the Brazilian Foreign Service has an excellent reputation in the diplomatic world.

LYMAN: From everything I saw, that was justified. I haven't had much contact with them since, but in those years, definitely.

Q: Well, Brazil of course – I've never served there, but from all the consulates, going through this period of, "We want to produce everything in our country," India was trying to do the same thing.

LYMAN: Yes, and Argentina was, too. Argentina was trying to have not only what we used to call performance requirements for local content if you wanted to sell in the country, but also punitive tariffs.

There were stringent price controls in some of the countries, which was difficult during times of enormous inflation. The price controls were especially tough on the pharmaceutical industry and the auto industry, but also hit high tech.

So, for about two years, during late '84, '85, and '86, I found government relations was busy at IBM. In the group I managed at IBM Latin America, I had about ten people working on government issues. But I also had the feeling towards the end of that period the governments in Latin America were starting to liberalize and more free market leaders were coming in. I also felt that government relations wasn't really where I wanted to spend my career.

I wanted to get over to the business side, so I abolished my own job and my own department and I moved over to the business side of IBM, and I've been in business mostly in Latin America ever since.

Q: How did you find, initially, that it went developing the market in Latin America?

LYMAN: It was a good market. IBM had probably a 90% share of the mainframe margin, and that was incredibly lucrative, but , aside from regulation, the economies of the region were very volatile. In 1985 in Brazil, there was 5,000% inflation. A hotel bill would change price every day. Restaurants had their menus written in chalk or crayon because you couldn't have a printed menu, because you had to keep changing your prices.

So, doing business in that environment was very difficult, and IBM luckily had some brilliant financial people. They actually would make as much or more money hedging as they would on the real business. But that's not always the greatest business model to have, because it's risky, but also, it's not going to continue forever. So justifying new investments was not always easy, even within IBM.

Still the potential for growth was high in Latin America. The adoption of computers lagged far behind the United. The economies continued to be very cyclical in Argentina and Brazil. Mexico had its ups and downs. In 1995, Mexico had a huge economic crisis. That year, I went to Mexico over 40 times instead of going to Washington 40 times, because I had a Mexico-focused job.

Argentina had tremendous ups and downs politically and economically. In Colombia, the late 1980s and early 1990s were a perilous time because of narco-terrorism. Venezuela was a mass of corruption and government regulation. So, it was a super difficult environment. But if you planned for it and managed it properly, you could do well, and IBM did well.

IBM recognized the volatility, so the business plan each year would assume that either Argentina, Mexico, or Brazil was going to have a crisis, and then if one of them did, they would still make their business plan. If two of them did, it was going to be pretty tough. If none of them did, it would be a great year. I was really glad I learned financial planning at IBM. I spent one rotational assignment there. The next ten years were all spent on the business side, in Latin America, mostly working in the PC business, which was very different from the mainframe business.

Q: Where were you working from?

LYMAN: I spent 5 years in New York, and then I moved to Boca Raton, Florida. In New York, once I left government relations, I first did a rotational job to help me learn IBM's business side. I spent about six months in finance, I spent six months in operations. And then I came to Boca and worked first on product management for software for the PC and then on hardware and the business side of the PC. focusing more on Latin America, on taking the products that IBM was developing and manufacturing in Boca, and developing the right products for Latin America, when we could, and marketing them properly in Latin America.

Q: Well, looking at Latin America, I've never served there, but you've got a hell of a lot of intelligent people. Yet it just doesn't seem to quite punch according to its weight or something, or is that unfair?

LYMAN: No, I think that's fair. It's always been frustrating for me, and at IBM we spent a lot of time, especially when we were looking to invest in Mexico, thinking about how we could make a positive impact on the country, especially its technological development.

It's still a bit frustrating. Some of the countries have done well for a while, and then they tend to drop back, like Brazil, because of corruption. Argentina has had political issues and corruption. Colombia had the violence and the drugs for years, but is emerging from that . Mexico has had corruption and the narcotics issues and some bad government decisions. But I've met so many wonderfully intelligent people in government, in the companies, in the universities, it's honestly a puzzle to me. I really don't have the answer.

There are a lot of issues there, but there's just so much potential. In my business now I have four employees in Colombia, and one in Panama, and they're incredibly skilled and hard-working. I would compare them to any employees I've had anywhere in terms of

work ethic, skills, ability to learn. They're amazing, and the other people I've worked with and the companies I've represented were all great. So Latin America's continued problems are a puzzle.

Q: Yeah. I mean, this is a question that I think about often when dealing with this. You have other countries such as Russia. You can see it's the governmental system that's doing it, but what would you buy from Russia today other than oil?

LYMAN: And yet they have some of the best programmers in the world.

Q: Yeah.

LYMAN: there are two characteristics I find in common, especially in Mexico and to a certain extent in Brazil and Argentina, which are corruption and lack of the rule of law. I'll give you an example: when I first joined a company called Sensormatic, which Tyco later bought, I was the head of Sensormatic Latin America. We had a great little business in Mexico; it wasn't very conspicuous. Sensormatic made surveillance cameras and access control, but its main business was those tags you see in retail that prevent theft.

We had a small, very inconspicuous office in the south part of Mexico City. One day, the people in the little *barrio,* the neighborhood – they had governments in each neighborhood –came in and tried to shake us down for a bribe. We said, "We are a global company. We're under the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act. We just don't do that."

Two weeks later, the employees came to work, and there was police tape all around the building. It had been shut down on some ridiculous pretext of building regulations or building permits or something, and for about two months, we ran the business out of our warehouse, and eventually we got back in and it wasn't repeated.

But there are other much more egregious examples of the rule of law not really applying. People get into partnerships, and they're unequal, and they can't escape their partnership, They can't litigate or argue with certain people who are in privileged positions in the countries. In some ways, it's gotten better, but there's still a lot of it, especially in Brazil. It's very frustrating and very negative for the development of the country. So, a combination of corruption and the lack of rule of law. Then, the distribution of income is still a big issue for most of the countries, although it seems to get better in some and then it falls back.

Q: Oh boy. Well, what are you doing now?

LYMAN: After IBM, I moved for a while to Ingram Micro, where I was President of Latin America, and then I was fortunate. I moved to Sensormatic, a security and loss prevention company in Boca, which was bought by Tyco, a large conglomerate soon after. Tyco had its own corruption scandal that broke soon after we were acquired, but a new CEO cleaned out its top executive team and brought in a new team, mostly from Motorola, and prospered.

All the changes opened up opportunities for me. I went from being head of Sensormatic Latin America to head of a global business unit within Tyco with over $400 million in annual revenue and thousands of employees. . So, for the first time in my business career I had a worldwide job with Asia, Europe, Latin America, the Middle East, Australia, North America. I spent about seven or eight years working in a real performance culture, with almost no politics, probably for the first time in my business career. There was tremendous emphasis on business performance, growing the business, managing it properly. There was a huge emphasis on ethics because of the problems Tyco had had under previous management. I even got to travel to Japan on business, although most of my Japanese language ability was gone.

So, I had about seven or eight years working for Tyco, and then eventually, when I was about 62, I left. I formed a type of business called a Manufacturer's Representative business, which acts almost like an agent to promote sales of Tyco products or other products in the region, not by buying and selling them like a reseller, but more like an outsourced sales team..

I formed that business in 2009 with just myself, and then I gradually added employees, and now we're up to six employees and we'll be up to seven soon. We work very closely with Tyco, and we represent some other companies, too.

Q: Is there a market in Latin America for, you might say, the computer business? Manufacturing, programming, what have you.

LYMAN: Oh, the market's huge. IBM I'm sure is doing an enormous amount of business there now. Microsoft Latin America is huge. Ingram Micro when I had that business 20 years ago was over a billion-dollar business. I can't imagine how big it is now. It was just bought by a Chinese company, ironically.

In the security business that I'm still in, Latin America's not as enormous a market as it is for computers, but it's a substantial market for security-related and safety products, partially because many of the countries are somewhat insecure. It's still a great market, but it varies a lot from country to country, and it varies a lot from year to year. It also varies a lot with exchange rates.

When the world economy started to change and some of the natural resources that were making some of the countries so wealthy began to decline, the currencies declined also, so the imports became a lot more expensive. So, it's still not a trivial territory to manage. You have to be cognizant of external factors. There's still corruption in some countries, and when you know you have the best product, you get frustrated when you think you lost because of corruption.

But that's so far a fact of life, so you just do the best you can without going in that direction, which luckily, I represent companies that would never go there and obviously I

would never go there. But you just have to compete the best you can in the proper way. The potential is enormous; we're just scratching the surface.

Q: Is there anything else you'd like to add?

LYMAN: No. Just the one thing I want to do, if my schedule allows, is write a book about U.S.-Mexican relations. I've published a couple of articles in the '80s, but I hope I can write a book about it, and if I do, these other oral histories will be really useful when I do it.

End of interview