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

DWIGHT N. MASON

Interviewed by: Charles Stuart Kennedy
Initial interview date: August 3, 1993

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INTERVIEW

Q: This is an interview with Dwight N. Mason. It's being done on behalf of the Association for Diplomatic Studies, and I'm Charles Stuart Kennedy.

Could we start a bit by, where were you born, when, a little about your family, and your early upbringing, so we'll know who you are?

MASON: I was born in New York City in April 1939. My father was a member of the faculty at Stevens Institute of Technology in Hoboken, and we lived in Hoboken, in the top floor of a house with a wonderful view overlooking the Hudson River and the New York skyline.

My earliest memory of Hoboken was during the war when an ammunition pier blew up about a mile away from our house. It was the greatest fireworks I've ever seen. My other,

early memory of Stevens is that the campus police were terrible. They wouldn't let the little kids like me sled on the campus.

There were no good schools in Hoboken at that time, so we faculty children were sent to grade school in New York City. We subsequently moved out to Summit, New Jersey to live with my grandfather to attend schools there.

After the ninth grade I went away to boarding school, to Holderness School in New Hampshire, and after that to Brown where I majored in history. I went on to graduate school at the University of California at Berkeley also in history.

I took my preliminary doctoral examinations and the Foreign Service examination in the same week and passed and the Foreign Service offer thus ending my academic career.

Q: Let me go back to the history, I being a history major myself, what attracted you towards being a history major?

MASON: Well, it's a funny tale. I had always been interested in history. But I intended to major in English. On arrival at Brown, all freshmen were required to take a series of placement examinations. I did well and as a result was not required to take any introductory level courses except for math. So I was free to take whatever courses I wished for my first two years. The courses which interested me the most were in the English Department. So I thought I'd major in English. On the appropriate day I went to the English Department to sign up. But the line was very long. While I was waiting, my faculty advisor, who was the chairman of the history department (and had been my father's advisor at Brown), happened to walk by and asked, "What are you doing in that line?" And I said, "I'm going to major in English." "Oh, that's nonsense," he replied, come on over to the history department." So I did. I signed up for the honors program in history.

Q: Did you have any particular specialty in history at that time?

MASON: No, not really. Such specialization was discouraged. But I was drawn toward European history. And I concentrated on that in my senior year in my honors seminar and thesis, particularly on the Balkans in the 19th and early 20th centuries.

Q: Were you getting any push towards the Foreign Service? How did this come about?

MASON: No, there was no push towards the Foreign Service. At that time it was the thing to do to take the examination. I suppose it still is at many universities. At the same time this was the age of the military age, and everyone applied to graduate school or to the Foreign Service as a preferred alternative to the draft. So we were certainly focused on either graduate school or something like the Foreign Service.

Q: You took the Foreign Service exam in '61?

MASON: I took it twice. I took it in 1961, and I learned an important lesson which was never take the examination toward the end of the season because there are obviously fewer and fewer places left as time moves on and offers of employment are made. Nevertheless, I made a good showing my first time out -- it took them two and a half hours to not pass me. And they were kind enough to suggest strongly that I try again the next year.

I did retake the exam the following year and passed easily. It quickly became apparent during the oral that I would pass because after pro forma questions on current events, the board spent the balance of the time on a discussion of sailing with me. The entire exam took about 25 minutes.

Q: So you came in when? '62?

MASON: Yes, in the fall of '62.

Q: Could you give us a little feel of what was your junior officer class like? And maybe the aspirations, how they felt about things at that time?

MASON: I remember very little about my class. It was a large one. I think the average age may have been in the late twenties. It included junior officers being appointed not only to State but also to USIA and AID. Our aspirations were to get a good assignment. The A-100 itself was a pretty bad course. The advisors spent a fair amount of time asleep at the back of the room. It was a disconcerting introduction to the Foreign Service, but on the other hand, none of us paid much attention to that anyway. We were focused on the new life we were starting, and, of course, on what was going to happen to us.

Q: Were you looking at any area, or not? Were you getting any idea when you went there? I mean, with all your thing about the eastern question, were you looking toward the Balkans?

MASON: No. I did not have the languages for Eastern Europe, my language on entry was French. But the way it seemed to work, we didn't have any control on such decisions. To us it looked random, and I think it was. We were all assigned to language training before we were assigned to posts. We thought that was strange. I was assigned to French training, and then to Strasbourg. But that assignment did not hold up, and I was then told I was going to Casablanca, then to Rabat, then to Tangier. I landed in Tangier.

Q: You went to Tangier in 1963 and you served there to '65.

MASON: Yes. But before I got to Tangier, however, there was a six-month travel freeze. I was assigned during that period to the Office of the Historian. I was too innocent then to recognize that such a job was a bad one from a Foreign Service strategic point of view. So I had a very good time there.

Q: What were you doing there?

MASON: I was sent to the division that does special studies. I was asked to write a history of our post in Tabriz, which I did. I don't know what happened to it. It was a masterpiece of footnotes. But let me tell you, our consulate at Tabriz has a very interesting and indeed tumultuous history.

Following that study I was assigned to work with a group on a project for the Secretary. This was the time when President and Mrs. Kennedy were expecting a baby, (who did not live as it turned out), and the Secretary had decided to give the Kennedys a present to mark the event. The present he had decided to give them was a book of facsimile reproductions of letters from heads of state to presidents, one per president. I was assigned to pick four letters from Washington's Administrator to that of Lincoln. I spent the next two months or so in the National Archives researching. The Archives are a fascinating place. There is a kind of initiation to the Archives by the senior researchers there. The first question I was asked was, "What are you really doing? Are you writing a book, or something?" I said, "No," and explained my mission and background. Then they gave me a tour. It included being shown the despatches from our posts in Mexico during the period of Poncho Villa. Villa had kidnapped an American. He was threatening the most dire consequences if his conditions were not met and sent a finger back as evidence of this intentions. The finger was sent on to the Department as an enclosure to a despatch. And there it is on a shelf.

The finding of the letters from heads of state to the presidents was quite easy. They are filed separately, and one simply went through them. Some make interesting reading. I decided to go a little beyond my mandate, and include a letter from the Committee of Public Safety in France to the Continental Congress. The letter was interesting because of what it revealed about the state of mind prevailing in France in the Committee of Public Safety and of that group's expectations of the Continental Congress. It makes the Genet affair more comprehensible.

Q: Then you went to Tangier after the travel freeze.

MASON: Yes, on the first ship out. In those days you could travel by sea and First Class, and I took the Independence. Because of the effect of the travel freeze, most passengers in First Class on that trip were government travelers, and quite young. It was one long party. I left the ship at Algeciras, spent the night at the hotel Reina Christina where the Algeciras Conference of 1906 on the Moroccan Crisis of that year had been held, and crossed the Straits of Gibraltar by ferry to Tangier the next day.

Q: When you got to Tangier what were you doing there?

MASON: Tangier was a three person post. We rattled around in a large, modern building built to be the Legation. I was the consular officer. My principal work was protection of American citizens. I only did 30 immigrant visas a year, and maybe 40 tourist visas. The game there was protection. I was at the Tangier jail my second day on the job helping American prisoners.

Q: I'd like to take a look at consular work at that time, as a former consular officer myself to document this. When you say protection, Tangier always struck me as a place where the remittance men and women were sent, and particularly in those days was sort of a hippy haven, and anything else you can think of.

MASON: The remittance men were all there. They were Brits so they were not our problem. They were interesting people. It was the beginning of the hippie period and of the drug age. I suppose my largest problem was deaths of young Americans from the use of drugs mixed with other drugs--like marijuana, hashish, alcohol. I had, I guess, about one death a month from this sort of thing, and generally it was a young American. There were a lot of young Americans over there adrift, many destitute. We had a lot of repatriation business. Many parents would tell us when we contacted them, "Sorry, we're not going to do a thing for that child, we've just had it," which was very discouraging. But we generally were able to give the kids repatriation loans and send them home. In the cases of dead Americans, the question usually was whether to ship them home or bury them in Tangier. Half the time they would be shipped, and half the time we buried them. I can remember many funerals with just the Anglican priest and me present sharing the prayer book.

Tangier had a reputation for being an exotic place. That reputation was justified. I can remember one case where an American resident who was a former golden gloves boxer went crazy one night. He was subdued by the fire department (apparently he was too much for the police!) and taken to the French psychiatric hospital. This was the normal procedure for Americans with drug intoxication symptoms, and that was the problem in the case of the boxer. The treatment then in use at that hospital for drug intoxication was vitamin B injections and electro shock. (As this story will reveal, the treatment certainly seemed effective.)

The hospital reported the situation to me and certified that the boxer was incompetent. This certification allowed us to request a repatriation loan without the consent of the patient. We did so and secured it promptly and made preparations to send the boxer home with an escort.

After about 3 or 4 days, the hospital informed me that the boxer was cured and ready to travel. But they insisted on providing the escort.

So they flew off to New Your via Madrid. The escort was a Moroccan and traveled in native costume. He spoke no English.

When the pair arrived and were met in New York, the boxer introduced his escort as the patient. The escort naturally became upset by this turn of events, and his agitation and appearance confirmed his identity in the minds of the authorities. So he was seized and hospitalized. The boxer left, we never heard of him again. So he certainly seemed cured to me. It took some time to straighten things out and get the hospital's escort back.

Q: What was the situation? Where did the consulate general fit in at that time, the political situation in Tangier?

MASON: Until 1957 Tangier had been an International Zone, a separate entity administered by the Great Powers. When the Zone ended, Tangier was incorporated into Morocco. The local residents saw this as something of a come down and did not particularly like it.

The language of business for us was French but it could just as well have been Spanish.

Northern Morocco, "the Spanish zone" had been administered by Spain until Moroccan independence. Morocco was fundamentally a tribal society, and the northern Moroccan tribes were fiercely independent. They had an impressive history of guerilla resistance to the Spanish authorities. There was a feeling that somehow or other they'd been taken over by outsiders when the merger with Morocco occurred. But there was no real separatist sentiment in northern Morocco. Nevertheless northern Morocco was different from the rest of the country, and that was a subject for political reporting from the consulate.

The embassy in Rabat at the time obviously had very little confidence in us, or at least in my Consul General because they would not allow us to report directly, but insisted that all cables go first to them for their review, which was a great frustration for us.

I became the political reporting officer after a few months of consular work. The most interesting political reporting actually related to Gibraltar. Gibraltar was not formally in our consular district, but we were the closest consulate so we had an arrangement with the consulate at Seville in Spain to take care of things in Gibraltar and in the Spanish possessions of Ceuta and Melilla in northern Morocco for them.

And in Gibraltar, as it happened, there was an interesting political situation. This was at the time when Spain decided to make a big push to recover Gibraltar. The native Gibraltarians vehemently objected to the idea of being handed over to Spain, and they were not entirely confident that the UK would not sell them out. The issue was being debated at the United Nations, and there was a lot of excitement in Gibraltar including riots demanding a firm British stand. Spain closed the border (and it remained closed for years). I would go to Gibraltar fairly regularly to report on the situation there. As a new officer, this was very interesting and exciting, particularly because I had access to the most senior local elected officials as well as to the Government of Gibraltar.

Q: Who was your Consul General?

MASON: Jerry Shutz.

Q: How did he operate? I mean, this was your first post, what was your impression?

MASON: I liked him very much. I thought he was very good, but clearly the embassy didn't have much confidence in him because they kept him on a very short substantive string.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

MASON: I can't remember. Dean Brown was the DCM.

Q: So you did get the feeling of the tension between a consular post and a embassy.

MASON: Yes. I would go down with the pouch fairly regularly and talk with the political section, and this is obviously the best way to ameliorate this sort of thing. There was very little contact between the two posts. It was a mere six hour drive between us, but we rarely had visitors from the embassy.

Q: I would have thought that you would have had officers coming up to get a little taste of something a little different.

MASON: Well, you would have thought so, and a few did. Tangier was such a far superior to Rabat in terms of entertainment, living conditions, and beaches that I was surprised they weren't there every weekend.

Q: What about the life there? Its always struck me as being the place where naughty people have a good time, or something like that.

MASON: That's true. It was an exotic place, and there were plenty of naughty people -- some quite interesting.

Q: Did you have access to Moroccan authorities there?

MASON: Oh, yes. The Moroccan authorities were quite cooperative. The access I generally needed was to the police. The police commissioner in Tangier Monsieur Banana was really very helpful. I think he regarded me with some amusement as being a young whippersnapper. But nevertheless he was very helpful, and he really did prevent bad things happening to Americans. Generally it was understood that Americans really couldn't withstand the rigors of Tangier prisons, which were horrible. So the general practice, which we worked out with him, was to have them deported. If necessary I would provide the five dollars to get them on the ferry and out of the country.

My relations with the police reached stratospheric levels when I solved a murder mystery for them. It is an amusing tale and captures much of the atmosphere of Tangier. One night I was called about midnight by the Consul General who told me that the police had told him that an American had been murdered in the Marshan district of Tangier. He asked me to go to a certain police station and pick up a detective and proceed to the scene. So off I went.

When we arrived at the house, I was ushered to the crime scene. it was a bathroom, the body was naked on the floor and blood was everywhere. The police told me that when they had arrived both the door and the window had been locked, and they could not figure out how the man had been murdered.

They then handed me the victim's passport, and I realized to my horror and surprise that this was a man with whom I had had a drink two days previously -- he was a friend of a friend.

Fortunately for the mystery, I noticed that the hot water heater in the bathroom was charcoal fired and was not vented to the outside. I realized that the death was probably the result of inhalation of the fumes. So that is what I told the police -- that the victim probably had been rendered unconscious by the fumes and had then fallen and hit his head against the side of the tub (his wound was to the side of his head) and lain there until he died of the effects of the fumes. I suggested that the police test his blood to see if his red corpuscle count was elevated because I knew from Agatha Christie that such a reaction was typical of carbon monoxide poisoning. The police were enchanted (and the blood test turned out as well).

Unfortunately, the police and I had another probable murder which did not turn out so well. In that case the young companion of an elderly American woman reported that she had died after falling down stairs. To us, it seemed far more likely that he had pushed here. But we could not prove it.

Q: After Tangier how did you feel about the Foreign Service?

MASON: I liked the Foreign Service and Morocco. I was asked if I wanted to study Arabic, and become an Arabist, but I decided not to. The thought of two years of Arabic training, probably half of them in Tangier where there was a language school at that time, was more than I wanted. I didn't want to specialize that early. Tactically, that decision may have been a mistake, but I have never regretted it.

Q: Also, were you getting the feeling...I'm not sure if it was at this time, but it was around this time when I understand the Arabic Language School in Tangier, really didn't do very...it wasn't a very challenging school.

MASON: I don't know if the school was a good or bad place, but many of the students in there did extremely well in the Foreign Service. How this school actually worked as a language school, I really don't know.

Q: Then you came back, and left in '65.

MASON: That's right. I was assigned to Caracas, and went back for Spanish training. I had briefly returned to the U.S. to be married before transferring from Tangier. We both were given Spanish training. About three-quarters of the way through the Spanish training, I met my personnel officer at a cocktail party, and he said, "Oh, by the way, did you know that

you're going to Barranquilla?" I said, "My God, where is that?" All my effects had gone to Caracas. In the end we were sent to Barranquilla.

Q: Where is Barranquilla?

MASON: Barranquilla is in northern Colombia. In fact it's north of Panama, and east of Miami. It's twelve miles inland from the Caribbean on the Magdalena River. It was a large, dirty, friendly interesting city.

Q: Was it a port city?

MASON: Yes, it was a port city but for freight. The tourists all went to Cartagena.

Q: In Barranquilla, you were there from '66 to '68. What were you doing?

MASON: I was sent as the consular officer with a promise that after a year I'd be the economic officer, and indeed that happened.

Q: Was it a consulate general, or a consulate?

MASON: It was a consulate general.

Q: And who was the consul general, and how did he or she operate?

MASON: His name was Bob Carl. He was a Middle East specialist. He was quite open, I thought he was a very good officer. He encouraged me to do what little political reporting there was. This was shortly after the dictatorship of Rojas Pinella ended, and there were elections so there was a certain amount of action. The society was much more open than in Morocco in terms of learning about things. Indeed, I still have friends in Barranquilla.

Q: What was the political situation in Colombia at that time?

MASON: It was the aftermath of to a civil war known as La Violencia. After years of fighting, the two sides (the Liberals and the Conservatives) had agreed to take turns running the government one side having the Presidency for a term and then the other. This arrangement proved to be quite stable, but it couldn't last forever and it was showing a certain amount of wear on the edges.

Q: Were you able to have contact with the political people in the society there?

MASON: Yes. Colombian society on the coast was quite open, and the political people were more than willing to talk. They appreciated our interest and also saw it as part of their status that we would talk to them. We were the only serious consulate in town.

Q: How were relations with the embassy?

MASON: They were quite good. Henry Dearborn was the DCM, and he ran a good shop. In fact, the biggest thing that happened to relations with the embassy was when direct dialing came in. We no longer had to negotiate telephone calls with the operator. It really made a difference being able to call the embassy, and actually get them without a half an hour of palaver. So we had a lot more contact. We were a one-time pad post there which was an awful experience in terms of anything classified. That was my first and last one-time pad post, and it was something special.

Q: Would you describe what a one-time pad is?

MASON: It's an encryption device. It is a group of random letters with which you encrypt a message. It's quite simple to use but very tedious. The problem with one-time pads is typographical error. The product looks random, and it's hard to proof read. If you make a mistake, you're in deep trouble because such an error can prevent decryption at the other end. We had also had to be concerned with how to destroy them, and that was not easy because they were as thick as a regular novel and they were glued together. I don't think we ever would have been able to destroy them all in a real emergency.

We hated them. One amusing examples of the drawbacks of one time pads was when we had a visit from Lynda Johnson the daughter of then President Johnson. She was coming to visit the hospital ship "Hope" which was then in Cartagena for several months. I was called one Saturday afternoon by the Embassy's duty officer, who was the station chief by chance, who said guardedly but in a most urgent manner, "Go down to the consulate, you've got an extremely important message from the White House."

The first thing I had to do was decrypt it. The Embassy had used abbreviations which in themselves were five letter groups which didn't help because they looked like errors. All I really got out of the message was, "L. Johnson" was coming to Barranquilla in two days, and I was panicked. The Consul General and I read it to mean that the President was coming.

Finally, of course, people broke down and began to use the telephone, and we found out that it wasn't quite Lyndon Johnson. But in the meantime in Washington, or Bogota, the same sort of thing had leaked out and most people in Barranquilla were expecting Lyndon Johnson, and there was a near riot at the airport when she arrived. It was quite a scene out there. The plane landed, and taxied quite a way off from the terminal. My boss, the consul general, had been asked to drive her car. The car had to be unofficial because this was supposed to be a private visit. So he was in a car which the Hope had rented. It had an automatic shift; although he was used to standard shift.

The party got into the car, and he lit out to try to escape the crowd which was closing in rapidly. At the appropriate time to shift gears, he forgot that the car was automatic and stepped on what he thought was the clutch. Of course, it was the brake, and everyone nearly went through the windows.

In addition, no one had thought to get the group's passports stamped. They remembered this as they roared off, and they threw all their passports out the windows to me. So there I was running along the runway picking up the passports as the crowd chased the car. It was a comical scene. Lynda Johnson spent the night in Barranquilla, but saw nobody including us. It was a bit embarrassing. She went on to Cartagena to the "Hope" the next day.

The "Hope" itself was a problem. They had put a lot of pressure on the United States to open a consulate in Cartagena just for them, and we couldn't see why we should do that. And we didn't in the end, but I had to go to Cartagena about every ten days to hold hands with them. It was entirely unnecessary.

Q: Would you explain what the "Hope" is?

MASON: The "Hope" is a hospital ship, run by the Hope Foundation, and it wanders around the world doing good works. I guess I'm not terribly high on it, but a lot of good work does get done. I signed off the crew twice, I think, during the time they were there. That is a lot of turnover. The crews apparently did not like long port stays. Those were the days when consular officers had to sign everybody on and off a ship, and pay them in cash. I didn't end up having to pay them, I don't think in cash, but these crew lists were enormous documents. This was straight out of the 19th century, all I needed was a quill pen. That's fundamentally all we needed to do for them.

What other type of consular work did you have? Was it mainly crews?

MASON: There were a lot of crew visas, and there were a lot of regular visas. There were 3,500 immigrants, and about 3,500 tourists a year for me alone. It ruined my signature! We had very low fraud rates because the bad cases would go to Bogota. We would just ask doubtful cases for bank references. The town was small enough so we could find out if these references were genuine. We didn't accept cash flash rolls and things like that as evidence of economic status. So while we had no real problems with the visa business, there was a lot of work.

There was some protection work, but much less than in Tangier. And, also, some protection for crazy types. One serious problem was with American spouses of Colombians; if such a woman wanted to leave her husband, the husband could seize her passport and tell the police not to allow her out of the country, and the police wouldn't. Consequently American women finding themselves in that situation would come into the office, and I would always give them a new passport and tell them to take a taxi to the airport immediately before the authorities could be alerted. In general this strategy was successful, but it was a surprising thing just the same.

On the crazy side, I once met the inventor of the atomic bomb. He came to my office in his pajamas with his hotel keeper who told me, "This guy hasn't paid his bill." And the inventor said, "Well, the White House hasn't sent my monthly check." And he talked, and talked,

and it quickly became clear that he was nuts. But I couldn't certify him as crazy as I'm not a psychiatrist. So I just sent a cable back reporting the conversation verbatim.

The man was also Colombia illegally in that his visa had expired, he had a valid return ticket and the authorities were willing to send him home so arranging for his departure didn't pose a lot of technical problems.

But I got a cable back about a week later saying, "Guess what? Thanks for your cable. Mr. X has been missing in New York state for seven years and was about to be declared legally dead. We'd like him to come home." So I asked the police to require him to leave.

But as I was preparing to leave post for transfer I was walking down the street with my successor, I saw him. I pointed him out to my successor and said, "See that man? He's the inventor of the atomic bomb. He'll be in to see you in his pajamas one of these days."

Q: Oh, the friends one makes. Well, no coups, or riots, or anything like that?

MASON: No, things were very calm. The only problems were common crime, and that was a constant threat.

Q: Then they finally got you back in Washington, is that right?

MASON: Yes, after Barranquilla I went to INR, the Office of External Research, which I must say was the ultimate backwater.

Q: External Research means what in INR?

MASON: The Office of External Research was responsible for handling contract research for the Department. I ended up handling two researchers who were working on studies about Latin America and with one working on China. My duties amounted to editing their manuscripts to prepare them for publication.

Q: Just to get a feel for it, what were we doing? If INR, which is the Intelligence and Research Bureau, wanted to find out about Chinese agriculture, sometimes they would hire somebody just to do that?

MASON: Yes. There is a belief that academic research has something to offer the Department. Objectively, this belief is undoubtedly true. But somehow or other the research never seems to be terribly useful. This is probably true because the Department is operational, while research is reflective. What the Department really wants from research is new ideas on how to address issues or new ways of looking at problems. The kind of studies we were working with in External Research were not of this type.

Q: Also there seems to be a desire in academic world to find patterns and trends.

MASON: Yes, but that is a basic human characteristic. We are always looking for new patterns and trends to explain current data. That is what a lot of analytical Foreign Service reporting is about. The Foreign Service is probably better at this then the academic world. But there is no monopoly on good analysis and ideas, we simply have better information as a rule. It's worthwhile to bring some academic experts in, give them access to good, classified information and see what they can come up with. It's a good check on our own analysis, and it also serves to increase the expertise of interested academics.

Q: You were there for about how long?

MASON: I don't quite remember, probably a year, a year and a half. I was working hard to escape because it really was a dead end. A nice group of people was there, INR was an interesting place, and we had a pretty good time in External Research, but it really was not where we all wanted to be from a career point of view.

Q: Then where did you go after that?

MASON: I was assigned to Athens as a political officer, and went to Greek training. And then after two weeks of Greek training they changed my assignment to consular officer in Cyprus which reduced my interest in the program considerably. And I also found a third time around at FSI really more than I could stand. The Greek was very hard, FSI was a depressing place, and between the disappointment in the assignment, and the difficulty of the language, I realized I couldn't go on. By really good luck, I fell into the job of Special Assistant to the Director of ACDA, and was able to break my assignment.

Q: Who was the director?

MASON: Gerard Smith. This was at the time of the beginning of the SALT I negotiations. Mr. Smith was the chief U.S. negotiator. I was in charge of his office and the reasonably large communications section they had there.

Q: Could you talk a little about George Smith, because he's an important figure, how he operated from your perspective?

MASON: Mr. Smith was a formal figure, and operated really only at the top level of the agency. Even as his special assistant I didn't work personally with him very often. I generally worked with the Executive Secretary, Howard Furnace, who was the one who actually hired me. I discovered that a large part of my job was keeping ACDA's and Mr. Smith's secrets until such time as he wanted them revealed to other agencies. This was a very, very educational job for me. I had never worked at these levels of government before, on these issues and with this level of classified information. I found out how things actually worked in Washington.

Q: We are talking now about early Nixon. So you had Kissinger at the White House.

MASON: Yes, Kissinger was at the White House and he and Mr. Smith didn't get along. I don't really know why, except perhaps maybe Kissinger resented the fact that Smith was in charge of the negotiations.

Q: He tended, if he wasn't in charge, to undercut.

MASON: I think he probably did, but again I wasn't privy to a lot of that, but relations were quite difficult.

Q: You're saying keeping the secrets, what were you trying to keep, and who were some of the other players?

MASON: When he was at the SALT negotiations, Smith wanted to be able to communicate privately with the Secretary and the President from time to time. You would think that's an easy thing to do, but it's not because any communication system has handlers including officers, secretaries and code clerks. These people distribute what enters and leaves the communication system. In short, they make copies and copies float around. So my first challenge was to try to make sure that this material was treated as more or less as NODIS/STADIS is now. That is to say arrange that it didn't go out of the building, and then sometimes to keep it out of State itself.

Mr. Smith, I must say, was innocent in some ways. He really thought that if he sent a message marked "Eyes Only for the President" only the President was going to see it. I said, "Sir, who is going to type your message? And who is going to encrypt your message? Who is going to decrypt your message? Who is going to type it in Washington?" I told him that, "There will be about 20 people who are going to see this. If you really have something that you only want the President to see, you have two choices: one is go and talk to him; or two, send it in the pouch to me, and I will see what I can do over there in the White House. But even then I can't guarantee that only the President is going to see it." He took that on board, he did start writing letters, and he did see the President more. So he was able to ensure some privacy.

But the really big fights within the U.S. government about SALT policy were about Soviet intentions and power in Washington. They were classic.

The intelligence agencies and the Pentagon took a darker view of Soviet intentions than the other agencies. Their budgets were of course in large part dependent on such analyses. These fights tended to focus on the issue of verification (a winner of a budget issue for the future). It was all very difficult, and I was left with the impression that the U.S. and Soviet military had more in common than anyone else in the negotiations in that it seemed doubtful that either of them really wanted an agreement if only because of the belief that an agreement would cost them status and power.

The Russians had another problem in that we knew more about their military programs, capabilities and dispositions than most of their negotiators. So we'd get into confused

situations where we'd be reviewing things about the number of warheads on each side, and half of the Russian delegates really didn't know what the facts were, and this didn't make the negotiations any easier.

I thought the whole thing was quite interesting. I was responsible for handling all the documents that went back and forth, so I did an awful lot of reading. I soon discovered than an additional and informal duty was to help the people who were writing for the Director avoid mistakes. For example, frequently I had information they did not yet have or I could advise them on who else was doing what so that a coordinated effort would result.

Q: You're talking about CIA?

MASON: No, usually ACDA. I remember one classic case where about 8:00 at night I received a very hurry-up message. It was a long 20-page position paper to be used at the negotiations on the next day in Helsinki. Bear in mind there was a 6-hour time difference. I read the message, and it said under such and such circumstances, the U.S. reaction will be nuclear. After about two more pages, I suddenly realized what I had read and went back to it. After rereading the passage, I realized that it was a typo. The author obviously had meant "unclear."

I called up the drafting officer and said, "Hey, let me read you this one sentence from your message to the Director." He was horrified and confirmed my interpretation. I had it fixed and had a new friend into the bargain.

Q : *Here you were, kind of the fly on the wall to some extent, but often this is a very good vantage point. You're taking a look. It struck me that many of these people who dealt with arms matters, particularly on the nuclear side, they're playing games, "Well, we lose 20 million here, and you lose 20 million here, you balance these off." Did you find that some of the technical experts they really understand the real world?*

MASON: Yes. There was never any talk like that in the agency. Their object was to make the negotiations succeed and to reduce the danger of nuclear war and accidents. For example, Mr. Smith was opposed to MIRVs, the multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles.

Q: This is considered one of the real nasties.

MASON: Yes. MIRVs made arms control, in terms of verification, really very difficult...maybe impossible. I think Mr. Smith was right to oppose them. Kissinger didn't and we lost. Looking back on it, whether our not a U.S. decision not to MIRV would have led the Russians to make the same decision is impossible to say. What is certain is that we allowed no opportunity to find out, and a new era of nuclear instability arrived.

Q: What was your impression of the Pentagon, the people coming from there at that time?

MASON: My impression was that they were opposed to the notion of an agreement. They didn't think it could be verified. Frankly I guess, they resented the interference in their business that a successful agreement would entail. They really did not think that the subject was one in which any agency other than the Pentagon should be involved.

Q: How about with the State Department? I mean the rest of the State Department. Did you say to them this is too complicated, and its our business, so don't bother us?

MASON: No, PM, for example, was deeply involved. The subject was complicated, but not hopelessly so. The concepts are very straightforward. But having said that, it's true that the solutions, or the approaches, were often highly technical, particularly in the area of intelligence gathering, and verification.

For example, in the case of verification, you want to know what's inside a missile warhead. This is particularly true in the case of MIRVed missiles. That means what does it look like, where is it, what kind of test telemetry does it have, what kind of radiation can be detected, how do you acquire that information, and what does it mean if an when you get some or all of it? We spent an awful lot of time on that sort of thing as did the other interested agencies.

Q: Were you feeling any pressures at this time from...I mean, were you getting this as far as what we were doing? This is at the height of the protest against Vietnam, which meant we had a very strong, and vocal peace movement. Did this have any echoes within what was going on?

MASON: No, it had none.

Q: What was your impression that you were getting from the people you were dealing with of the Soviets? Were they trying?

MASON: I wasn't a member of the negotiating team, so I never dealt with the Soviets at all. So I really don't know. They mirrored us in many ways. They were the same sort of agencies present, and I'm sure the Soviet military and ours had more in common perhaps than other groups on the delegation. I'm sure too that the Soviets didn't know how to assess our intentions and abilities, and in the end probably had a very difficult time with making this agreement for the same reasons that we did.

Q: Underlying all this, were you getting the feeling, "We really are on the brink of a nuclear war."

MASON: No, we were not feeling that we were on the brink of a nuclear war. I suppose I came away from the entire experience more concerned about accidents, than anything else.

Q: Something blowing up in one's backyard?

MASON: Yes. Obviously the higher the number of warheads, the better that chance is. We thought that our failsafe measures were better than theirs. Remember we at that time had experienced some amazing accidents. People were very concerned about this, and we were worried about proliferation to technically unsophisticated countries who would have almost no safeguards.

Q: Were there other countries that you were looking over your shoulder at? Or people were saying, we better get something going because these other countries are moving along?

MASON: Yes, the agency was heavily focused on the whole business of proliferation. But having said that, the main game at that time was the SALT talks. Still some parts of ACDA moved forward on these other issues. It was clear the director was engaged really on one thing and that was SALT. Nobody had any bright ideas either on proliferation other than let's not let this stuff spread. I would see studies from time to time on the probability of accidents, catastrophic failure in a safety system, and to the extent that proliferation increased so did the probability of such events. An additional fear underneath all this was that such an accident might be interpreted by the other side as an attack, and therefore the world might end.

Q: Before we leave this, I just have to mention that in one of my interviews, I think it was Ann Swift, was saying that when she came into the State Department as a completely junior officer, she was put in sorting the mail and they were a bunch of young people and when they had nothing else to do, they'd go to the box and look at "Eyes Only" telegrams.

MASON: She was in the Operations Center.

Q: They'd just go look at these highly confidential things, and these are brand new kids coming in.

MASON: No, I never saw any of this stuff until I went to the Director's office in ACDA. I had never even heard of things like NODIS distribution. It was very exotic traffic, and it was an education on how we attempt to control information.

Q: Then you left ACDA, and went to what? The Woodrow Wilson School?

MASON: Again, typically of my career, I was offered the job of principal officer at San Pedro Sula, and agreed to take it. I would have been the principal officer. But, no sooner was I assigned then the post was closed. And there I was high and dry.

My personnel officer suggested that I go to university training for a year because they had no other assignment for me. I agreed and asked if I could go to the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton. My personnel officer agreed saying, "I don't care where you go, just go, and call us when you get back." So I went to FSI, to the office in charge of university training, and I came was sent to a very distinguished-looking gentleman and asked to go to

Princeton. He replied, "I'm a Princeton graduate, done, you got a deal. Call me when you get back." So I went off to the Woodrow Wilson School at Princeton, and with no instructions of any sort.

I was formally enrolled in the Woodrow Wilson School's Mid-Career Fellows program. The Woodrow Wilson School, fortunately, insists that no one tell them or you what to study. So while I studies in the Latin American affair program at the College, I also had the chance to study whatever else I pleased generally on a audit basis. It was like being in a candy factory because this was the first (and only) time I had ever been in a educational setting where I could study to broaden my knowledge rather than specialize. As a result I probably worked harder than I did at Brown, but it was far more fun.

Q: This is '71 and '72. Were you under pressure? You're one of those State Department people who got us into the war in Vietnam?

MASON: No, we encountered no anti-government pressure of any sort. The Woodrow Wilson School is a graduate school for people who want to enter public service, and many of the students wanted to enter government service and the Foreign Service in particular. The students worked very hard, and I doubt that they had any time to spare for such unfocused activities. Some of the faculty did harbor such views and tended to look upon us with suspicion. Some wondered whether we worked for the CIA for example. We were a large group in the mid-career program, there may have been about 40 of us. But neither the undergraduates nor the graduate students ever really took an interest in us as representing The Government.

Q: Then you finally got off to overseas?

MASON: Yes, typically a personnel officer called and offered me the job of special assistant to the ambassador in Buenos Aires. I replied that I would prefer another assignment having just served two years as a special assistant in ACDA. The personnel officer said, "What's your name again?" And I replied, "Dwight Mason," and he said, "Oh, yeah, I'm Bob Carl's (my former boss in Barranquilla) brother-in-law. I know about you. We'll see what we can do." He called me back a day later, and asked, "How would you like to be second political officer in Quito?" I said, "When do I leave?"

I went off to Quito as the second political officer, and there the politics revolved around tuna fishing. Tuna are a species that doesn't live anywhere in particular but is a migratory species. We claimed that in the case of migratory species, individual countries could not unilaterally establish fishing rules for such fish and that therefore Ecuador had no right to attempt to limit U.S. tuna fishing within Ecuador's 200 mile economic zone. We had a terrible time with this policy. The Ecuadorian navy was arresting our boats and fining the hell out of them. They were right in terms of managing the species, and we weren't about to admit they were right because of domestic political considerations.

Q: The fishermen in California carried tremendous clout, didn't they?

MASON: Yes. But the Ecuadorans figured out, that if you fine them enough, you'll get their attention. And in the end they did. Now that there is no problem anymore. Ironically, the Ecuadorians were using airplanes we had provided under military assistance programs to spot our fishing boats, and they were using ships we'd sold them to do the arresting. The only benefit of that is that they would use these ship radios and broadcast en clair when they'd found a vessel. So we could monitor the channel and advise the Department a bit in advance of an arrest. The Department liked that. But there was no solution to this business of arresting boats, other than paying the fines, or stop the fishing. And finally, after I left, we came to an understanding with Ecuador about this issue.

Q: Other than making appropriate noises to Ecuadorian authorities about our rights as fisher folks, or something like that, what were other issues with Ecuador?

MASON: There really weren't very many. Ecuador was an oil producing country, so we had oil companies drilling down in the jungle. They didn't have any serious problems. The domestic political scene was quiet

Q: Any border problems with Peru?

MASON: Well, there are differences with Peru about where the border is, but there were no serious problems. It was fairly quiet. We had a consulate in Guayaquil. We followed domestic politics, but really they weren't terribly active at the time.

Q: What sort of government did Ecuador have at the time?

MASON: It was an elected government, and they were doing more or less a good job. Ecuador was a poor country. We had a major AID presence and program there. But I doubt that we or the government of Ecuador had much influence in the country beyond Quito, Guayaquil and the other major towns. The reality in Ecuador was that the politics and the politically conscious groups were basically in Guayaquil and Quito. The rest of the country might have been in the pre-Inca period. The topography of Ecuador is extraordinarily rugged, and its very difficult to get around. This is illustrated by the fact that until 1968 when a law of decree was formulated in Quito it took effect in concentric circles based on how long it would take the messenger to walk or ride in a day from Quito. Weights and measures weren't unified until about the same time. Political consciousness was not very high outside the main cities. For example, while I was there it was announced that Prince Charles would visit Ecuador. So a newspaper did a survey and asked in the hinterland, "Who is the ruler of our country?" A majority of the respondents said the King of Spain, if they said anything at all. When asked the name of your country, many replied New Granada.

At the same time, it was clear that Ecuador faced a difficult economic and political future. This was true because land tenure and rights on common land had recently been abridged by an enclosure movement led by large landlords seeking to begin modern dairy farming.

Enclosure of common land and limitation of peasant rights on such land (collection of firewood for example) was forcing people onto hillside land, diminishing their ability to practice subsistence farming and forcing increasing numbers into the towns and cities -- a typical pattern in developing countries. Ecuador was and is fortunate that this population shift has not focused on one city as in Peru.

Q: Who was the ambassador at the time?

MASON: Findley Burns.

Q: How did he operate?

MASON: He was originally an administrative officer, and had become one of the deputy executive secretaries of the Department. He had served in Jordan as ambassador. Quito was his last post. He was a Princeton graduate, very old school Foreign Service, quite formal, and I think shy. I thought he was a very good ambassador, but it took me a while to reach that conclusion and to get to know him. He didn't express confidence in many people at post. I was fortunately one of those who did have his confidence. He dealt with a rather small circle of the people at the embassy. I remember my first interview with him, he said, "Where did you go to school?" And I said, "Brown, Berkeley." "Oh, no, no, I said where did you go to school?" He meant boarding school, a test which I passed. But this is unimaginable now.

Q: I went through this game when I took my oral exam for the Foreign Service. I'd just spent four years as an enlisted man in the Air Force, Korea, Japan and Germany, and the whole thing was about my time at Kent, which was way off. It's a different world.

MASON: Maybe your examiners had been at Kent, who knows?

Q: Well, I think something like that. It was a whole different world, that you never have today, and its better for it. Were there any civil disturbances, or any problems particularly?

MASON: Fundamentally it was a calm period.

Q: Because every once in a while they have had their coups.

MASON: Before we arrived, they had held elections to replace the last dictator or, more precisely, the president designated by the military. There had been a coup to end his rule. But the coup was old fashioned, that is to say, the president and the cabinet, always met on Tuesdays. When the General Staff decided that the time had come to replace the president they told him his time was up and that the coup would be on the following Tuesday. Apparently the president replied, "No, no. My daughter is getting married and I want her married from the palace, the coup will be a week from next Tuesday." This change in date

was agreed to, his daughter was married from the Palace, and the coup happened on schedule, and the president retired. Then they had elections.

Q: What was your impression of our AID activities there?

MASON: I found relations with AID to be difficult. I don't quite understand why. The AID people thought they had a mission separate and more worthwhile than that of the embassy. The ambassador and DCM always had a hard time making AID focus on U.S. interests and how their program related to them. They resented and resisted such supervision. I don't think anybody has been terribly successful on this because AID activities tend to be programs. And after you've started a program, its got a life of its own. The AID people were in a separate building, a classic mistake, and had more money than anybody else. They could hassle us from Washington, so it wasn't an easy relationship.

Q: Was it having much of an effect?

MASON: Yes, but the effects were on the whole pernicious because the AID program provided the Government of Ecuador with financial resources which allowed it to divert its own resources to other purposes including corrupt ones. In short in my view, the real effect of the AID program in Ecuador was to permit the local government to avoid making difficult economic decisions. In the end assistance programs are fungible. If we're going to pay for X, then they could afford something else like navy ships. I didn't see how we could get any of these governments to focus on serious economic policy if we were paying them not to. I thought this was the policy consequence of the AID program.

Q: When did you leave Quito? You got there in '72, and you left?

MASON: I left in '74.

Q: You went back to Washington?

MASON: Back to Washington, I was medevaced for cancer from which I eventually recovered, and I wasn't allowed to be posted abroad for some six years. I went to see my personnel officer to find out what he had for me. He first replied that he had nothing but then said, "Wait a minute let me look at my blotter." Then he said, "What about this CU/ARA?" I asked Who was in charge of that office and was told Max Chaplin who had been my DCM in Quito. So I instantly agreed because I liked Max and thought he was a good officer. As it happened, I saw Max at a small cocktail party the next day, and I said, "Guess what, I'm going to work for you." He said, "What? I haven't heard that, who decided that?" A typical Foreign Service assignment.

Q: You were there from...I try to get these years.

MASON: I was there two years.

Q: So it would be '74 to '76. What were you doing?

MASON: That was one of the best jobs I ever had. CU/ARA was the office of Latin American programs in the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. Our principal duty was the management of the Fulbright Program in Latin America. I was the deputy office director. The office had twenty people in it, so I had my first opportunity to supervise people. Equally important, we had a budget. We had six million dollars, so I was managing a budget and people, something most Foreign Service officers really don't ever do. I learned a lot in that job, and it had a powerful effect on the rest of my career which began to take a management direction from that time forward.

Q: What were you doing?

MASON: We were running the Fulbright program in Latin America, and this meant working with all the Fulbright commissions in Latin America on the one hand, and USIA on the other. The focus was fundamentally on getting resources for the program, and on planning, managing and defending its budget, and working with organizations who were cooperating in some way or another with us.

Q: You were handing out the money, but other people were choosing the people who were going?

MASON: The Fulbright commissions, by and large, selected the grantees coming up, and there was a national competition for people going out.

Q: What was your impression of the Fulbright program?

MASON: I thought it was a good program. A lot of people got a lot of exposure to different countries and cultures. The Fulbright program included not only scholars, but also visitors, and that was a particularly interesting activity. We spent a lot of time arranging their schedules, and trying to be responsive to what the embassies wanted to achieve.

One of the things we wished to accomplish was to maintain the contacts established among people by the program after their participation had ended. We proposed things like funding the use of computer nets for example but unfortunately this never got off the ground. I never really had enough time to devote to selling the concept. Now it looks obvious. It certainly did not then.

Q: This was pretty early in the computer age.

MASON: Yes, but I thought it was a neat idea, and I still think so.

Q: Did you find yourself with the Fulbright program watching out for the political payoff? Sometimes you've got to get the daughter of the prime minister, get her a Fulbright.

MASON: This was not true for scholars. The commissions and the selection process insulated as it was protected the program from that kind of abuse. The political stuff came in the leader grants, but those grants were intended in part for such persons. We left the judgment on who the visitors should be to the embassies, and we did not second guess it. We just tried to tell them that what we were looking for is young, future leaders, not established leaders.

Q: Was Senator Fulbright still around, and keeping an eye on the thing, or not?

MASON: Yes, but this was a Republican regime. We never talked to him, but he was around. He is still interested and around.

Q: Did you have any problems with Congress?

MASON: I only experienced one political problem, but not with the Congress. That was when a new officer working for me, in charge of the American speakers program, (the program used to send Americans out as speakers) innocently enough responded to a request from our embassy in Santiago de Chile to have a staff aide from Senator Kennedy's office go down there and talk about something. All of a sudden the White House liaison officer, (the mid-level political appointee whose duty it is to try to get loyal supporters of the Administration jobs in the Department), heard about it, and had a fit. There was hell to pay. It got all the way up to the Deputy Secretary, and the Department's decision was, go with it. It's done and the cost of undoing the decision would far exceed the cost of proceeding with it. That was a smart decision.

Q: Political cost, you mean?

MASON: Yes. But that poor officer really was shocked. She was on her very first job in the Foreign Service. I was astonished too. I wasn't aware that she had even made the decision, because we made zillions of them, and she didn't know...never thought about it.

Q: Well, you were there at the time that all hell was breaking loose in Chile, weren't you?

MASON: Yes. But I no longer remember how this minor event fit into the scheme of things.

Q: Anyway, this didn't intrude particularly because the Nixon regime was taking a fairly strong stand on Chile.

MASON: The issue in the Department had nothing to do with Chile. It was the fact that we'd sent somebody from Senator Kennedy's office. That is what it was about. It could have been to the moon. It was patronage, and we had given it to a Democrat of the most objectionable sort. And someone who would not parrot the Administration's line. As it turned out, the visit went smoothly and created no ripples.

Q: Then you did get yourself for about a year or so over to Congress?

MASON: Yes, working in CU/ARA was not seen as career enhancing. I needed to a job which would enable me to move to another good one -- something that it would be difficult to do directly from CU/ARA. So I applied to the Congressional Fellow Program of the American Political Science Association, made it through the competition, and went up to the Hill for a year.

Q: This was '76 to '77.

MASON: Yes. I went to the Hill for what amounted to an academic year.

Q: What were you doing?

MASON: The Congressional Fellows Program was a training program to familiarize State Department people with the Congress, and, of course, Senators, Congressmen and their staffs with the Foreign Service. It was administered by the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) at Johns Hopkins University here. We reported to the program in July and went through a training period at SAIS before moving up to the Hill.

Q: This would have been '76.

MASON: Yes. After this training at SAIS, we were supposed to go up to the Hill and find a job. I went around and saw 20 some offices on the House side, and most of them said no. None of them had any physical space, that was the big constraint. I ended up working first for then Representative Paul Simon, and later for Senator Pell. (We were supposed to spend half our time in the Senate and half in the House.) The work on the Hill was a very worthwhile experience, and I got a lot out of it. I learned how things work up there, and it led directly to my assignment to M when I came back to the Department.

Q: Were you getting any impression on how the State Department was viewed from the Hill. I mean, particularly you were working with staffers.

MASON: Yes. The State Department was viewed as un-cooperative. The Hill is like a consular operation, what they get is complaints. They don't get good news, they get bad news. So when they got news about us, it was bad news. Joe's friend didn't get a visa, or he died, or he was in jail and the Department wasn't doing enough about it. The impression they had was based on that sort of thing. Plus the fact, of course, it is the Department which speaks up about foreign countries to explain why something is the way it is. They would tend to equate explaining of something with advocating it. We were seen as representing the foreigners, and not contributing much to their district, or state, in any practical sense. On the other hand, I made a lot of good friends up there, and the staff was very serious, and strongly supported us when we needed it. I'd say on balance that at that time our relations on the Hill were more positive than negative, but it always took a lot of managing.

Q: So you came back as a management specialist in '77.

MASON: Yes, I was assigned to M/MO, Management Operations, working for Joan Clark who was the Director. After about two months there, I was called up to the front office to be special assistant to the Under Secretary, where I spent the next three years.

Q: Who was the Under Secretary?

MASON: Ben Read.

Q: First let's talk about the short time you were working with Joan Clark. You were doing what?

MASON: M/MO was supposed to be the Under Secretary's staff support office. We provided him with policy advice independent of the bureaus he supervised, and we coordinated activities among them. As it turned out, I was in fact working for Mr. Read on various projects which interested him. As a staff office, M/MO was not too successful because it was too large. It got in the way more than it helped. I believe that the bureaus which reported to M saw it as a bottleneck and impediment. On the other hand, when focused on specific matters of direct and immediate interest to the Under Secretary, it could be very effective. Perhaps its principal duty was to provide M with a second opinion on budget priorities, and there it was useful because it did manage to link policy to money to some extent.

Q: This is sort of classic invention that comes up every few years. There was a great one during the '60s of trying to have a matrix of deciding on...

MASON: Well, you have to try all these things. The reality is that most of our resources at that time were going to consular work. And even if we said, "Look, our main business is political reporting and analysis," you can't shift those resources because the consular work must get done. In fact, when I was in M both times the biggest struggle was to make the people who did the budget on the Hill understand that there was more to the State Department than consular work and trying to defend, and indeed augment, the substantive elements.

Q: How did Ben Read operate?

MASON: Ben Read was the smartest and best person I ever worked for. He came to the Department with political clout, he was well-connected in the White House, and he was a close friend of the Secretary. In other words, he had access and influence. He used that access and influence to get things done, and he spent a considerable amount of time deciding what should be done. He was focused and exceedingly well prepared.

Q: The Secretary was Cyrus Vance at that time?

MASON: Yes. The first thing Ben Read did every day, was to attend a 7:30 staff meeting with the Secretary which included the Under Secretary for Political Affairs, the Deputy Secretary, and the Executive Secretary. I had to be in the office sufficiently in advance to prepare him for that meeting. The purpose of that meeting was to set the day's agenda for the Department, and it permitted Ben to raise important management issues with the Secretary directly and to obtain immediate decisions when appropriate. This imparted speed and momentum to his office and enabled him to be decisive within a time frame that was useful. The fact that Ben had this kind of power gave his staff standing and power also which in turn further increased his effectiveness.

Q: What were you trying to do?

MASON: We were concerned with the future of the Foreign Service. This was the time, remember, that the Carter Administration had decided to reform the Civil Service fundamentally. The issue was, should the Foreign Service be a part of this reform, and if so, how?

The Administration insisted that the Foreign Service be included within the new Civil Service format. At the same time, many people in the Department thought that the time had come to combine the Civil Service and Foreign Service personnel systems into one common system and that new system should be Foreign Service because of its obvious advantages over the Civil Service and because managing two personnel systems was expensive and created first and second class employees.

The advantages of one personnel system were obvious, and we were attracted to the notion because of its simplicity and potential for rationality and budget savings. But in the context of the larger Administration drive to reform the Civil Service it became increasingly clear that we would be unlikely to succeed but would be forced in the opposite direction. In particular, we learned that we would have to merge senior Foreign Service positions into the Senior Executive Service thus decapitating the Foreign Service and perhaps opening its senior ranks to senior officers from other agencies who would probably not have the language and foreign affairs skills required but who would anyway be forced on us politically. On the other hand, the idea of a common Senior Executive Service in which our senior officers could compete for jobs in other departments was attractive. We were confident that our own senior officers were well qualified for such competition, but we feared that true commonality and transferability would not be achieved. We also feared that far more seniors from other agencies would want our senior positions than the reverse and that therefore competition would work against our people simply on the basis of population. Nevertheless, we were strongly attracted to the idea because we saw new opportunities in it as well as a new way to broaden the horizons and contacts of our senior officers.

In the end, we decided to oppose inclusion of the Foreign Service in the Civil Service Reform Act and a single personnel system in the Department for two reasons: First, we would lose control of our personnel system and second because we would lose the

distinction between those who were committed to world-wide service abroad and those who only wanted to serve in Washington. We all knew from direct experience that the Civil Service personnel system was more rigid and far slower to act than ours and that it was not designed with our need to assign and reassign personnel constantly. But far more importantly, we believed that if we gave up the fundamental distinction between those who serve abroad and those who don't, we would put in question the special benefits (principally retirement) enjoyed by the Foreign Service. Those benefits were and are justified by the fact of overseas service and the special difficulties such service entails. We thought it extremely unlikely that extension of those benefits to Washington-based personnel could be justified. In fact, we thought that it would be inappropriate to do so. Having reached that conclusion, we realized that inclusion in any common personnel system would probably adversely affect the Foreign Service.

So we strenuously objected to the inclusion of the Foreign Service in the Administration's Bill, but we were overruled. We were included in the Bill that went forward to the Hill.

Nevertheless, we had many friends on the Hill, and we were able to make our views known privately. The truth of the matter is that we lobbied actively against our inclusion in the Bill and did so with the knowledge and consent of Ben Read. In fact one of my principal responsibilities was managing that effort. In the end we were successful.

The big moment came toward the end of that Congress -- a time when legislation is very vulnerable to small filibusters. I received a call from Gerry Christiansen, a former FSO and an aide in Senator Pell's office. Gerry said that the Civil Service reform Act was on the floor and that the Senator was prepared "to discuss it at length" if we wanted to be excluded from the Act. He asked for an immediate, final decision on whether or not the Department wanted the Foreign Service to be included. Very importantly, Gerry added that if we did not want to be included, we would have to agree to amend the Foreign Service Act to conform insofar as possible to the Civil Service Reform Act.

I was alone in the office at the time. But I told Gerry that we did not want to be included, because I knew we didn't. I knew also we were prepared to amend the Foreign Service Act. So I agreed to that condition as well. The outcome was our exclusion from the Civil Service Reform Act and the insertion of language in our Authorization Act requiring us to submit a report and draft legislation to amend the Foreign Service Act to conform to the principles in the Civil Service Reform Act.

Q: That came in 1980.

MASON: No , it was in 1978. But that event was the origin of the process which led to the Foreign Service Act of 1980. That's where it came from. That was the price of exclusion. We had to agree that we would amend the Foreign Service Act to conform in so far as possible to the new Civil Service Reform Act.

We knew that changes to the Foreign Service Act were necessary in any event. Our review of the operation of our personnel system had already shown that. Selection out was not working, and it was doubtful then that mandatory retirement would survive. (It was before the Supreme Court, and we were not confident about the outcome.)

The process of drafting amendments to our the Act led us to the conclusion that an entirely new Act was required for reasons of simplicity. That notion was advanced first by of Jim Michael in L. He pointed out that the amending process was too complicated for two reasons. First amendments would be unintelligible when presented in a Bill. No one would understand it because it would consist of nothing but fragments of language linked to sections and subsections of the old Act. Secondly he noted that the 1940 Act had been repeatedly amended that it itself was difficult to read and that it would be better to start from scratch. Such an effort would also enable us to rationalize the Act and to include in it relevant things which had been inserted into other legislation. The idea was to come up with a comprehensive Bill with a strong logical structure.

So we began that process. And we did so despite the vehement objections of the Administration, principally OMB. OMB fought us at every turn. But we were able to argue that we were required to do this by the Congress which was true but still transparent. The House Foreign Affairs Committee, the House Civil Service and Post Office Committee and to a lesser extent the Senate Foreign Relations Committee supported us strongly and held a series of hearings devoted to the legislation.

Q: OMB didn't want you to amend it?

MASON: No, they wanted us to be in the Civil Service.

Q: This law was already passed, wasn't it?

MASON: Yes the Civil Service Reform Act had passed, and we had dodged the bullet. Everyone else had in fact been included, and those agencies which had objected had been administratively exempted -- something which had been offered to us but which we rejected on the theory that an administrative exemption is always vulnerable to being withdrawn. They were quite annoyed at us, and not terribly cooperative, and of course, we were trying for every inch of new territory we could get. We tried to limit the President's power to appoint political ambassadors, and we succeeded in getting a lower limit on political appointees in the Senior Foreign Service than exists for the Senior Civil Service.

We also tried to increase the Secretary's authority in every direction and that of Chiefs of Mission over their missions abroad with some success. We tried to use the Act to unify the personnel systems of the foreign affairs agencies, and the Act now applies to all of them. But we failed to get them to work together meaningfully because of the inferiority complexes existing in AID and USIA.

An interesting example of this sort of thing, was the authority of ambassadors. We had been having a lot of trouble with the CIA and the Defense Department about who was really in charge overseas, and we had succeeded in amending the old Foreign Service Act by including in one of our authorization Acts a statement about the ambassador's authority at missions overseas. There had been a tremendous fight about this. That fight really revealed the extent of the problem. And that problem included the jurisdictional interests of various committees on the Hill. We started out subjecting the missions abroad to the authority of the chief of mission. The compromise we had to accept was additional language qualifying this authority with the words "under the direction of the President, the chief of mission," and that means that if the President tells the CIA to go do something, they can do it, and it doesn't have anything to do with the ambassador. Well, we couldn't really fight that. The final outcome on this was, yes, the ambassadors really did get a charter of new authority to run their missions, but it was not as generous as we had hoped for.

One of the more obscure but important gains we made in this area was the expansion of the ambassadors' authority to include chiefs of mission which includes, chargés d'affaires, who never before actually, clearly held this authority, to manage all aspects of their missions. We further, expanded that authority by changing the definition of a chief of mission to include an official designated by the Secretary at certain posts " diplomatic in nature" Interests Sections and certain Consulates General like Hong Kong. On balance, I think we did very well with the chief of mission authority, and State's authority, in defining it more clearly, and expanding it to chargés and heads of Interests Section. The other agencies really didn't understand what we were getting at fortunately at the time. In fact, after this the Secretary did designate the heads of post in places like Martinique, and Hong Kong, Jerusalem, and our Interest Sections as chiefs of mission. That was only done once as far as I know, and I believe that the Department has forgotten about this authority ever since.

Q: You're talking about other agencies, there must have been an awful lot of opposition, or at least interest from the Foreign Service itself like AFSA, the union, or not, or was there?

MASON: There was a lot of confusion and interest in the proposals to change the Foreign Service Act. That interest focused on the sections on labor relations, on grievances, the rights of divorced spouses, and promotion and retention. The unions naturally wanted strong grievance and labor language, and we didn't particularly oppose that. The new language generally codified existing practices and amendments, and it was essential for passage on the Hill. We would have preferred more general language and greater reliance on regulation. The Post Office and the Civil Service committee, under Mrs. Schroeder, really wanted to...

Q: Mrs. Schroeder, who was very strong on rights of divorced spouses.

MASON: Yes, they wanted to legislate in this area very badly. They saw this as an opportunity to break new policy ground. We really had no objections in principle to this; but we wanted to keep it simple, and it got fairly complex.

Where people got excited and involved was on the promotion and retention system. That's what, from the point of view of the unions and the Foreign Service was what the Bill was about. And, indeed, that was a principal reason we thought the Act needed to be amended. It was absolutely clear that the existing selection out system was not working. People were not being selected out. Rating officers were unwilling to write truthfully when it came to poor performance. As a result, grievances and litigation was going against us. At the same time, mandatory retirement was before the Supreme Court, and we thought we might lose the appeal. So we were looking at the possibility of no one ever leaving the Foreign Service involuntarily. This was a disastrous prospect, and it also promised to undermine Foreign Service benefits if we could no longer make the argument that our personnel system was a competitive up or out one.

It was Bill Galloway and I who invented the "window" -- the notion of selection in to the Senior Foreign Service over a threshold. The theory was that selection out was never going to work in the real world if we continued to reply on the old approach and that it would be more effective to reverse the process and select people for continued service beyond a normal end to a career. The radical idea here was to make selection out real by defining the normal termination point of a Foreign Service career. Although we had always said that the Foreign Service was competitive, no one had ever fixed a point where the competition would occur. We chose the point at which an officer would be eligible for a pension and at a rank equivalent to Navy Captain or Army Colonel, the normal terminal grade for most officers in those personnel systems. We also decided to offer interested officers the opportunity to elect not to seek further promotion if they did not wish to do so by allowing them to decide not to compete for that final promotion. The idea here was that there were undoubtedly some such officers, and this choice would enable them to make firm plans at time convenient to them. Finally, we decided to give officers more control over their futures by allowing them to decide not only if they would compete but when. As it turned out the addition of these choices was not welcome.

We also were looking for ticket punching approach to increase an officer's ability to plan his career rationally. For example, we suggested that senior officers ought to have 3-3 in some language. In fact, we developed an entire menu of items so that an officer could select a pattern which suited his interests and which would be related to career growth. But we failed to secure agreement on the specifics of the idea.

Q: As you say, the courts have not sustained somebody just looking at somebody and says, no, you go. You've got to have a mechanism in order to get...

MASON: Yes. When you must be chosen to enter the Foreign Service or the Senior Foreign Service, the system works efficiently. It is easier to make positive than negative choices, and there is no selection out decision to contest.

Q: Were you feeling any pressure about minorities, women, at the time?

MASON: Yes. The Act has a provision saying the Service look like America, and so on. But the Act really doesn't get at how you do that. The key to that was the recruitment and examination process. Mr. Read didn't like the results of the examinations in this area, and he decided to relax the standards so that there would be a larger pool from which to select. We had argued that there were enough minorities who were almost passing the exam within, say, ten points, and that it might be more rational and better for them if we took that group and tried to train it to the point of passing the exam.

Q: I take it this pretty well absorbed most of your time until you moved to Ottawa. Is that right?

MASON: No. There were three special assistants. Two of us dealt with the Congress, so the Foreign Service Act took a lot of our time. But every year we had an Authorization Act, every year we had an Appropriation Act, and that absorbed an awful lot of our time as well.

Q: Who were the key people as far as you were concerned in Congress?

MASON: At that time the key person for us was Dante Fascell, Chairman of our subcommittee on the House Foreign Affairs Committee. When we got to the Senate the key person was Senator Pell.

Q: Did it help that the fact that he had been a Foreign Service officer?

MASON: Yes. And his aide we were working with had been in the Foreign Service as well.

Q: Who was that?

MASON: Gerry Christiansen.

Q: Well, with Fascell and Schroeder, what were their interests as far as you were concerned?

MASON: They agreed with us in that the Foreign Service Act ought to be revised. It was a matter of working out the details with their staff and other Congressmen who had various interests. The basic strategy Mr. Fascell and Mrs. Schroeder had was to draft a Bill which would command support on the floor, and therefore this put anybody who had something to say in a pretty strong position. They didn't want floor amendments, so people could come in from everywhere with contributions to this bill and get them in. That put us in a weak position. But the other side of that coin was not many people had a lot to contribute.

Q: Were there any other things? I thought we might cut off and grab a bite of lunch, and then come back.

MASON: Yes. Dealing with the Hill was an adventure in the Carter Administration. There was very little discipline. We managed to pull off a real under cover coup on retirement. It

was a real delight; although, it turned out to be only a temporary victory. At this time, the Department had a surplus of senior officers, and we were looking around for ways to encourage a number to retire. We thought that if we could change the retirement formula, many would retire. Naturally, OMB refused to cooperate. So Marc Ginsberg, another Special Assistant in M (and a political appointee) and I decided that the easiest way to change the retirement formula would be to attach it to our authorization bill. The change we were seeking was in the calculation formula. Then (and now) retirement is calculated on length of service and the highest three years of salary. We wanted to change that to the highest single year of salary. Vast amounts of mathematical analysis showed that this would result in savings. But OMB hated the idea. The long and short of the matter is that we were able to insert this into our Bill,. and it was enacted. The Administration was beside itself. Unfortunately, OMB was able to persuade the Congress to repeal this language but not for ten days. So a number of officers were able to take advantage of this opportunity. That was probably the high point of my lobbying career.

Q: Why don't we talk about...now you went to Ottawa as a political officer?

MASON: Yes, as the Political Counselor.

Q: When did you go?

MASON: I went in 1980, in the summer.

Q: You were running the political section. I would think it would be both a difficult job to be the political counselor in Canada. I mean everybody is reading the news, and we're so close that you don't have the thing when you're translating some unknown society for the Americans. How did you find reporting on Canada?

MASON: I found reporting on Canada to be easy because information was freely available and officials and politicians were easily accessible. I've never served in a post where I had such access at all levels. You could call people up and they'd answer your questions, and you had never even met them. It was an entirely different world. All countries are unique, and Canada is too. It's our northern neighbor, we have a long history with Canada, a lot of it not so good. Our first arms control agreement was with Canada, demilitarization of the Great Lakes. We didn't do too well in the War of 1812 versus Canada, which they never hesitate to point out. But Canada's only foreign affairs relationship that matters is with us. They're almost completely dependent upon us economically. We take 80% of their exports, for example. Ten percent of the country lives in the United States at any one time; 20% during the Easter break. The largest ethnic minority in New England is from Quebec originally. The relationship is very, very close. No one knows the full dimensions of our relationship with Canada. It is too large, and there are too many players at all levels. For example, there is no complete list of agreements with that country, because the agreements extend not only to treaties, but also to memoranda of understanding between agencies, between pieces of agencies, between states and provinces, between cities, police

organizations agreements, and so on. One of the jobs of the political counselor is to try to know as much as possible about that.

We were in the same time zone as Washington which helps considerably in terms of communicating with the USG. The embassy was able to dominate the policy agenda with respect to Canada in Washington most of the time. This was because we were able to exploit the communication system. An officer in the State Department who wants to send a memorandum to say the Secretary of State, or worse, the White House, that officer is faced with a hierarchical project that can take days or weeks. We in the embassy could send a cable anyplace directly. We discovered this was an effective way to communicate. We would work with the desk to present positions to Washington through the cable system to create an opportunity for the desk to exploit. We were able to set the agenda most of the time simply through initiative and by staying ahead of things and offering analysis and policy recommendations before anyone else did.

Q: It's something I haven't heard expressed that way before.

MASON: We discovered it, and then adopted it as a conscious practice. We would consult with the desk, and other places in the government about what we all wanted to get done, and then we would take the lead in pushing a cable on the matter to the appropriate agency and official with copies to the right places. I found both times I was up there that this was an effective strategy to influence policy.

Q: You were there the first time as political counselor from 1980 until when?

MASON: 1983.

Q: What were the main issues that you were dealing with at that time? You were there at the time when there was a change from the Carter to the Reagan administration which must have sent some shock waves through Canada, didn't it?

MASON: Well, the Canadians imagine themselves as more liberal and to the left of Americans; so they tend to assume that they should sympathize with the Democrats. So the election of Reagan did send shock waves which turned out to be unjustified. The relationship, in fact, between the Reagan administration and the government of Canada was a very good one. It's a truism to say the countries' relationships are determined by their interests, and the interests don't change when a new administration changes.

The problems in Canada that I dealt with as political counselor, were really divided into two parts: one was domestic Canadian politics, that was not a problem as much as a reporting challenge. And the other was various kinds of disputes with Canada, primarily in the area of fisheries, boundaries and some military matters.

In the case of domestic politics, the Province of Quebec has never been happy in its relationship with the rest of Canada, and it had just gone through a referendum on whether

it should separate from Canada or not--I guess a month before I arrived. The voters in the province defeated the resolution, just barely, and it's pretty certain that a majority of francophone voters favored it, by a very slight majority. The issue has never gone away. It's still present. But after the referendum there was a period of euphoria when it was believed that the issue had finally be settled and Canada could move on the other matters. But as it turned out, the question of what kind of a country Canada was to be never really was off the agenda. Prime Minister Trudeau was trying to make it a more unitary country, and it became clear over time that this wasn't in fact what the Canadians really wanted. So throughout my time in Ottawa Canadian domestic politics revolved around this classic issue This subject came into sharp focus in 1982 when Prime Minister Trudeau convened a meeting of the provincial premiers to try to forge an agreement to "repatriate" and amend the Canadian constitution. The Canadian constitution is not a document like the U.S. constitution but then consisted of the British North America Act and certain customs or political conventions. One of these conventions was that the constitution would not be changed without the consent of Quebec. Mr. Trudeau wanted to make the British North America Act a Canadian statute and thus formally end the requirement for legislative action in Westminster when changes were desired. This proposal in itself was not very controversial. What was controversial was the idea of including a Charter of Rights patterned after the U.S. Bill of Rights. Opponents correctly saw that such a Charter would limit the powers of Parliament and the provincial parliaments and increase the power of the courts because it would for the first time give citizens standing to sue on such issues. Thus Quebec, for example, could anticipate suits over its restrictive and anti-English language laws. Quebec therefore opposed the notion of the inclusion of the charter in the constitution on the grounds that it would diminish its ability to protect its French culture.

The long and short of this affair was that the premiers did agree on a proposal except for Quebec. The deal was cut after the Quebec delegation had left the meeting. Naturally, the government of Quebec was infuriated. But Trudeau pressed on and eventually succeeded but at great political cost since Quebec was now an alienated province and the issue of Quebec's place in Canada was once more prominent.

Q: Was there a problem, from your point of view, of trying to keep the United States out of the game? Were people trying to drag us in? Were you having problems with gratuitous statements from the States?

MASON: Yes, there were efforts to drag us in on the part of the government of Quebec. The government of Quebec at that time was a Parti Quebecois (PQ) government, and the PQ was the independence party. That government did try to influence the United States by appealing to New Englanders of Quebec descent (of which there are a great number). This strategy did not work. The Federal Government of Canada, of course, wanted us to stay out of it, and that was our policy. We stated when asked from time to time that the U.S. hoped to see a strong and united Canada, but whatever Canadians wanted to do with Canada was their business. It's still our policy.

Q: Trudeau, particularly during the Vietnam war, had been sort of a thorn in our side. How did we view Trudeau at this stage of the game?

MASON: Trudeau had been Prime Minister at that point for almost 15 years. He was the senior prime minister in the western world. The man is brilliant, and we recognized the man's brilliance, and his experience, but we were impatient with his advice at times, sermonizing, and his needles. But we also recognized that he had a tough domestic political row to hoe, that Canada really is a minor Power, that it doesn't usually matter what foreign policy positions Canada takes because it can do nothing about most of them -- that it's mostly posturing. We knew that Trudeau had to assert policy independence from us for political reasons and that this situation is a basic Canadian problem. We knew that Canada would be there when it really did matter; so, our policy was one of patience although that was not always easy. Furthermore at that time, most people in Canada opposed our policy in Vietnam and American draft dodgers were being welcomed into Canada as refugees. This grated on us and made relations more difficult. The Canadians see themselves, I think not entirely accurately, as a different from Americans in the sense that they are more socially conscious and orderly than Americans. Canadians are preoccupied with their national identity or lack of it. The general English-Canadian view is that Canadians are primarily not Americans. This is a rather weak and negative world view, it is constantly commented on in a hand wringing sense. The origin of this self-image is the outcome of the Revolution. The first large group of immigrants to arrive in English Canada were loyalists leaving the U.S. They were on the losing end of the Revolution and were anxious to justify their often very unfortunate economic situation by differentiating themselves from the rebel Americans. This attitude persists today particularly in Southern Ontario. It has been augmented by envy because the big leagues are always to the south and Canadian influence in world terms is marginal. This marginal status is exacerbated by the fact that they are located right next to us, and it is rubbed in every day. Curiously, the latest real wave of U.S. immigrants was the Vietnam group, and they have reinforced this anti-U.S. mind-set for the same reasons that the Loyalists did: the psychological need to justify their political choice.

The central Canadian foreign policy problem is us. How to relate to us, and how to stay independent in an economic and foreign policy sense. The Trudeau's government's strategy was called "the third option." The idea was to reduce Canadian economic dependence on the U.S. by increasing Canadian economic relations with other countries. In this context, the Trudeau saw the EC as a potential Godsend because it appeared to offer a real trade alternative to the U.S. The third option was anti-American in the sense that Canada was trying to achieve a better balance in its trade relationships at some cost, perhaps, to U.S. interests.

From the U.S. point of view the third option could have been a good thing because it would have made the U.S. - Canadian relationship less emotional and would probably have made Canada a stronger trading partner in the end.

Unfortunately the third option policy was a failure. Canada was unable to increase in relative terms with other countries relative to the United States. Canadian trade with the

United States was growing at such a rate that no matter what Canada did with the third option, the results were inconsequential. This was a great frustration, but in the process, the government of Canada took various other steps to increase its economic independence of the United States, and some were directed at U.S. interests and led to serious disputed between the two countries. The best example was the National Energy Policy, (naturally but unfortunately known as the NEP which reminded many people of the old early Soviet New Economic Policy).

Q: New economic policy, yes.

MASON: The object of Canadian NEP was to reduce foreign and in particular U.S. ownership of Canadian petroleum resources and companies. American ownership was quite high at that time. Obviously we didn't like it very much but there was not that much we could really complain about. Canada decided, for example, to start its own national oil company, Petro-Canada or Petrocan. Canada did this by buying other petroleum companies, it didn't nationalize. Petrocan wasn't a horror but it wasn't a great success. (It was privatized under the Mulroney Government.) The issue with us, the burning issue, and an emotional one was something called the "back-in." This policy meant that Canada could take without compensation (or "back in" on) a portion of petroleum concessions and do so retroactively despite previous agreements and contracts. It was the retroactivity which was particularly offensive, and it has left a bad taste to this day.

Q: In my interviews with people who dealt with Canada, one thing that comes up almost every time and that is, dealing with the Canadians as negotiators. That they play, "Gee, we're a poor little country...." I mean they're a very difficult group to deal with.

MASON: Yes they are. They complain, we're a little country and you should be generous, but we don't have to put up with that. The Canadians are difficult to negotiate with, but that's because they're negotiating from weakness. Their analysis is the elephant and the mouse--whenever the elephant turns over, the mouse is in trouble. Well, it's true. So any negotiator representing the mouse, has got to be difficult. What's he got in his cards? Next to nothing. The basic Canadian strategy, not in each negotiation, but overall for relations with us is to bring as many other factors to play on their side as possible. Their fundamental strategy in that respect is to stress international law, or international agreements, on getting us to agree to put things in the UN, or in the case of the Free Trade Agreement to have binational trade dispute settlement commissions in which the two countries have equal powers to balance off the power difference between us. This is why you see the Canadians always emphasizing international agreements, international organizations, and it's a very rational strategy.

Q: We're talking about the '80 to '83 period, was there either a counter strategy on our part, or just say, "Let's not raise too many, it's not that big a deal for us."

MASON: It was a big deal for us in the petroleum sector. But these were not being treated by the Canadians in international council.

However, a basic rule of U.S.-Canadian diplomacy is that in the end, we all have to live together in North America, and therefore we must never allow one issue to affect other issues. This is the "no linkage" policy. So just because we're having a trade dispute doesn't mean we're going to have trouble some unrelated area. The fact is there's a very serious effort to avoid linkages, because we both recognize that if we ever linked things, there's no limit to the gridlock that could result. Periodically new political regimes in Washington and Ottawa want to link, and it takes about a year to get them to understand that this is simply not a useful strategy.

Q: When the Reagan administration came in, obviously Canada was not very high on its agenda, but did you see any change?

MASON: Canada was high on the agenda. President Reagan's first foreign trip was to Canada, and it was an experience. I haven't forgotten it. President Reagan came to Ottawa several times while I was there. And I might add that he did a very good job every time he was in Canada. I was present at many of this meetings there, and I can tell you that he had read and mastered the briefing materials.

Q: What about on the cultural side? There's always been a complaint that our TV overlaps, and magazines are read more than their magazines, etc. Did you have to fight this? Or get involved in that?

MASON: Yes. First of all, it is true that all our magazines, major newspapers and television programming are available throughout Canada. Canada is a more cabled country than we are, and all the major American stations are carried on Canadian cable. An example to the degree to which they watch us is that the border PBS television stations obtain half or a little more of their funding from Canadians. These stations play to that audience; they do programs focused on Canadian issues and their sign-off and sign-on features both national anthems. They may be the only effectively binational television stations in the world.

The U.S. cultural penetration of Canada is up-setting to Canadian nationalists and to the cultural elites whose position is threatened. There is a group in Canada who thinks Canadian culture is in danger, that they know what this culture is, and that they can and should prescribe what it is to the rest of Canada. The rest of Canada, of course, does not agree with this or they wouldn't be watching all these U.S. programs or buying U.S. magazines and books. Nevertheless this nationalist group is important politically because it's very literate and very present.

The issue that focused this problem during my first tour in Canada was television and magazine advertising. In an effort to conserve Canadian advertizing dollars for Canadian publications television stations, the government of Canada mandated in law that Canadian advertising expenses for ads in U.S. media aimed at the Canadian market would no longer be allowed as a business expense for Canadian tax purposes. The effects of this legislation on U.S. interests were minimal (except in Buffalo) but the policy was nevertheless

extremely annoying to the USG because of its discriminatory nature. It has not made Canadian magazines into a profitable business.

This issue is also expressed in Canadian restrictions on foreign ownership of Canadian publishing companies, in the prohibition of the sale in Canada of "split-editions" of U.S. magazines (a "split-edition" is a regular run of a U.S. magazine with special inserts concerning Canada. Such editions are very attractive for Canadian advertisers), and in attempts to limit U.S. penetration of the Canadian movie market.

The bottom line is that we don't agree with the Canadian definition of culture. We see magazines, publishing and television as a business. In our view, the cultural elites in Canada are simply an interest group who have an economic interest to defend and are seeking various kind of economic protection to that end.

The latest iteration of this group of disputes is Sports Illustrated, in Canada, which has succeeded in leap-frogging the split-edition prohibition printing in Canada, through satellite processes, a Canadian edition -- essentially a split-run in terms of content but entirely made in Canada physically. All parties have admitted that this was a real stroke of genius, but it once again put the split-edition issue in the limelight. Canadian publishers sought Government intervention to prevent anymore such publishing, and the outcome is that now Government permission is required to start publication of a magazine in Canada. The cure may be worse than the disease.

Q: Sometimes I almost have the feeling...I've Canadian relatives, that the real definition of what is a Canadian, is that they're not Americans.

MASON: Well, that's an exaggeration. On the whole, Quebecers and Western Canadians do not have trouble with their identity. The know who they are. The people who have that problem tend to be from southern Ontario. They are a critically important group in Canada because southern Ontario is the population and intellectual center of English-speaking Canada. This problem to the root of Canadian domestic problems. Originally Canada was founded by two different sets of colonists: the French and the English. The French were in Quebec, and the English were in Ontario. These original groups are still in place, and both tend still to see Canada through the prism of its origins. Furthermore a major fraction of the early population of Ontario came from the United States during or immediately after the Revolution as refugees. They brought with them an attitude about the United States which was negative and defensive. They stressed loyalty to the Crown and their respect for law and order in contrast to the situation in the U.S. at the end of the Revolution. They were determined to be different from the Americans to the south because that difference was the justification of their departure and self-respect. That determination is the origin of the tendency in Ontario to identify as not being Americans. It continues to this day in varying degree and is a partial explanation of why many Canadian accepted the NEP and the third option as good policies.

Q: You probably had two ambassadors while you were in Ottawa the first time.

MASON: Yes. former governor of Maine Ken Curtis was my first ambassador. He left early January 20, 1981. I remember seeing him off in his driveway in the snow. He said he was going to be over the border to Maine by noon because "I'm not going to serve one minute under a Republican." Then Paul Robinson, an insurance executive, and a Republican party figure and fund raiser from Illinois came that summer as ambassador for the rest of my time during as Political Counselor.

Q: How did he operate?

MASON: Well, Paul Robinson was my first political ambassador close up, and they're at sea really when they arrive. As a businessman, Robinson had run an insurance businesses. So he had an immediate problem of scale. He had also been used to exercising greater authority and control over his business than he could do as ambassador. Finally, as a businessman he had not dealt with the number and kind of issues confronting him in Canada. In short, Robinson faced a far more complex and subtle environment. Paul Robinson did know a fair bit about Canada, but he didn't have much feel for its government at the beginning. It took some time for him to sort out what the different agencies did, and how they related to each other, and what this had to do with him as an ambassador in Canada. We had 16 agencies in the Embassy, not counting about ten Defense Department agencies. They were mostly extensions of domestic agencies up there for reasons that had nothing to do with foreign policy. For example, the largest number of officials stationed in Canada were from the Immigration Service and the Customs Service. They were stationed at twelve airports and two seaports around Canada to clear travelers bound for the U.S. There were 300 of these people. The FBI had a significant office up there, but its business was entirely related to police cooperation. There was no policy in any of this.

Ambassador Robinson was an activist. He believed that Canada should do more in the common defense of the West, and he did not hesitate to speak up about this and other issues which affected the U.S.
This directness startled the Canadians, but many of them agreed with what he had to say. It is interesting to note that Robinson was really the first U.S. official to push hard for the notion of a free trade agreement. It seemed crazy then, but his talking about it eventually had an effect. A career officer would probably have considered the notion so exotic that he would not have invested any time in it.

Once Robinson got used to the DCM and me, we were able to work together well. He went through the classic sequence of distrusting the Foreign Service to admiring it.

Q: Your DCM was?

MASON: Dick Smith.

Q: Were there any other major issues during this time?

MASON: Yes, the major issues in the political area were maritime boundaries and fisheries. It may surprise you, but we have no settled maritime boundaries with Canada. We have four maritime boundaries with Canada. The only one which is partially settled is in the Gulf of Maine, and it took a special panel of the World Court to arrive at an agreement there. That boundary line starts off-shore, and gives Canada part of the nose, it's called of George's Bank, a rich fishing ground for scallops, and goes on out to sea, but not the 200 miles. So it's unfinished at both ends. Up until the court settlement, this boundary was a source of very serious problems because our fishermen and the Canadian fishermen were fighting--really fighting--each other over the scallops. The management of the fishery there was not going well; it was being over-fished. We could not agree with the Canadians on the management strategy to be followed, mainly because the New England fishermen couldn't agree on any reasonable strategy. The Canadians wanted to manage the entire area by species without regard to the boundary, which was very sensible. We almost agreed. We had negotiated a treaty to that end with Canada which it turned out could not get through the Senate. We therefore recommended that the treaty be withdrawn from the Senate, and it was. This decision really upset the Canadians because they didn't understand, and had never focused until this point really, on how our political system works. Just because you reach an agreement with the Executive Branch, doesn't mean it's a done deal. This was a revelation to them, and it led to fundamental changes on how they manage their affairs in the United States. After the treaty was abandoned, we ended up agreeing to go to submit the issue to a special panel of the World Court. The strategy was successful, and a boundary determination was made which split the difference (something that neither country could have done without the cover of the Court), but it did not settle how the fish would be managed. Each country now manages its own fishery in its own way, although I think we're coming more and more to the Canadian view on management.

The other maritime boundaries are in the west. There are three out there: 1) between the bottom half of Vancouver Island and the state of Washington in the Strait of Juan de Fuca. It is not an important difference. 2) Further to the north of Vancouver Island, where the Alaska panhandle comes down, is the Dixon Entrance. The issue is fishing. There we have agreed with the Canadians on an interim regime for the fisheries management of the disputed area which is quite large. Each country enforces more or less agreed fishing rules on its own vessels, with its own ships. This is called "flag state enforcement" and has worked rather well. The effect is the creation of a zone where the fishery is more or less managed on an agreed basis. The Canadians periodically backslide by trying to assert authority over U.S. vessels in the area. From time to time we have had to take a strong line with them up to the point of saying, if you try to board our vessels, we will really take some serious action about it. We have in fact used Coast Guard cutters to interpose physically between a Canadian enforcement vessel and our fishing vessels. We've never used any weapons. I don't think we ever would, and they never have. But nevertheless, this is the area where things could happen. There seems to be no possibility of an agreement on settling this dispute because the government of British Columbia has even more extensive claims than the government of Canada, and doesn't want to settle. I don't think the federal Canadian government has the political will to do so.

The last difference is in the Beaufort Sea where Alaska and Canada meet on the north slope. The issue there is whether the maritime boundary line goes straight to the North Pole from the coast, or veers a little bit to what is called the equidistant line, that is, a line drawn perpendicular to the shore line, if you can agree on what the shore line is. We argued for the equidistant line, and they for the longitudinal line to the North Pole. The difference is important with respect to petroleum exploration. Many of the companies doing the oil drilling (or interested in exploration) are American; so. the issue really comes down to how the tax revenues are shared. We proposed all kinds of ingenious solutions on that, but again there's been no real will on the part of Canada to settle this. And it's complicated by whether or not the Yukon has any right to that part of the Arctic, or not. As it happens, the Yukon boundary almost touches the Alaskan boundary at the top, and whether they have any off-shore rights at all isn't clear. But in the meantime it complicates our life, and its further complicated by the native peoples and what rights, if any, they have. So it doesn't look like much is going to happen on that problem in the near future.

Q: Well, you left there in '83, and came back to Washington to Management?

MASON: Yes, I came back to be Executive Director of M. That is to say I was Executive Director for about ten bureaus and offices which reported to the Under Secretary for Management when they had a consolidated Executive Office (EX). But I really was brought me back to do congressional work for M. It was pretty obvious that I couldn't do both jobs after a while. For example, I found that with ten bureaus and offices, there were more staff meetings than I could attend. Furthermore, the larger units such as the Medical Division and Personnel objected to a consolidated EX anyway, and there was constant trouble working with them.

In any event, I went back up to the front office to do the Congressional work for Under Secretary Spiers. The atmosphere was quite different. It had nothing to do with Spiers. The Administration was different, and we didn't have the freedom to deal on the Hill that we had enjoyed under Carter. Furthermore, the budget climate was entirely different. The financial tide wasn't rising anymore, so neither were all the boats.

Our central challenge was protecting the Department's budget and in particular the substantive parts. Spiers and I spent an awful lot of time trying to explain to the Congress what the Department and the Foreign Service did besides consular work. For example, we told them that 70% of all human intelligence came from Foreign Service reporting. They had the impression that it came from CIA spies. As a result of this effort, we were able to increase positions for substantive officers somewhat during that period. That was an important success.

This period was a time of security problems, both attacks such as bombings and technical penetrations as in the new Chancery construction in Moscow. Ron thought we ought to get ahead of the curve and try to come up with a strategy before the Congress did so. He came up with the idea of the Inman Panel, under Admiral Bobby Inman, to study our security posture and make recommendations. I had a hidden agenda in all this besides getting ahead

of the Congress. It was obvious to me, and I think to others, that we really needed an awful lot of money for construction overseas, particularly if we were going to make any security effort at all. So I saw the Panel, not only as an effort to preempt the Hill in the policy sense, but also as maybe a really good vehicle for getting some significant funding for Office of Overseas Buildings. And indeed, the initial draft recommendation of the panel was an $8 billion building program, which we told them was wonderful, but not really realistic. We suggested they cut it back, and they did, and then came back with something like $4 or $5 billion, which we eventually got authorized by the Congress. It was not all appropriated, but it was authorized (which left room for future appropriations).

The down side of the results of the Inman Panel's work was the creation of a separate Bureau of Security, but that was the price we were forced to pay. At the time, we did not realize how bad an idea the separate bureau was -- it led to further isolation of the security function and to an excessive expansion of the number of security officers (and thus financial problems for the future) and immensely complicated the overseas construction program through the creation of detailed, rigidly enforced physical security standards for construction. The central problem in all this was probably the imposition of "accountability" in the legislation stemming from the Inman Panel's recommendations. We knew that some kind of accountability standard was essential to secure passage, and we believed that out best chance was to draft it ourselves. I believe that analysis was correct, and I drafted the language. The unforeseen consequences of that section of the legislation was a flight from responsibility to the refuge of detailed requirements and regulations rigidly interpreted. The ultimate effect has been the abandonment of most of the physical security standards.

A good example of this cycle is the case of the new chancery project in Ottawa. For more than 25 years, the USG has wanted to build a new chancery in Ottawa to replace the aging one. Numerous factors have blocked action the most important of which has been finding an appropriate site. After 20 years a site was agreed upon. It was between two main streets downtown. No sooner had the design work been completed, that the Marine barracks in Beirut were truck bombed. That bombing led to reconsideration of siting buildings overseas and the Ottawa project was canceled at that point. Given the location, this was a reasonable decision. The problem came in the selection of a new site. We could not get the Bureau of Security to apply its own standards (which included a sliding scale of requirements depending on local circumstances to our situation. Rather they insisted on applying the maximum requirements - a 200 foot setback for example, something impossible to obtain within miles of the center of Ottawa. The reason for their disregard of the flexibility built into their regulations was clearly because they feared being held responsible if something happened as a result of a lower but appropriate standard being applied. This position prevented any progress whatever, and ironically it left the existing chancery in a far more exposed situation in a security sense. Ultimately, a new decision was finally made to return to the previous disapproved site, and it appears that that decision will stick. The costs of all this probably exceeded $30 million to the USG.

Q: Was there concern about the access of the public to our buildings?

MASON: Sure. We didn't want to build fortresses that nobody would want to come into, and on the other hand, didn't want Joe Terrorist having access. On balance it came out on the fortress side.

Q: How about Spiers? How was he as far as running things? I mean you had been working with Ben Read...

MASON: Spiers was very good, but he simply didn't have the clout that Ben Read did.

Q: He wasn't that close to the Secretary of State.

MASON: No, he wasn't. I guess after both experiences, my conclusion is that it may be better to have a political M than a career one, provided the M really has the clout needed. Most M's didn't have Ben Read's clout or bureaucratic skills. Spiers had more clout probably than some of the other political M's that have been and gone since, but it wasn't enough. He wasn't able to fend off other Under Secretaries all the time, or S/S. You really need tremendous clout to be successful, because you have to do things that the rest of the Department simply doesn't want to be done.

Q: Did you get any feel about Shultz, and the management of the State Department and Foreign Service?

MASON: I thought Shultz was a very good Secretary. He selected Spiers, but once he'd done it, he didn't keep up with it. And there was no structure to encourage that. In Ben's case, he attended a very small staff meeting every morning at the crack of dawn with the Secretary, the Executive Secretary, D, and P. That meeting set the day's agenda for the Department, and key decisions were made then. Spiers simply didn't have the organized access to the Secretary that he needed, and he never fully appreciated this problem. He ended up depending on other people there, and once you're in that situation you're really can't be completely effective because other people are getting between you and the Secretary.

Q: How were you finding the Foreign Service Act working out? Was that in your province?

MASON: Yes. The Act was quite new, so experience with it was not extensive. The Foreign Service was preoccupied with promotions, time in class rules, limited career extensions, the senior threshold and the "window".

Limited career extensions (LCE) were conceived by Bill Galloway (Ben Read's Executive Assistant) and me. Our theory was that management ought to be able to retain the services of particular officers based on the needs of the Service. This never really worked terribly well because no one was willing to concede management the right to select those officers. And, on the other hand, there's no way the promotion boards can select those officers because they don't know what the specific needs of the Service are. So it never was terribly

satisfactory. One semi-solution to this was to be that limited career extensions would be given to specialists because its easier to define the needs of the Service in their cases. I thought that was a good idea, but then was not possible to on what the specialties were. For example, is the civil air officer in Ottawa a specialist? He's classified as an economic officer, general. So he is selected out. He should have been retained as an LCE specialist. The Department has the authority to do that, but it was never willing to exercise it that way. By allowing the promotion boards to decide who got the LCEs, it robbed this provision of law of its management focus and justification.

The decision to grant all Career Ministers LCEs automatically further compounded the problem. The authority to grant LCEs was a new, needed management tool but it has not been used to retain people with particular skills needed badly by the Serviced at that particular moment because to have done so would have meant that Management was picking and choosing who would be retained and retired. That Management cannot do this on a reasonable basis illustrates why it is so hard to manage the Department and the Foreign Service. The notion of "the needs of the Service," and perhaps of service itself, have been lost.

Q: Did our union, AFSA, the American Foreign Service Association, play much of a role in management? Was it changing?

MASON: No, it didn't. Its constituencies are conflicting, and its management is not professional. I don't think Foreign Service officers make good union leaders. My personal opinion on that is that AFSA would be better off with full-time professional management -- perhaps using a retired officer as the president. Outsiders do not see AFSA as a real union. They see it as a company union in part because of the lack of sufficient distinction between management positions and covered positions in the Department and the Foreign Service.

With respect to the development of the Foreign Service Act, the AFSA people really didn't have all that much useful to say. It's not hard to see why because they have conflicting constituencies. They also lacked the resources to study the issues in question.

Q: You went to Ottawa when?

MASON: 1986.

Q: You were there until when?

MASON: The Summer of 1990.

Q: How did you get selected to go to Ottawa as Deputy Chief of Mission?

MASON: Oh, the classic way. Tom Niles was named as the ambassador, and he had been the Deputy Assistant for Canada when I was the political counselor in Ottawa. What happened was that Dick Smith, the DCM during my first tour in Ottawa and who had

returned to the Department as a Deputy Assistant Secretary in EB, called me and said, "I think you should go over and see Tom about being his DCM." So I went did, and Tom said, "Sure, I'd like you to do it." So that was it. I stayed in M another year waiting to go because the current DCM's tour there wasn't up.

Q: Tom Niles was a junior officer in my consular section in Belgrade many years ago. His DCM in the EC remarked to me that Tom was a difficult man to be a DCM for because he knew all the ropes, and he knew everything and he was a very hard worker, a nice guy, but...

MASON: He was not difficult to work for at all. He is extremely smart. He may be the smartest person I've ever worked for. But the way he and I worked...he focused on some things, and I focused on the rest. Tom focused on the Free Trade Agreement negotiations, for example, and that left a lot of other things. I also had two important advantages: I had served in Ottawa before and very recently so I had a good grasp of the issues and knew the Canadian players, and I had had extensive management experience in the Department and knew how to make things work. Most DCMs do not have those advantages. Because of them, Tom could and did leave the management of the Embassy, Consulates and many issues to me.

Q: I was not saying because he was difficult to work with, he was just so good in the EC thing Mike Healy(?) found himself sort of adrift because he almost felt...

MASON: Well, USEC is small and highly focused compared to Canada in terms of issues and management problems. I was responsible for management of the embassy, the six consulates, and much of the substance of what went on, with the exception of the free trade agreement. That was plenty of work. A mission like USEC probably does not need a DCM.

Q: How did you find, at that point, the operation of the consulates other than consular work?

MASON: Remember, several of those consulates (Montreal, Vancouver and Toronto) are major visa issuing posts primarily for third country nationals. So first of all, as a management problem, you've got that.

Canada is a very regional country. There was no supervising consul general, that was my business. Most of the principal officers were substantive officers by our choice because we saw these consulates as important reporting posts on their regions. There was at least one substantive officer at the largest posts, other than the principal officer, and they did a lot of reporting because it really did matter what went on in the provinces in terms of how things were going to go in the country. Quebec City is the most obvious example of such reporting requirements.

Q: Substantive in Foreign Service lingo is political and economic reporting.

MASON: Toronto is another good example. Canada is our largest bilateral trade partner. If Ontario were a country, it would be our second largest trading partner. But Ontario is also Canada's most important economic unit. The provincial government's financial policies directly affect those of the federal government. Indeed, the provincial government's economic policies can nullify those of the federal government in many cases (debt for example). As it happens, at present, the provincial government is not of the same party as the federal government, and the two do not cooperate well together. This interaction has important implications for the US and requires close attention. We have one economic officer in Toronto, that's all. It's crazy. We need a lot of economic reporting out of Toronto.

Q: You now have the Brian Mulroney government. Did you, having also served when Trudeau was Prime Minister, see a difference in our relations between the two Governments?

MASON: Many people say there's a big difference. There wasn't. Countries' interests determine their relationship. On a personal level, the relationship was closer between Mulroney and the President, whether it was Reagan or Bush than between Trudeau and the President. Mulroney and the President talked to each other on the phone all the time. Mulroney made an effort to cultivate the President. There was a theory in the Prime Minister's office, which I think says more about the Prime Minister and the government of Canada, than about us, that you really had to get past the bureaucrats, you had to deal with the top guy to get anything done. That says a lot about Canada, but it doesn't say much about us. That attitude led to very odd moments where we would tell the president, "Look, the Prime Minister is going to see you and here is what's on his mind." What usually was on the PM's mind was second order matters -- the kind we would ordinarily resolve at the Deputy Assistant Secretary of State level. On the other hand, the Presidents would put up with it. And this Canadian practice was convenient for us because it gave us a chance to get US-Canadian issues before the President in concrete terms.

Q: In effect, not pernicious, but basically the control. The president was briefed for it, the president passed it back.

MASON: He got the briefings from us. We would go around to External, and say, "What's the Prime Minister going to raise?" And they'd tell us. They had to if they wanted an intelligent answer, after all. The positive side was, when there were issues, this galvanized the bureaucracy in Washington to agree on what the president was going to say. So in that sense, the Prime Minister was doing us a favor, because we could never raise some of these issues above the general noise level. Some of these issues really were petty from the point of view of the United States, but they were not minor from the point of view of Canada.

Q: What about an issue that you must have had with Reagan et al. both your times, the environment, acid rain.

MASON: Acid rain was a very big issue throughout my tours there. Initially the issue was whether or not to negotiate an agreement to limit emissions of nitrous oxide and sulfuric

acid. Up until about 1980 the standard way Americans and Canadians had worked on issues that appeared to be capable of objective analysis was to form a technical group to agree on the data. The best example of this strategy is the International Joint Commission, established by the Boundary Waters Treaty of 1909. But this didn't work in the case of acid rain. There really wasn't agreement on the data, not to mention its interpretation, which was surprising to both sides -- particularly to the Canadians because they had good and sufficiently complete information. I discovered scientists were just like anybody else, and they're perfectly capable of twisting data, or interpreting it in a political sense. The net result was that we never did completely agree on the data about acid rain; its origin, and its effects. Personally, I think the Canadians were generally right, and many Americans thought so too. Anyway, we formed all kinds of groups and committees to study this issue to death and kept doing it over and over again. Over the years the weight of the data began to overcome the US position. The net result was in the end, we did agree to limit emissions in various ways, and we do have an acid rain agreement. But the unknown, underlying facts of all this are that most of the US emissions which create acid rain in Canada come from the Ohio Valley. They come from old electric power plants that are frequently using high sulfur coal. Most of these plants were scheduled to be rebuilt on the basis of new and higher standards and therefore their emissions were expected to decline in the normal course of events. But they were not, and have not been rebuilt. You will recall that at that time interest rates went right through the roof to 20% or more. Nobody could afford to rebuild anything. Who could afford to borrow the money? So all of a sudden they began to retrofit those plants. So the anticipated decline in emission never happened because these plants were still on-line, which made, of course, an agreement all the more important.

Q: Were the Canadians contributors to the acid rain problem?

MASON: Yes. But remember Canada is one-tenth the size of the US in economic and population terms. There's a rule of ten up there, it's ten of everything. They produce acid rain, yes, but nothing like what we produce. And as it happens, the way the weather works emissions from the Ohio Valley tend to go up the St. Lawrence Valley, and they tend not to come the other way. The largest single point source of acid rain causing emissions in the world, however, is the International Nickel plant, INCO, in Sudbury, Ontario. INCO has the tallest smoke stack in the world. The idea was that the emissions would be widely dispersed if emitted at such an altitude. It didn't work quite that way, and INCO's emissions have been detected in Rhode Island but not in significant concentrations. There's been a lot of work at INCO to reduce emissions. But the amount you're talking about is tons and tons of sulfur.

Q: Were there any other major issues while you were there.

MASON: Yes, the issue of Quebec's place in Canada returned. Quebec had never gotten over the repatriation of the constitution done without their consent. Mulroney, an Irish Quebecer, took office saying, "We're going to bring Quebec back into the fold, and we're going to make this right." He attempted to do so. His Government worked up an agreement

to correct the situation, and it failed. And a subsequent attempt to correct that also failed spectacularly. So the net constitutional situation was left worse.

The first attempt at a solution was called the Meech Lake Agreement because the negotiations were held at the Prime Minister's summer house on Meech Lake. The second attempt was made at Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. This latter effort came closest to success. But it failed badly in a national referendum. People voted against it for several reasons One, because it was chance to repudiate the politicians and the "political class." For various reasons, Canadians were sick and tired of the Quebec issue, and they were tired of the Mulroney government. Quebecers voted against it because they thought it didn't do enough for them. The other parts of Canada voted against because they thought it did too much for Quebec. The net result of all this was to underscore and sharpen the deep difference in Quebec and the rest of Canada. Quebec sees Canada as a partnership between Quebec while the rest of Canada sees all provinces as being equal. Quebec is further threatened by demography -- the other parts of Canada are growing more rapidly than Quebec and apparently will continue to do so. Furthermore fully one-third of Canadians are neither of Quebec origin nor of English origin, and they don't see Canada through the prism of its origins. The Quebec issue has sharpened, and indeed, there is now a national party, the Bloc Quebecois, which advocates independence, as well as a provincial party, the Parti Quebecois, which is going to run in the next Quebec election next year on a platform of independence. Their scenario is first to win the provincial election and then, within a year, to hold a provincial referendum on independence in Quebec.

Q: When you were there, you were seeing this movement and as an outsider looking at this, Quebecers can call wolf so many times and my guess is that sometime they will have a separate nation. You just can't keep playing that game all the time. But I would think it would be almost politically dynamite for anybody in our embassy to do what you normally would do, and that would be say, "All right, let's say Quebec goes. Here is how things might be." But the fact that Washington leaks, the American embassy is looking at Canada as maybe splitting up. Did you find yourself under constraints about talking about this problem?

MASON: Yes and no. There was a certain amount of anxiety that we could add to it if we prepared contingency plans. But a lot of reporting and analysis has been done on this over the years, and a National Intelligence Estimate was done in 1990. I did the first draft.

Q: Yes, but it could be embarrassing. This thing could be used, it could cause a flurry.

MASON: I don't think it would cause much flurry in reality, but we never did do any contingency planning. It's time to start.

Q: Did you have any problems with groups either in Canada, or in the United States, sounding off about, "Well, if Quebec goes, we'll join the United States."

MASON: There is a sizeable element of the population of Canada which has some degree of interest in joining the United States. If the question is, are you inclined to join the United States, 20% of Canadians will say yes. If ask that question in a hard edge group, 5% will say yes. But 5% is, of 30 million people, is still a real number. Oddly enough, the highest percentage in favor is in Ontario.

Q: Yes, I would think this would be the last place.

MASON: You would have thought the sentiment for joining would be strongest in the West, but the least interest is in British Columbia. And there is a fair number of Quebecers that wouldn't mind.

Q: You left there in 1990?

MASON: Yes.

Q: Then you came to your last assignment?

MASON: Yes. I had decided to retire.

Q: Doing what?

MASON: I was office director, Office of Environmental Protection in OES. And guess what? It was acid rain agreements again.

Q: How long were you there? From '90 to...

MASON: Early '91.

Q: How did you find acid rain from a different perspective?

MASON: Oh, it was frustrating because in Ottawa the buck stopped with me, in Washington who knows where it stopped. It was much more difficult in Washington. The number of agencies involved was large, and that Republican Administration was opposed to an agreement with Canada. They really only agreed with the greatest reluctance and under great pressure. They just didn't want to do it, so it was a tremendous bureaucratic hassle.

Q: We're talking about the Bush administration which was very strong on non-progress, as you say. What was the rationale behind this?

MASON: Cost, cost. The rationale was, a), it's not proven, and b) it's going to cost too much. Now, you can never prove anything...well, put it this way, if you waited to get the ultimate proof, we'd all be dead. So you have to make a command decision at some point that the data are sufficient to justify some action. And, indeed, that's the analysis that won

in the end. The Bush people agreed yes, we should at least take no action that makes things worse which was progress. I think in their hearts a lot of them probably agreed with the whole business too, but nobody knew where the money was going to come from for any of this.

Q: Was there anything else we should cover?

MASON: I think that's probably it.

Q: Well, thank you very much.

MASON: You're most welcome.

End of interview