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JOHN D. PIELEMEIER

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INTERVIEW

Q: This is an interview with John Daniel Pielemeier. John, when did you start with AID [Agency for International Development?

PIELEMEIER: I joined AID in the very last part of 1970.

Q: How many years did you spend in AID, altogether?

PIELEMEIER: I spent more than 24 years.

Early years and education

Q: Well, let's start off with your early years, where you were born, where you grew up, and your education, with an "emphasis" on anything that happened during that time that might have indicated how you got into the international aid business.

PIELEMEIER: That's a good question. I was born on September 7, 1944, and grew up in Bloomfield, a small town in southern Indiana, which then had a population of about 2,000 people. I was recently there with my son, who is now in college. He asked me: "How in the world did you ever get into international activities, living in a little town like this? It's in the middle of nowhere." I thought about it and said: "I'm not sure I really know how it happened."

However, as I look back, I think that the kind of influences that I remember included the fact that I loved to read issues of *The National Geographic Magazine*. I also collected stamps from around the world. I found international developments in general quite interesting. There were very few people in my little town who had ever done anything international and many of them had never even traveled out of the state of Indiana.

I think that one of the influences which affected me was the church that my family attended. I used to go to a church sponsored "summer camp" at which missionaries sometimes spoke. I remember particularly once, when I was probably a junior or senior in high school, hearing one of these speakers who, in this case, lived and worked in what was then the Belgian Congo. It was later called Zaire but is now the Democratic Republic of Congo. This speaker I remember was a fairly young, black minister, Jessie N'Kube. I was so taken with what he said that I decided to try to bring him to my town and arrange for him to speak at our high school.

I remember waking up in the middle of the night thinking: "This is a ridiculous thing to do" and thinking, "No, this is really something that might be useful. I should do it." This missionary was then living several states away from my home. I eventually was able to contact him and arrange for him to come. I'm sure that he was the first black who had ever spoken to our high school. Some people said that he was the first black ever to have been in our town in many years, if not decades.

Q: What was there about his personality that had such an impact on you?

PIELEMEIER: I really can't remember. I think that it was more that he was able to explain what was going on in the Congo, or Zaire. He had an enthusiasm about the potential there. He was interested in the help which people, working together, could provide to improve the lives of the people in the Congo. For me, that was an influence in terms of seeing that I accomplished something that I had started myself.

Q: What impact was the reaction in your town and your high school?

PIELEMEIER: I think it was quite good. The Principal of the high school took my suggestion and made the basic arrangements. He was very nice about it. The program went very well. I don't think that the high school in this small town had ever had a student bring in somebody to give a special talk. So that was somewhat surprising.

I started to think about going to college. I knew that all of my relatives had gone to colleges in Indiana or didn't go to college at all. Probably, out of my high school graduating class of 50, maybe 10 or 15 of us went to college. Maybe only five of us continued beyond the first year of college.

I decided that I wasn't going to go to Indiana University or Purdue University, the main state schools. I wanted to go to a college where they had a program of international studies. We didn't have college counselors in my high school. The closest thing to a college counselor was the former high school basketball coach. That is what some Indiana schools would do with former basketball coaches. They keep them employed as college counselors. The former coach didn't know anything about colleges other than those in Indiana. So I was on my own.

I remember going to the magazine rack at my father's drugstore, which also had some books. I found a paperback book on colleges and universities in the United States. I pored through that book, looking for international studies programs. I found a couple of colleges which I thought would fit the bill. I decided to apply to two of them. I remember my mother saying: "Well, what are you going to do if you don't get into one of these two schools?" They happened to be Harvard and Georgetown Universities. I said: "Well, it says in this book that Harvard has a certain minimum SAT [Scholastic Aptitude Test] score and some other things that are required, and I might not get in there. But the description of Georgetown doesn't say anything about SATs, so I think that everybody who applies gets in." This shows my extreme naivete at that point. My parents didn't try to persuade me to apply anywhere else, and I didn’t.

When I later received a letter from Harvard, saying that, due to the “unusual number of excellent candidates that year,” I knew I would be going to Georgetown. By some quirk, I was admitted to Georgetown, to the School of Foreign Service. That clearly was what led me to continue down the path that I was interested in.

Q: You were admitted as an undergraduate, then, in the School of Foreign Service.

PIELEMEIER: That's right. I was admitted to the undergraduate program. I'm convinced that they must have had a "small town, Protestant, 'set-aside program.'" for some people to complement the majority of the students at the Foreign Service School, who were Catholics. [FYI: This is not really true. From the time the Foreign Service School was established by Father Edmund Walsh, S. J., in 1920 or 1921 there had always been a considerable number of non-Catholic students admitted. At times the non-Catholic students were a majority of the total student body. In fact, the School of Foreign Service used to be called, "Father Walsh's School for Protestants." END FYI] Ironically, there were a lot of other, small town people from the Middle West who also came to Georgetown to attend the Foreign Service School. I got to know many of them and have stayed in touch with many of them over the years.

Q: How was the program at Georgetown?

PIELEMEIER: I think that Georgetown had an excellent program. It was a "stretch" for me initially, as I came from a very small high school. After a while, I realized that people from small towns could handle the program, too. Georgetown has a wonderful atmosphere, being in Washington, DC. It still has a wonderful program, although it has changed a lot and has gotten larger. The student body was very diverse. There were a lot of Latin Americans there who viewed Georgetown as the "Harvard" of the Catholic university network in the United States.

I think that the teaching at Georgetown was of very high quality and still is.

Q: Did you have any major area of studies?

PIELEMEIER: My major area of studies was in international affairs. It was essentially political science and economics. We received a very strong basic grounding in both subjects and took additional courses which had an international point of view and in an international setting. Those two areas were really the areas of concentration. International law was an excellent course. No sociology and anthropology courses were offered. I took an excellent course on comparative religion from Father Sebes, a Jesuit who had lived most of his life in Asia. A comparative history course for freshmen, taught by an extremely well known scholar at the time, Joseph Quigley, was a major influence on me and most freshmen. Essentially, he taught us how to find the essential arguments and themes in books and articles we read. There was a major stress on languages, including the oral method, using tapes. I found this system to be extremely successful, at least for me.

Most of the professors at the School of Foreign Service had a vast amount of international experience. The focus of studies at that time (1962-1966) in the School of Foreign Service, was mostly on Europe, the Soviet Union, and the United States, as the focus of most American colleges would have been at that point. Most references to the developing world were to Latin America - very little to Africa or Asia.

There were many other things that were going on around us at Georgetown. One of the influences which, I am sure, was important for my life was, as a freshman, I happened to learn about the "Lay Mission Program." This was a Catholic-based program which encouraged students to go to Mexico during the summer and do volunteer work. I became associated with this group and liked the idea. We raised enough money on campus to buy a brand new pickup truck. The fellow who came up with the idea for this program was a transfer student who had taken part in a "Lay Mission" program the year before, in 1961, when he had attended Notre Dame University.

We ended up with five young men going to a very small town in the State of Hidalgo in Mexico and four women working in health programs in Mexico City.

Q: Who sponsored this program?

PIELEMEIER: It was basically a self-sponsored program. The linkages in Mexico had been previously established by Notre Dame University. The five men worked with a small church in the State of Hidalgo and lived inside the walls of the church for the summer. The pastor of the church was an Indian priest. There weren't very many Indian priests in Mexico at the time. His mother, or "mamacita," cooked for us. We used that pickup truck we had purchased and a used jeep that my father donated to the program to go out and pick up huge stones in the countryside and hoist them into in the back of the pickup truck, bring them into the town, and then work with a local, Mexican mason to help build the walls of what was going to be a school. While we were there, we pretty well completed the walls of the school and helped with other aspects of the construction program. The local people paid the mason for his work and we did the rest.

Q: Did you know how to speak Spanish at that time?

PIELEMEIER: I had studied Spanish in high school and during my first year at Georgetown. Certainly, by the time our group left this village, we were all fluent in Spanish. We had to learn how to dance Mexican dances with the girls in the central square in this very small town. It was quite an environment for us students from Georgetown to become well acquainted with Hispanic and Mexican culture.

There were three or four young American girls associated with this Georgetown group working in a medical clinic in Mexico City. Most of these people, then young men and women, are still involved in international activities. Several of them are now living in Latin America. This program made a real impact on my life. Looking back, I am now amazed at how lucky I was to learn that the program existed, that I immediately decided that it was for me and finally that my parents agreed that I could go, rather than work that summer to help pay for my college expenses. As I mentioned, my father even bought a used jeep to use for the program, which proved to be very useful.

Q: That was a happy bond, but then you seized the opportunity.

PIELEMEIER: I might mention that there is now a National Catholic Volunteer Network which has an office in the Washington, DC, area. It now supports something like 500 volunteer programs, internationally. The kernel of that program was the Notre Dame and Georgetown lay mission program begun in the early 1960s, which has continued to grow. Recently, I happened to have called the secretariat of this organization. I asked when their program began. They said: "Well, we think that it began around 1961 or 1962." Some of my colleagues in Mexico, after they graduated from Georgetown, helped to establish a new national secretariat for Catholic volunteer programs, which is now the Volunteer Network.

Those are some of the influences which affected me. I know that at Georgetown we had a lot of speakers from other parts of the world and we were open to a lot of international influence in Washington. During the Kennedy era, international development was becoming more of a significant issue than it previously had been. International development certainly wasn't as popular during the Eisenhower administration. However, with the Kennedy administration came the establishment of the Peace Corps and the Alliance for Progress. Affected by the idealism of the era, a good number of Georgetown students served in the Peace Corps after they completed their undergraduate degrees.

I remember thinking about what I was going to do after undergraduate school. It eventually became very clear to me that the Peace Corps was the way to go. Of course, I wanted to use my knowledge of foreign languages. The one language that I really knew well was Spanish, although I had studied a little bit of French. In Peace Corps' tradition, they did not send me to Latin America, they sent me to Francophone Africa.

Q: What year are we talking about?

Joined the Peace Corps in Ivory Coast - 1966

PIELEMEIER: I was accepted by the Peace Corps in 1965 for two years of service that would begin after I graduated in 1966. The Peace Corps sent me to the Ivory Coast, where French is widely-spoken. So I prepared for this assignment. I didn't appreciate it at the time, but my parents were amazingly benign about all of this international travel and my going off to strange places. They had paid for my education at Georgetown, which is extremely expensive for a small town pharmacist to pay for. My mother worked at "the store" managing the financial accounts, handling personnel, cooking pies for the soda fountain, and doing whatever else was needed. My parents didn't say "No" when I decided to go to Georgetown but supported me. When I came up with "crazy ideas" of going to Mexico and into the Peace Corps, they didn't get in the way. They were a little worried about the Peace Corps because nobody in our town that they knew had ever gone into the Peace Corps and Africa seemed to be the most unknown of all places for me to go.

However, it all worked out well. We had a very good training program in Quebec [Canada]. I learned to speak French with the Quebec accent. We also had some training at Oberlin College, in Ohio. Then I went on to Bouaké [about 200 miles north of Abidjan,

the capital] in the Ivory Coast, for the last part of the Peace Corps training program. I was expected to be a teacher in a secondary school. With me were other Peace Corps volunteers who were going to almost all of the other Francophone [French speaking] countries of West Africa.

There were several people in that training group who have continued to be involved in developmental activities. I might mention one of them in particular, Margaret or Margie Weld, the sister of the recent Governor of Massachusetts. After she came back from her Peace Corps assignment, she married Jack Vaughn, the Director of the Peace Corps. David Bellamer is a noted African linguist.

Q: Is there anything about the training program that you would like to mention?

PIELEMEIER: I don't think so. I remember one embarrassing event when I was learning Djoula. I had enough trouble speaking French, but we also had to learn Djoula during our six week training program. Djoula is essentially a "market" language used in Mali, the northern part of the Ivory Coast, and the Sahelian states between Senegal and Ghana. I remember in particular learning the numbers in class, which were based on a set of five, rather than 10. This was confusing enough, and then I had to learn the words for these numbers.

One day I went down to the market in Bouake to practice my Djoula. I saw a Malian blanket that I thought I really needed and started bargaining for it. I knew enough in Djoula to say: "How much is it?" The Malian trader gave me a figure. I immediately turned around and translated and recalculated the number in my head, based on a set of five and trying to remember the numbers in Djoula. I knew that according to custom, the next thing I said had to be: "Oh, no, that's too much. You have to lower your price." Automatically, that had to be the next phrase in the bargaining process. So he gave me another price. I turned around again and tried to calculate what it was in my mind and on my fingers. This price seemed better, but I thought that even this second price was higher than I could afford. So I said: "You must reduce the price again." He said: "No." Then he said something else which I eventually understood to mean: "You give me your price." So I calculated a price and gave it to him. He said: "Oh, no," and repeated his price. I repeated my price. I pretended to leave and then came back to negotiate further. He never budged from his price and seemed rather exasperated by the whole process. So I didn't buy the blanket.

The next day I went to class and found out that the price he had quoted to me was lower than mine! [Laughter] So after this experience I became quite humble about learning an African language and using it.

We really weren’t well prepared as teachers. We knew a little bit about teaching. In my case I was assigned to a school in the north central part of the Ivory Coast, in a town of 1,000 people called Katiola. At that time in the Ivory Coast there were very few trained Ivorians, even to teach high school. Most of the teaching at these schools was done by French expatriate "volontaires" [volunteers]. They were satisfying their French military

service obligation by teaching in secondary schools in Africa. There were also some British volunteers at another school at Katiole. I was the only Peace Corps volunteer at this school, a new “college moderne.”

There was a very strict and, I thought, kind of "mean" French director of the school. He would bring me my mail which came directly to the school. If a letter had a Washington, DC, postmark on it, he would say: "Oh, here is your mail. It must be from the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency]."

In any case, mine was probably a typical Peace Corps experience. It was a little easier in terms of living conditions than a lot of Peace Corps volunteers, who lived in the “bush. For a time I lived on the school compound and then moved to the town, a few hundred meters away. Many of my fellow teachers were young expatriates, as I was, so it wasn't as complete an African experience as it might have been.

This was a useful experience for me. However, as I was teaching, I knew that it wasn't enough. I wanted to do something else. Peace Corps volunteers were encouraged to do other part-time activities in addition to their primary assignment. I decided that I was going to teach my students, who were about the level of 8th or 9th grade, how to teach literacy and health education, so that when they went home during the school vacation period, they wouldn't just let their fingernails grow. This is what students normally did, because their fathers and parents wouldn't let them work in the fields, since they were becoming "educated." I thought that these students, who had been drawn to Katiola from all over the country, could teach literacy and basic health education in their very isolated villages. This was the first time that they had been away from home.

Working with another volunteer, I trained a group of about 15 or 20 of my students to teach literacy and maybe another 15 or 20 to teach health education. During the summer school vacation period, I traveled all around the Ivory Coast and visited them in their villages to give them some support. I tried to give them some "technical" support and to help to deal with the problems they had encountered. Some of them had not continued to teach or hadn't gone very far in this direction. It was obviously a problem for them, as relatively junior people in very hierarchical and age-oriented villages, to get the village chief to agree that they could teach literacy or health education to adults. In some cases my efforts were successful, and we were all quite pleased with some of the outcomes.

Q: Apart from that, you were teaching English?

PIELEMEIER: Teaching English and anything else that the French didn't want to teach. I taught music and physical education with French as the medium of instruction, as well as six classes of English each day.

Q: Did you have a fixed curriculum or...

PIELEMEIER: We had a curriculum for the English course, based on Peace Corps materials as much as anything. The other subject matter I basically had to develop

myself. This secondary school happened to be fairly new, so it didn't have a lot of old books, materials, and notes around for teaching.

It was a good experience. Because of the requirement of working directly with the French and teaching a lot in French, it was almost inevitable that my French became fluent enough to survive. A Frenchman who "hated" Americans taught me French for a while. He would delight in picking on any slight flaw in my spoken French.

Q: What did you do about that?

PIELEMEIER: I stayed with him for quite a while. I guess that it was a good idea because, in the long run, it probably improved my knowledge of French. Unfortunately, one night he got drunk at a neighbor's home and yelled into my open bedroom window, "Do you have whiskey?" I was in bed and kept quiet for the first calls. Finally, I responded in French, "Yes, I have whiskey, but not for you." Silence. Then a large rock was thrown through the window. Luckily, my bed was not under the window.

Q: How did you find the students?

PIELEMEIER: The students were extremely interested in learning English. They were still vibrant and weren't at all "jaded" about education. Quite the opposite. They were a wonderful group of students. Their qualifications and their abilities varied significantly, but they were willing to do just about anything I asked them to do. They were generally well prepared for class. I remember this as being a very positive experience for all of us.

While I was in the Peace Corps, I traveled extensively. I traveled to Togo and Dahomey. I also traveled to East Africa during one summer vacation period, hitchhiking in Kenya and Tanzania. I tried to go to Zanzibar, but that was "off limits." So I got to see a little more of Africa, which also was intriguing to me.

Then, during the last year of my teaching experience, the story began to circulate among my students that I had gone to the "sacred forest" but without the permission of the village "witch doctor." In fact, I did go out to the "sacred forest" with "Petit Jean," an Ivorian who ran a little African restaurant. He wanted to show me some things there. He told me a story that when the French tried to build a road through the sacred forest, some little "gremlins" came up out of the earth and "blocked" the bulldozers. According to the Ivorians, the gremlins broke the plow blades of these big machines. So, the "sacred forest" was still there.

Probably a month or two after my visit to the "sacred forest," I contracted a form of paralysis diagnosed as Guillain-Barré Syndrome. The onset occurred at the end of the school year, just before Christmas in the middle of the night. I had strange prickly sensations up and down my legs and instinctively felt that I immediately needed to get myself to Abidjan, six or eight hours away by road. Eventually, it became clear that this paralysis wasn't going to go away. I lost all motor function in my legs and shoulders. I had to be medically evacuated from the Ivory Coast and never saw my students again. I

was told later on by some of my friends among the teachers that the story flourished that I was paralyzed because I had gone to the "sacred forest" without the permission of the "witch doctor."

Q: You didn't recognize the cause and effect?

PIELEMEIER: Well, you never know about the fine arts of poison and other things in Africa. You never really quite know why and how things occur.

Q: How long were you in the Ivory Coast?

PIELEMEIER: I was there for about 21 months before I was medically evacuated.

Q: What year did you leave the Ivory Coast?

PIELEMEIER: That would have been in January, 1968. I was there from 1966 to 1968.

Q: So what happened then?

PIELEMEIER: To be brief, I was medically evacuated to a US Air Force hospital in Spain, because the Guillain-Barré Syndrome could have been fatal. It is caused by a virus which attacks the limbs and also can attack the vital organs of the body. In my case the virus stopped before reaching the lungs or liver. However, the Peace Corps doctor wanted to get me where an "iron lung" was available, in case my lungs were also paralyzed.

After several weeks in Spain, I was transferred to Washington, DC to Bethesda Naval Hospital. After about two months at Bethesda, the Peace Corps terminated me. Luckily, my sister was a physical therapist. So, I went to Jacksonville, Florida to live with her. She helped a great deal with my physical therapy and gave me a lot of moral support. With her help, I regained much of my strength. I had to learn to walk again. I did exercises first in a swimming pool, where gravity has impact on ones muscles. I gradually was able to walk with crutches and then with a cane.

After three or four months of rehabilitation in Jacksonville, I found a job for the summer of 1968 in Philadelphia, PA, with a firm called "Trans-Century Corporation." This company employed a lot of former Peace Corps volunteers.

With Trans-Century Corporation in South Philadelphia and then to graduate school - 1968

Q: It was headed by Warren Wriggins?

PIELEMEIER: Yes, it was headed by Warren Wriggins.

Q: He was formerly the Director of the Peace Corps.

PIELEMEIER: That's right. Many of the former Peace Corps volunteers employed by that company are still active in international activities. I run into them every day at organizations like Interaction, World Resources Institute, and other groups.

This job with Transcentury was in South Philadelphia. The project was a HUD-financed (Housing and Urban Development) 100% "social diagnostic survey" of poor and lower middle class black and white residents of Grey's Ferry. The original residents were upset in part because people losing their homes due to "urban renewal" in northern Philadelphia were moving to South Philadelphia. They were regarded by the residents as "lesser quality" in terms of their education and social behavior and were "bringing the neighborhood down." The Transcentury project studied attitudes, behavior, and the needs of the Grey's Ferry residents. We also referred people in need to public social service programs.

We were asked to live in the area. My roommates in the run-down apartment we found were a Mennonite volunteer who had served in Vietnam and an "ex-convict" who had just gotten out of Lorton Penitentiary, named "Wimpy." Hiring ex-convicts for social programs was another "trend of the times." It turned out that Wimpy wasn't completely "rehabilitated," so we had a very interesting stay there! He brought along with him his common law wife or girlfriend, a former "go go" girl from Atlanta named "Candy." So we had Wimpy, Candy, and the two former volunteers from different parts of the world, all living together. Quite a scene.

1968 was also the summer of the riots at the Democratic Party Convention in Chicago. The mayor of Philadelphia, named Rizzo, was a former policeman and a "law and order" mayor. There were instances when I would be interviewing a family and would hear a noise outside. I would look out and see groups of blacks and whites on the corners of an intersection yelling at each other and ready to throw apples and oranges, if not rocks, at each other. Some also had weapons in their pockets. These fights were usually stimulated when the Philadelphia police would respond to a call and take away somebody accused of some crime, usually a black.

The situation was "extremely hot." The other circumstance which also made it "hot" was the fact that half of the people who were working on this HUD project were law students from Howard University in Washington, DC. They were essentially part of the rising black, intellectual elite, mixing with former Peace Corps volunteers, all of whom were interested in social change. We were working in a very volatile atmosphere. The attitude was: "Are you with us or against us?"

Q: I can imagine, yes.

PIELEMEIER: That was also quite an experience. I think that it was also useful later on. When you work for AID, you realize that there is only so much that you can do about certain issues. You learn that you have to do what is right at the moment with a "no regrets" policy about what your ancestors may have done in the past. Having spent two years in Africa with Peace Corps, I also felt I had paid any past "dues." The ex-volunteers

were generally not swayed by the “with us or against us” arguments of our black Howard Law colleagues and we tended to be pretty level headed about decisions the project had to make.

I succeeded, somehow, in getting admitted into the Graduate School of the University of Chicago after this project in South Philadelphia was over. I spent a year at the University of Chicago in a master's degree program, under the tutelage of Bert Hoselitz, who had written quite a lot on international economics back in the early 1950s and 1960s. He had had a stroke by the time I got there and was no longer up to writing. However, he was still running an interdisciplinary master's degree program in the social sciences. This broad program allowed me to take courses in just about any field that I wanted and that Hoselitz felt was reasonable. I did work in both Latin American and African studies. I took courses in the Anthropology and Economics Departments. I had almost total freedom to study what I wanted.

In terms of my career this experience did two things for me. First, it made me appreciate the value of extremely highly qualified, academic skills and teaching. Secondly, I learned how to find and interpret the best of the documentation available in the social sciences. At the time the University of Chicago really was at the "top" of many social science disciplines. There was just a marvelous, hard-hitting, tough atmosphere, a seminar type atmosphere, where you really had to know your stuff and had to know how to defend your views.

Because of the good education I received, both at the University of Chicago and at Georgetown, I felt that most people in AID missed a lot by not trying to take advantage of the experience and knowledge available in the academic community. There is good value in keeping up with the published journals, and using them to help determine what AID should be doing in any particular country or region.

The program at the University of Chicago lasted one year. I graduated with an M. S. in 1971 after finishing a master’s thesis. I had the opportunity to continue in Ph. D. programs in history or political science. However, I had had practical experience in the Peace Corps and knew that I wanted to work in the practical world, rather than in an academic situation. So I decided to seek my fortune somewhere in the development world. After working three months in Quebec, training new Peace Corps volunteers who were being assigned to francophone West Africa, I went to Washington and started hunting for a job.

Q: When was this?

PIELEMEIER: This was early in 1970. I remember looking in the Washington phone books, writing down the names of all of the international organizations I could find. Sometimes, I literally went from building to building, looking at the directories of firms with offices in those buildings to find the names of organizations that I had never heard of before. Often, I would just walk up the stairs and, unannounced, ask whether there were any job possibilities. With Peace Corps experience and my Georgetown and

University of Chicago academic background and because more money was becoming available for international development, it wasn't as hard as you might think to find job opportunities in that era.

For a time, I stopped my job search and went back to Indiana to work on a political campaign for a college friend of mine who was running for Congress. My friend won the primary election but lost in the general election. Later, however, he was elected and served six terms as a Member of Congress. Prior to going out to Indiana, I had left as my forwarding address the house of an old friend with whom I had been staying.

Joined USAID and assignment in Brazil - 1970

When I came back from this campaign in Indiana, the younger brother of my friend said that there were some messages for me. He eventually found some isolated slips of paper. One of these slips of paper had a phone number but no name of the organization. This is a true story. I called this phone number. A woman answered the phone but did not give the name of her organization. I said: "May I speak to So-and-So," and she answered: "This is she." I said that my name is John Pielemeier and that I had a message from her, asking me to call. She said: "Oh, yes, John Pielemeier," and she rustled through some papers. She came back on the phone and said: "I wanted to know if you wanted to come and work with us and go to Rio de Janeiro." I immediately said: "Yes," without knowing what the organization was. [Laughter] The organization turned out to be AID [Agency for International Development].

Q: You had obviously written to AID.

PIELEMEIER: I had written to AID and I had interviewed with a couple of people. Those whom I had talked to at that time said: "If you really want to get into AID, you'll have to go to Vietnam. There are lots of job openings in the USAID mission in Vietnam." However, I did not want to go to Vietnam. When I left the Peace Corps, I was called up for a Selective Service physical exam and was classified 4-F [physically unfit] because of the paralysis I had suffered in the Ivory Coast. In any case, I was not at all interested in going to Vietnam. So I thought that my chances of getting a job with AID were pretty slim. But the lady at the International Development Intern Program called me, as I said, and offered me a job. I readily accepted. It seemed like the kind of work I wanted to do and also Rio de Janeiro was a good place to go.

I had a girlfriend at the time. We were pretty serious about getting married. There was a serious question as to whether we were going to be married before I went to Rio or whether I was going to go down to Rio de Janeiro first as a single male to get married a year or so later. I had heard about all of the pretty girls in Rio and its beaches.

In any case, we did get married, and went to Rio together. My wife Nancy and I packed our few belongings and, after some excellent training from the IDI [International Development Intern] program staff and language training, we headed to Brazil.

Q: Was this the AID orientation program?

PIELEMEIER: Yes. I think that the IDI training program lasted for about six weeks or perhaps longer. I remember that the man who was running that program was really quite good.

Q: You mean Jerry Woods.

PIELEMEIER: That's right. Jerry Woods. There were several trainers in that IDI program who stayed with AID much longer and whom I ran into from time to time. They were wonderful people. There was also a good group of people in this IDI class. I have kept in touch with many of them over the years. Some of them have become AID Mission Directors and others have done very important work as agricultural officers or in other senior positions.

When we arrived in Brazil early in 1971, the AID Mission had 100 "direct hire" American employees. Bill Ellis, the AID Mission Director, and his senior staff liked the idea of bringing in IDI's [International Development Interns], so the Mission was full of IDIs. I went to Brazil with two other IDI's from my training group. While I was in Rio, there must have been as many as 10 IDI's in the mission at any one time. That gave us a young "cohort" to work with. Many of the other people we found in the Mission seemed to us to be rather old. By contrast, the IDI's recently had come out of Peace Corps and/or university backgrounds and a different generation.

The older people in the Mission were not the kind of role model we were looking for. We found that there were a lot of divorces in the Mission in Brazil and a lot of families breaking up. I found, in going out to dinner with people, that there was a lot of "backbiting" and competition. To my mind the older crew in the Mission, many of whom were close to retirement, was not very impressive. There were some people in the AID Mission who were impressive. Bill Ellis himself, the Mission Director at the time, and Bob Ballantyne the Deputy Director were particularly helpful to Nancy and me. Bob was a very warm individual and very positive. However, most members of the Mission had their jobs to do and were not particularly warm or interested in helping people from a much younger generation to break into the agency and get settled in a new location.

Q: What was the situation in Brazil at that time?

PIELEMEIER: In 1971 Brazil was part of the U.S. government's "Alliance for Progress" program, established by President Kennedy. The Alliance was beginning to fade from prominence. The respective offices in Washington of AID and the State Department were "co-located" offices dealing with the same countries and regions in the two agencies were across the corridor or next to each other, just as they may be soon, again. This arrangement worked well, I think. Phil Schwab was the director of the Office of Brazilian Affairs in Washington. He was very well known in Latin American circles and a wonderful guy with an extraordinary sense of humor. He had spent many years in Brazil but, because of a heart problem, couldn't go back on another assignment. So he remained

as the Brazil desk officer for a long period of time.

After the Brazilian military coup d'etat in 1964, the country received a lot of American assistance. There were several major programs which AID tried to establish. Overall, the AID program in Brazil provided well over $200 million per year in loan grants, Food for Peace, and local currency programs. This is probably equivalent to about $10 billion a year in today's dollars. Many leftists in Brazil found the AID program offensive. They considered it essentially a program with "imperialist trappings" supporting an unwanted military dictatorship.

Included in the AID program in Brazil was a major effort to reform secondary education in Brazil. This was denounced by the Brazilian left as an effort to indoctrinate Brazilian youth and substitute American for Brazilian values in the school system. The Brazilian left also opposed efforts which the AID Mission was trying to carry out to improve the quality of the university education system, which was dominated by the Left. One program was intended to improve the training for university rectors and to build an association of Brazilian university rectors, linking them to equivalent rectors in the United States in an effort to upgrade the quality of university administration.

I was somewhat aware of these issues. I tended to be more aware of them than some of my older colleagues in the AID Mission, because of my contacts with younger Brazilians whom I had met. The Family Planning Program was seen by the Brazilian Left as a completely "imperialist plot."

We had some dynamic USAID programs going on, but not without vocal opposition. One of the people that I heard a lot about, although I did not get to meet him, was a very young professor of sociology in Sao Paulo, who was starting up a small, development organization. His name was Fernando Henrique Cardoso and he is now the President of Brazil. During the military region, like many Brazilians, he had Leftist and very socialist interests and outlooks. He has over time moved toward the middle of the political spectrum and he was elected in 1994 as a "moderate."

However, remember where Cardoso and others were coming from. They had seen the Brazilian military overthrow a democratically elected government by force in 1964. There had been a lot of repression of the opposition, with many young people "disappearing" - not as many "disappearances" in Brazil as there had been in Chile, but there were many such cases. It was fairly natural for many people in the university communities to be anti-military and to see the US as supporting the Brazilian military regime.

As I said, the AID program in Brazil was huge. It extended to virtually all sectors of society. It did a lot of capital development work and provided technical assistance. It was responsible for some wonderful programs in Brazil. Major hydroelectric plants were constructed with our funds and major road building programs were undertaken. The whole agricultural research network was established with our assistance and became the basis for Brazil becoming what it is now, an exporter of basic foods, rather than an

importer. In terms of agricultural research, we trained hundreds of Brazilian agricultural scientists who are now the backbone of the whole agricultural research program in Brazil.

Other programs established included, as I recall, one called the Brazilian Institute for Municipal Administration, or IBAM, in Rio. When I returned to Brazil some 20 years later, in the early 1990s, it was still in existence. When I went to see the Director of IBAM, he reminded me that his own salary was initially paid for by AID. Almost all of the costs of his fledgling organization were initially paid by AID to help get it off the ground. AID supported IBAM for almost 20 years until it became fully self-sufficient. Now IBAM provides excellent training for municipal government employees not only in Brazil, but also in other countries of Latin America, often financed by World Bank loans

Q: Does IBAM have links to American institutions?

PIELEMEIER: Initially, there may have been. I think that the AID program in Brazil was quite effective. The quality of the program seemed to be good. We had hundreds of millions of dollars in local currency available each year, as well as money for loans and grants. There was a major food resource available. As I rotated around the AID Mission as an intern, including the "Food for Peace" office, I remember that there were at least five different "Food for Peace" programs dealing with such things as school lunches, maternal and child nutrition, and food for work programs. There were even programs to buy sorghum to feed animals and use that program as a basis for improving nutrition.

At that time the Amazon area was extremely remote. These food programs, such as a school lunch program in Manaus that I visited, may have been the only "donor programs" at that time to reach an area as isolated as the Amazon. Remember, this was the period from 1971 to 1973.

I rotated to different sections of the Mission as an IDI [Internal Development Intern]. I spent time in the Education, "Food for Peace" Program, and Capital Development Offices. I may have been assigned to a fifth office as well, but I can’t recall.

Q: Did you end up in some place in particular?

PIELEMEIER: I ended up in what was then the Program Office. Meanwhile, Brasilia had been built as the new capital of the country. The Brazilian Government was encouraging all of the Embassies to move their offices to this new city in the middle of Brazil. This was a red clay area with not a single restaurant to be found and a cultural “waste land” compared to Rio de Janeiro. There was no beach within 1,000 miles and hardly anything to do. The U.S. Government decided that the AID Mission would be among the first major elements of the U.S. diplomatic mission to move to Brasilia.

Of course, within the AID Mission, some of the junior staff went first, including the Pielemeiers, after having spent almost a year in Rio, the most beautiful city in the world. So we packed our bags and moved to Brasilia. We moved into what was called a "Super Quadro," (Super-Block) a big apartment building owned by AID, which housed all junior

and mid-level AID staff. It was a "compound" situation. This was about as far divorced from our Peace Corps experience and Peace Corps philosophy as possible.

I think that compound living worked out well for administrative and other personnel who didn't speak much Portuguese or who liked to live in an American setting. However, for some of the younger people this certainly wasn't where we were interested in living. It was especially hard on spouses.

My office in Brasilia was a combined Capital Development and Program Office. This was becoming a trend in AID. I worked on leading the project design process for an integrated health loan in northeastern Brazil, as well as some grant activities. To my lasting benefit, during my first assignment with AID, I learned the skills of a Program Officer as well as design and capital development skills.

Q: You had learned to speak Portuguese by this point?

PIELEMEIER: I had received three months of Portuguese language training in Washington. My wife received one month of such training. I continued language training in Brazil, wherever possible, but never more than one hour per day. Nancy and I tried to use our Portuguese as much as possible, roaming around Rio de Janeiro. We became fluent enough to operate in both "business" and social situations, without any great problems.

The AID Mission in Brasilia was much smaller than it had been in Rio. It was more intimate, and there was a better work situation. However, some AID offices remained in Rio, and a third office in the northeastern city of Recife. It was headed by Donor Lyon, who had been in Brazil for several years.

Eventually, the resolution of the Vietnam War became more and more of an issue, and AID wasn't sure where it could find the resources needed to support what was expected to be a massive effort to underwrite a Vietnamese peace settlement. As I understand it, one of the outcomes of that situation was a decision to reduce the size of the AID Mission and the assistance program in Brazil. In part this was because Brazil was growing at the rate of 10% a year, with our help. The US was the largest source of aid funds, providing more than the World Bank or the IDB [Inter-American Development Bank] combined at the time. [This reduction in the size of the AID Mission and program involved not small but large amounts of money.] Eventually, over a period of two years the AID Mission in Brazil was reduced from 100 "direct hire" American employees to 30 or 40 people in this category. By 1967 the AID Mission to Brazil was closed.

Q: Why was it closed?

PIELEMEIER: Basically, because Brazil had "graduated."

Q: What does that mean?

PIELEMEIER: In most countries this involves a combination of a country no longer needing resources from AID and AID itself having too limited resources to finance and staff all country programs. In this case there was an attempt to continue linkages between Brazilian and American institutions. For example, Purdue University had a long time relationship with Vicosa agricultural university in the Brazilian State of Minas Gerais. Efforts were made to encourage the continuation of that association, using a tiny amount of AID money. Agriculture was the primary area where those continuing linkages were fostered.

I wasn't in Brazil at the time the AID Mission was closed. I left in 1973 after two years. When I visited the country some 20 years later, in 1993, as the AID Representative to Brazil, I found that some of these relationships had continued even without continued AID funding. For example, many of the Brazilians who had studied at Purdue University were now professors at Vicosa University in Minas Gerais. There was an almost automatic, continued linkage which the Brazilian professors fostered themselves. The American professors at Purdue also wanted to keep these linkages going. They would try to find small amounts of money here and there to help to finance exchanges of professors and students as well as exchanges of technical information.

Q: You went back to Brazil many years later as an AID representative?

PIELEMEIER: That's right.

Q: Maybe we can cover that later, but let's finish up with this period.

PIELEMEIER: The AID program in the 1970s was primarily a government to government program. We worked through a central Brazilian secretariat in the Ministry of Planning. The AID Mission had some contact with private, voluntary organizations in Brazil and with other private sector activities, especially those involved in capital development type programs. For example, AID helped to establish the modern Brazilian stock market.

Q: Were you involved in northeastern Brazil at all?

PIELEMEIER: I designed a loan for an integrated health organization for three states in the northern part of Brazil, working with the AID office in Recife.

Q: What was your impression?

PIELEMEIER: Brazil was and still is a country of many contrasts. In the 1970s, the southern part of the country was already well developed, but the northeast was extremely poor. Most aid resources were channeled to the northeast for health, family planning, and education projects. However, some AID programs were nationwide in scope, and we had the resources to be able to handle them as well.

Q: Any particular programs which were memorable or which you found particularly

successful?

PIELEMEIER: I was in Brazil for only two years as an International Development Intern. During part of that time I was involved in helping to design the health loan in northeastern Brazil. I remember doing other things, including working on the "Food for Peace" program, working with education, and performing general program work. I was impressed that school lunch programs, using donated American food, were an important factor in encouraging school attendance in the northeast and in the Amazon.

Q: What was the health program in northeastern Brazil about? What were you trying to do in that?

PIELEMEIER: At that time the program basically focused on "primary health care," that is, trying to encourage a system of "outreach." Brazil was like many Latin American countries at that time. Most of the government spending for health was on hospitals in the cities. So AID and other donors at the time were beginning to encourage the establishment of medical facilities and services in rural areas, where most of the population lived. I think that AID was probably a leader in that effort in Brazil. Dr. Lee Howard, director of the Office of Health in Washington, visited Brazil and helped us with key issues in the new loan project. He was a very impressive and well respected figure in the field of international health. He looked like your friendly “family doctor.” The AID program in Brazil before I arrived there helped to develop the whole San Francisco valley, which is now the "California" of Brazil. This area exports fruit all over the world. AID helped to finance the construction of hydroelectric plants and the damming of rivers, in addition to helping strengthen various agricultural activities and structures in the San Francisco valley program and in the northeastern part of Brazil.

Q: Was there any pattern of issues and problems that you had to deal with?

PIELEMEIER: My recollection is that the most significant issue was the political setting. The Left essentially saw AID as being "in bed" with the military government. For its part the military government was becoming slightly more democratized and slightly more open by the early 1970s. The period from 1971-1973 was a very heady time in Brazil with a massive amount of economic growth. Brazilians were like what Americans used to be in the 1950s - very optimistic and entrepreneurial. Many people had ideas of starting a new business, constructing a new building, or going off to a new place and doing something different. It was a real "go go" time. At that time Brazilians emulated Americans in culture. They wanted to live in "ranch houses" and to emulate much of American culture. Middle class Brazilians in particular wanted to be like Americans.

Lower class Brazilians were left behind. Over time many of our programs tried to address the concerns of the people who had been "left behind." Many of the people in northeastern Brazil were leaving the countryside and moving to the cities of Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.

Along with a couple of other young people in the AID Mission, I wondered why AID

was not involved in urban development. Many "favelas" [slums] were being created or had previously been developed in Rio and other cities. People were pouring into the cities. There were very few services available for them. There was a great demand for community development and services in the "favelas" in those areas.

As newcomers to AID, we wondered why AID did not have an urban development program. Well, AID had never been oriented toward urban development. It focused almost solely on rural development at that time and for many years subsequently. We decided to put together a working group to draft an urban development program. The term we used for this program was "FUD" [Friends of Urban Development]. This shows how young and inexperienced we were, with no sensitivity to public affairs. FUD has a bad connotation in English ("Old fuddy duddies") and means something much worse in Portuguese. We made some initial contacts. The AID Mission Director gave us a little bit of money to play with. We sent Brazilians off to a few urban development conferences and did a little bit of training. However, the more we planned the clearer it became that nothing much was going to happen. AID/Washington and the Mission just weren't focused on urban problems.

The rural emphasis in AID was so strong that there really was no room for urban development. At the time, there was only a very small office in the Science and Technology Bureau of AID in Washington that dealt with urban issues. I think that Eric Cheywyn and Bill Minor needed that office at the time. They seemed to be the only people in AID interested in working with us.

Q: How did you find working with Brazilian Government people?

PIELEMEIER: It was not particularly easy. They were very bureaucratic at the time, not only at the central level of government but at the regional levels and in the states as well. Brazil has a federal system of government. Some of our programs involved working directly with the Brazilian states. However, I think that in general the Brazilian bureaucrats were simply bureaucrats, much like the case of India. They had copied the colonial bureaucracy without appreciating that the bureaucracy was supposed to provide services. Most bureaucrats at that time in Brazil worked for the government for only half a day. If they were doctors or lawyers, they had their own, private practices, where they would work during the afternoons. If they were teachers, they had other forms of activity to supplement government salaries. So Brazilian government service was, in effect, a part time job. Brazilian bureaucrats weren't paid very well, either. Maybe this was inevitable due to the financial and budgetary circumstances of the time.

One change that I should mention was that when Brasilia was established, many of the people who had staffed the federal government offices in Rio de Janeiro refused to move to Brasilia. So the jobs that they had formerly held became available. Who was willing to go to Brasilia? People from northeastern Brazil, for the most part. So there were many instances of people from the northeastern region who were willing to take the "risk" of going off to the middle of the South American continent to take up a job in Brasilia. Many of them may not have started very high up the bureaucratic ladder. However,

because they were in Brasilia at the right time and they showed interest and dedication, they were steadily promoted. When I returned to Brazil 20 years later, I found many of these people in very high positions in the federal government - people who were born, raised, and educated in the northeast. By then they were quite important and successful people.

Not many "new cities" in the world have succeeded as well as Brasilia. Nigeria and Tanzania have never succeeded in moving their governments to a new capital.

Q: Were there any class or cultural clashes or distinctions that were similar to the situation in Africa, including tribal differences? Was that an issue?

PIELEMEIER: Skin color was an issue in Brazil. There are people who say that there are only a few blacks in Brazil. However, there are others who say that just about everybody has some black blood in his or her background. Brazil is remarkable in that there is a wonderful mixture of races. Just about everybody has ancestors from more than one ethnic background. There are Native Americans and immigrants from Africa, Europe, and Asia. Large numbers of ethnic Europeans emigrated to Brazil. Prior to World War II many Germans, Italians, and Jews came to Brazil. Since World War II, Polish, Russian, and Armenian groups have immigrated as well as large numbers of Japanese and Chinese. The country is filled with immigrants from various ethnic backgrounds. Brazil is much like the United States in this respect.

The last thing that I should mention about that era in Brazil is that from the time the Brazilian military took over the government in 1964, they wanted to inhabit the Amazon area. This was essentially done for two reasons. The first was to secure and protect their borders. Brazil includes at least half of the landmass of South America, but the military felt it could not defend its Amazon borders. The military regarded some of Brazil's neighbors as "Leftist" and didn't want those influences to be contaminating Brazil. Secondly, the Brazilian government was looking for space for the poor to go to, especially those people leaving the northeast. They were increasingly moving to the south and continuing to overpopulate the burgeoning cities. The government was trying to siphon them off to the Amazon area.

Some initial work on Amazon development was being done while I was in Brazil [1971-1973]. I believe that AID helped with some initial studies of resources and opportunities for the development of the Amazon. I remember seeing some AID-financed studies in this area. However, I don't think that we had a major role in supporting this effort because at that time AID funding was decreasing.

Q: Are you referring to resettlement programs?

PIELEMEIER: Yes, I was referring essentially to so-called "colonization" or resettlement programs. A major road was eventually built into the Amazon, called the "Trans-Amazon Highway." There were also plans to build a railroad into that area. People were being encouraged to live in "poles," or little "centers" or villages along the highway. However,

the highway was practically destroyed after the heavy seasonal first rains. Many of these colonists, after they settled in the Amazon area, were essentially abandoned by the Brazilian Government. If they were able to produce anything for sale beyond their immediate needs, they were unable to get it to market. There were some major failures in this program.

However, over time, the Amazon population has expanded. By the time I returned to Brazil 20 years later I spent a good bit of my time in the Amazon, traveling to cities such as Belem and Manaus, each with well over a million people

Returned to Brazil 20 years later - 1991

Q: Well, let's go into your return to Brazil, 20 years later. Then we'll have all of your Brazilian recollections together. When did you return to Brazil?

PIELEMEIER: I returned in 1991, almost exactly 20 years later. I had spent the previous year at the National Defense University.

When I returned to Brazil in 1991, the AID program was quite different from what it had been during my first tour there. This time I was the only "direct hire" AID employee, compared to the 101 "direct hires" when I arrived in Brazil in 1971. As I mentioned before, the AID mission in Brazil had been closed in 1977. However, the program had not been terminated. It was greatly reduced and changed in scope. A residual program was being run by a State Department officer, on a part-time basis. I think that the Family Planning Program had continued on a very modest basis.

The Family Planning Program involved working with non-governmental organizations [NGO's]. The federal government had not officially accepted the idea of family planning, but it was desperately needed. AID was the only donor willing to work in family planning at that time. The program slowly grew. Howard Lusk, who directed the AID Education Office in Brasilia when I was in Brazil in 1971-1973, returned to Brazil to be the AID Representative in 1985. His office was in the embassy in Brasilia. He had a very small staff consisting of a secretary and, I think, a part-time accountant. When Howard decided to leave Brazil, I was working in the office of the AID Administrator. I knew that the position was coming open. By chance, I talked to a friend who had worked in Africa and who was looking for a new assignment. He said that he was learning Portuguese so he could work in one of the Portuguese-speaking countries in Africa. Knowing him well and considering that he would be a good person for the Brazil job, I encouraged Howard Helman to apply for the position and recommended him to my boss, Buster Brown. Howard became the second AID Representative in Brazil. I succeeded him as the third AID Representative of the new era.

By the time I returned to Brazil in 1991 the AID program had grown from about $1.0 or $1.5 million a year in 1985-1987 to $6.0 or $7.0 million a year. Gradually, it grew even more. I was not engaged in "empire building," but the total value of the AID program reached $15 million by the time I left in 1994.

Q: This was all on family planning?

PIELEMEIER: No. What happened was that the same philosophy was applied in other areas. Brazil was perhaps of the first, "global interest" country in the sense that AID can't really deal with family planning on a worldwide basis if you don't deal with family planning in Brazil. Brazil is a huge country with a historically high growth rate. Similarly, it was clear that AID couldn't influence global climate change if it didn't have programs in the Amazon. AID also concluded that it couldn't deal with HIV [the virus causing AIDS] and AIDS [Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome] if it didn't try to reduce the disease's presence in Brazil, which has the second largest number of AIDS cases in the world. So family planning, climate change and HIV/AIDS became the three programs that were the heart of the AID program in Brazil when I was there in 1991-1994.

Q: So our interest in Brazil was not in terms of the political, economic, or developmental perspectives?

PIELEMEIER: That's right. It was largely because we were interested in dealing with global issues, and Brazil was part of that picture. In fact, when I returned to Brazil in 1991 there was no US Government to Brazilian Government program at all, because of nuclear restrictions on U.S. assistance. Brazil had not allowed International Atomic Energy Authority access to its nuclear facilities for verification of standards. Brazil also had been delinquent in paying its debts to the U.S. government. Because of debt and the nuclear verification situation, AID could not have a direct government to government program. We had to work through non-governmental organizations, states, and the private sector.

Q: Cooperation with the NGO's wasn't prohibited by US legislative restrictions. Otherwise, our aid relations with Brazil were terminated as far as AID was concerned.

PIELEMEIER: That's right. So there was just the family planning program and the "Partners of the Americas" program, which is an American PVO [Private Voluntary Organization] dating back to the "Alliance for Progress." The Partners Program was very strong in Brazil and continued to function. When I arrived, I tried to find out whether the old bilateral agreement with Brazil still was legally in effect and to find a copy of it. We brought in our personal and household effects through the embassy as an Embassy Counselor for International Development. My status was that of Attache at the Embassy. The AID Representative's office was in the Embassy in Brasilia. None of our programs was approved officially by Brazilian Government. The Brazilian Government has a Donor Cooperation Office in the Foreign Ministry in Brasilia (ABC in Portuguese). Unlike other donor countries we did not work through the ABC. We basically obligated funds through direct grants or contracts or through "buy-in's" to Washington-based programs.

This arrangement gave us an extraordinary amount of flexibility. Once the other donor

countries realized our ability to work outside government-to-government channels with PVOs and also with the private sector, we were a very envied donor. We were able to act flexibly and quickly.

Q: Did AID permit this?

PIELEMEIER: AID permitted it. We informed AID Washington [AID/W] what we were doing. We tried to avoid doing things that AID Washington would disagree with. AID Washington just wasn't directly involved in most detailed program decisions.

Q: But AID had no objection to what you were doing.

PIELEMEIER: AID/W gave us excellent support. I even had to turn away Washington money for programs that we couldn't manage due to our small staff. The only area where there was any problem with the Brazilian government was in the health and family planning area. We were encouraging the Brazilian Ministry of Public Health to take up family planning programs, and they were gradually beginning to do that. However, they were still reluctant to work with the same NGO organizations with which AID had worked in the past.

Q: Why was there so much resistance to family planning?

PIELEMEIER: Many Brazilians came out of the university communities during the military regime in the 1960s and the 1970s with a negative view of AID. They retained this view and were now in key government positions in the various ministries. Some of their academic colleagues were still carrying this "intellectual baggage."

Q: Was the fact that Brazil was a Catholic country much of a problem?

PIELEMEIER: It's a Catholic country, but it's very much a non-practicing Catholic country. Unfortunately, abortions and sterilizations are the major methods of birth control in use in Brazil. We weren't encouraging either of those practices. We were encouraging the "cafeteria" approach to family planning by making other methods of birth control available.

Q: Then you think that the opposition came from the view that family planning was an "imperialistic plot" and that it had been "imposed" by the U.S.?

PIELEMEIER: The opposition came mainly from the old Left. We encouraged other aid donors like the World Bank to use some of their resources to encourage family planning. We very much encouraged the UNFPA [UN Family Planning Administration] to become more involved and more active in promoting family planning. They hadn't been particularly "aggressive" in promoting the kinds of things that we thought should be done.

We were originally the only donor in this field and, later on, were pretty much the donor

of choice in promoting family planning. I know that we were the first donor country to be involved in HIV/AIDS programs in Brazil. Our involvement in these programs began when I was in Brazil in 1991-1993. We also spent a lot of time encouraging other aid donors to get involved in HIV/AIDS programs.

Q: But the Brazilian Government was not...

PIELEMEIER: At this time strong leadership in connection with HIV/AIDS activity in the Brazilian Government was provided by a woman named Lair Guerra. Lair was one of the north easterners who entered government when the capital moved to Brasilia and eventually moved up to more senior positions. She had worked in the U.S. at CDC during her career and also had worked briefly for Family Health International. Shortly after I arrived back in Brazil [in 1991] as the AID Representative, she came to see me. At that time I didn't know her background. Shortly afterwards, she was appointed by the Minister of Health to be the Director of the Brazilian HIV/AIDS Program.

She was a very aggressive person and eventually negotiated a $100 million loan with the World Bank to help HIV/AIDS activities. With our relatively small program we ended up working with the Brazilian Government to design several of the components of a proposed World Bank program, such as the "social marketing" of condoms, working with the private sector on “AIDS in the workplace,” and dealing with condom logistics and procurement issues. These things would never have advanced to the point of a program proposal if AID had not been there. We worked hard to try to get PAHO [Pan American Health Organization] and the EC [European Community] involved with the HIV/AIDS programs.

Q: Did you have an AIDS testing program?

PIELEMEIER: No, at that time AID Washington had developed a specific methodology for AID projects, which it encouraged worldwide. AID worked specifically (1) with behavioral change through education, (2) with making condoms available, and (3) with STDs [Sexually Transmitted Diseases]. If you deal with these three issues simultaneously, you are likely to find that they build on each other and that will have a greater, overall benefit than you would have by dealing with any of them separately. We employed that philosophy in our new AIDSCAP program in Brazil. We stayed away from areas like testing, leaving this to voluntary organizations.

Q: You left it to people who were willing to be tested to determine whether they had HIV/AIDS.

PIELEMEIER: I think that that was the kind of issue that we tended to stay away from for political reasons. We tried to stay away from sensitive issues like this in Brazil.

Returning to Brazil, I was astounded to learn that condoms were unusually expensive - at about $5/condom - far out of the reach of sex workers and poor Brazilians. I learned that this was largely due to tariffs placed on condoms by both the federal government and

almost all individual states - in theory to protect 1 or maybe 2 very small Brazilian condom producers using Amazonian rubber. The tariff was placed on donor imported condoms as well as private sector imported condoms.

One night I had an epiphany that "camezinhas" (condoms) should not be more expensive than "cafezinhos" (tiny cups of coffee sold on every street corner). I talked to Lair about this using this "handle" and, to her immense credit, she agreed that we should try to get these tariffs eliminated. She said she would have to handle the politics, talking to the various legislatures, but needed a strong economic and social rationale that USAID would have to provide her. Using AIDSCAP $, we found an experienced economist who put together the needed rationale in economic and political terms. Lair said we needed to start with the Sao Paulo state legislature and if they could be convinced, most other states would follow suit, as would the relevant federal organizations.

USAID's task was to provide her with whatever technical information she needed to answer questions from the legislatures. I don't recall how much time it took but eventually, all of these tariffs on condoms were eliminated.

The AIDSCAP program had many sub-grantees, including small ones working with sex-workers and men who have sex with men. On one trip to Rio I was taken to a small office of one of those in a remote area of Rio. They were proud to show me their latest video aimed at convincing sex workers to use condoms. Among other techniques they recommended was - very graphically - to place a condom on a male penis using one's mouth.

My immediate reaction was a) I hope USAID didn't fund the production of this video and b) if Jesse Helms ever sees this, the AIDSCAP program will be DEAD. When I returned to Brasilia, I quietly asked my USAID project manager and was extremely relieved to learn that we weren't funding any video productions from this group.

Our office had an excellent project manager for AIDSCAP. My primary role in the management of our AIDSCAP project turned out to be often calling or meeting with either Lair or our younger and talented female Brazilian chief of party who seemed to be constantly at each other's throats. I think Lair felt that, maybe as a Nordestina, she wasn't sufficiently respected by the younger Paulista woman. I'm pleased to say that quietly and with some humor, I succeeded in helping resolve these tensions and issues throughout my tenure as Mission Director.

Going back to the family planning issue, we found, every once in a while, that there would be an article in one of the lesser newspapers which was a sort of Lyndon Larouche-type "plant." Basically, these articles would deal with the alleged "hegemony" of the countries of the Northern Hemisphere, the Atlantic Alliance "taking over the world," with Henry Kissinger at the heart of the effort. These occasional articles, also published in other countries, argued that U.S. family planning programs were meant to keep Brazil’s population small and therefore keep Brazil “weak.”

We discussed whether we should try to rebut these unfounded allegations, or whether we should simply ignore them with our colleagues in the press section of USIS [US Information Service] . After a while, we found that these articles would just "peter out," as no other newspapers would pick them up. These articles were, indeed, promoting a dying issue, which no longer had an audience in Brazil.

I think that the family planning program in Brazil was very successful. The HIV/AIDS program was unique. Both of them provided models for the World Bank and other aid donors as they began to build their own programs. The AID Brazilian HIV/AIDS program is still unique because it works with the private sector, with state governments in Brazil, and NGO's in the states of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo.

The third area which was "global" in nature was the environment program in the Amazon. It had been initiated before I returned to Brazil [in 1991], with help from Twig Johnson, who was the deputy director of the Global Bureau Environment office in Washington. He had been a Peace Corps volunteer in Brazil. As I understand the early history of the AID global climate change program, AID funded some organizations that were already active in that field and this helped to expand their work. By the time I returned to Brazil, AID was working with seven or eight American institutions, including the University of Florida, which was engaged in the most remote regions of the Amazon area. Other organizations included in the program: the Smithsonian Institution, the Woods Hole Institute, the World Wildlife Fund, the State University of New York, and one or two others.

I think that two, very positive things came out of the AID environment program. One is that these American organizations all worked through Brazilian Non-Governmental Organizations to carry out their activities. By the time I left Brazil, it was clear that we had helped establish a host of strong and capable Brazilian environmental NGOs working in the Amazon area. Not only did these NGOs exist, but they were linked up with each other, through the AID network.

We held an annual coordination conference with our environmental partners. At the first such conference only our American partners participated. At the second conference we also invited all of our Brazilian partners through our linkages. NGOs in the eastern Amazon were learning what NGOs in the western Amazon, over 1500 miles away, were doing. The NGOs traded personnel and research topics. They began to see this program as "their" program and they were truly pleased with it, because it was a program that was action oriented and not stymied by government bureaucracy. This occurred at the same time as the Brazilian government was pressing the World Bank for a major program supported by the "G-7" countries [a group which included the seven most industrialized countries in the world]. The G-7 program would provide $1.0 billion for projects in the Brazilian rainforest. Action on this government controlled program moved very slowly in contrast to the more agile AID program.

What happened? Well, our program, because of the work of all of these American groups, working in conjunction with their Brazilian counterparts, was making progress, and you

could see the results. You could see new, tropical products being grown and marketed. You saw degraded pasture land being returned to secondary forest conditions. We financed research on how timber companies could reduce unnecessary deforestation by up to 40 or 50%, while keeping the same profit margin. This could be accomplished by taking four steps in advance of logging operations: mapping the high value trees to be cut, linking the trees in narrow trails, cutting lines which connected high value trees to many others, and using smaller "skidders" to tow the logs out of the forest.

There were many things that we were doing that became models for the larger, World Bank and multi-donor programs that came in later. I am told that, even today, this continues to happen. So the prescience of the people who started that program and the skills of the really wonderful people from the United States research community, who have been working in the Amazon area, have been put to good use. AID has fostered this program in most years with no more than $2.0 - $3.0 million in funding - a very cost-effective program.

Q: What was the issue about the environment and the Amazon?

PIELEMEIER: The issue involved climate change. The question was whether cutting down the forest essentially meant reducing carbon concentrations, because trees are essentially "sinks" or stores of carbon. Cutting down trees increases the amount of carbon in the air and thereby contributes to global warming. The major ways to reduce global warming were to reduce deforestation and, secondly, to reduce emissions from industrial plants and automobiles.

AID decided to stick with the "green" side of the program, rather than try to spread our small resources to also address the "brown" issue of industrial and automobile emissions. So we focused on deforestation. Our program goal was to reduce deforestation in the Amazon. The Amazon is a tough place to work, but it is an intriguing place.

Q: Did you travel through the Amazon a lot?

PIELEMEIER: We had an office in the Embassy in Brasilia but we didn't have any "clients" in Brasilia. All of our "clients" were involved in family planning programs in northeastern Brazil, environmental programs in the Amazon, and other programs dealing with HIV/AIDS and with drugs and drug awareness in the cities of Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. So we were on the road a lot. I traveled a great deal, including trips to some of the more remote regions of the Amazon.

Q: You were following up on the fertility problem countrywide?

PIELEMEIER: At one time the fertility problem had been the only concern of the AID program in Brazil. However, fertility rates had declined in many parts of the country, and the family planning program was now focused on northeastern Brazil, where population growth rates were still over 3.5% annually. On the HIV/AIDS program we decided to focus on just two states, rather than on the whole country. To have an impact on the

environment, we decided to focus our efforts only on the Amazon. Of course, there were many other environmental problems in Brazil. However, given the resources we had available, we thought we should focus just on the Amazon, which is a big enough territory.

Q: Regarding the environmental program, are there some specific aspects which stayed in your mind? Did they work or did you think that there were lessons to be learned from what you had done?

PIELEMEIER: One aspect that was a big help was the idea that you can get American and Brazilian groups to work together through their various programs. These annual environmental conferences I have mentioned helped to foster that attitude. We would sit down with individual representatives from each of these groups for three days in a hotel and prepare "logical frameworks." We prepared a "logical framework" for the overall program. We approached the problem in that way. Then we would say: "Okay, you, SUNY; you, Woods Hole Institute; you, WWF [World Wildlife Fund] prepare your logical frameworks and think about how this fits in with your proposed level of achievements and relate all of your achievements to what we are trying to achieve here as a total program."

These groups found that to get to our overall program goals, they have to work with the other USAID grantees. They liked this approach so much that they asked to have a second planning session later in Washington to finish this collaborative planning process. They prepared their "logical frameworks" to measure their success. This really helped them to see whether they were working toward common objectives. We had a wonderful facilitator, Mark Renzi, from MSI, who helped with the planning process.

This experience was great. We encouraged a lot of "partnering" between our contractors and grantees. We would sit down with them every year and say dealing with deforestation or with certain policy issues, “Okay, what is it that we need and don't have in this program if we are to achieve this particular objective?” Basically, we tried to encourage them to come up with the information needed to decide where we would go in terms of the new program initiatives.

Q: Was there any other aspect, including a technological aspect, that you found was worthwhile?

PIELEMEIER: Some of my field trips to the Amazon were quite memorable. I recall one visit to a very isolated village in the state of
Amazonas where WWF was encouraging villages to expand their production of cupuaçu, a very tasty Brazilian fruit especially desirable as an ice cream flavor. Via WWF we had financed the procurement of a large freezer and a generator to store the liquid fruit until it could be sold. I asked a village leader how much fruit was in the freezer. He said "it's full". I asked why they couldn't sell.more and he said "we don't need to. We don't have any need for more cruzeiros". It became clear that we were working with a pre-capitalist economy where the only use for cruzeiros would have been to buy more cattle but they

had no more grazing land for the cattle. I also learned that the small Brazilian intermediary CBO linked to WWF had previously been a Marxist group in a previous incarnation. So, in summary we were working with a post-capitalist CBO dealing with a pre-capitalist economy.

On another trip to a heavily forested region of Para, we drove to a community that seemed to be full of smoke from dozens of family-owned saw-mills.This rapid depletion of the Amazon forest was exactly what we had hoped to reduce through the WWF program. I was surprised and pleased that WWF had found at least two owners of logging operations who had agreed to be pilots for testing several innovations in forestry production that WWF was hoping to expand throughout the Amazon. These included: 1) very careful prior mapping of a region to identify the relatively few high quality trees large enough for harvesting; 2) prior cutting of "lianes" that had grown from tree to tree and if not eliminated, would pull down multiple secondary (and unusable) trees when a primary tree was felled; 3) use of small "skidders"that could weave through the forest without destroying nearly as much secondary forest as the large skidders used by almost all loggers, It became clear that these logging operations were extremely competitive and the two working with WWF were viewed suspiciously as being linked to "foreign anti-logging organizations."

Our grant to the University of Florida focused on the SW state of Acre and worked with studying the lives of and organizing rubber tappers. Using graduate students such as Connie Campbell, the senior faculty involved, especially Professor Marianne Schmink, played a role in preparing the leadership of the rubber tappers such as Chico Mendes (assassinated in 1988) for national and international recognition. I recall that Marianne, a single mother, would stop in Brasilia on her way to Acre and drop off her infant daughter to stay in our home under the care of our housekeeper, a former nanny during her 7-10 days in Acre.

Dan Nepstad, then with Woods Hole Institute, did path-breaking research with "Dan's Holes" which he and his staff dug to explore the deeper and deeper layers of soil, carbon and pottery artifacts that had accumulated through the centuries. He, along with Penn State Amazon expert Chris Uhl, trained dozens of young Brazilian scientists, usually with a year or two at their home institutions in the U.S.

Our grant to the Smithsonian Institution supported their Biological Dynamics of Forest Fragments research project under the leadership of Tom Lovejoy. I spent two days there sleeping for the first time in a hammock.

Many of the people involved in these programs had been doing research in the Amazon for many years. That made a big difference. There was a tremendous "mentoring" program which many of them carried on with young Brazilian students or academics.

Several of the programs have developed a "cadre" of Brazilian scientists. In fact, one of the things that we established before I left Brazil was a new program to develop the “next generation of Brazilian Amazonian scientists.” Just as we had done with agricultural

research some 20 years before, AID took the lead in training a strong cadre of research specialists for the Amazon.

To find people to work in the Amazon, you have to provide incentives and a cohort of trained people who work together to deal with some of these really major research issues in the area. I think that it is easier to do this with grant funding than loan funding that comes from the other major donor sources. We saw this as one of AID's comparative advantages, and we pushed it quite hard.

In general, I think that the programs were pretty successful. The amazing thing is that they have been so inexpensive, amounting to about $2 or $3 million a year for all of the seven or eight organizations which we funded to stretch our money. We would require the NGOs to provide matching grants. For example, we required a 100% matching grant from World Wildlife Foundation for their program in the Amazon. And they were able to find the money from individual donations to WWF.

I think that the Family Planning Program continues to be relatively successful. People work very hard on that. It's a tough issue. The HIV/AIDS program was a very innovative program and AID, as the first donor to address this problem, provided excellent models for a future World Bank $100 million loan.

Q: What do you think were the principal features that made it successful?

PIELEMEIER: We tried to do two things. We tried to encourage the Brazilians to set up organizations to import family planning "commodities," which were very expensive when produced in Brazil. We supported private sector organizations to import family planning "commodities" and sell them at reasonable prices to state and local governments through some of our NGO [non governmental organizations] intermediaries. AID also helped by encouraging the introduction of new kinds of family planning methods. One such device, "Norplant," has very recently been approved. To achieve this result, a lot of basic research had to be carried out very carefully, but the Population Council funded most of that.

Q: What about the acceptance of the idea of family planning and a willingness to...

PIELEMEIER: Acceptance seemed to be no problem. There was a much greater demand for family planning commodities than there was a supply. Even in northeastern Brazil the problem was not necessarily increasing awareness of family planning practices. Except in rural areas, awareness seemed to exist already, certainly among girls who had gone to school at least for a few years and who weren't extremely rural in outlook.

Q: Do you think that education was a factor?

PIELEMEIER: I think that if you can ensure that a young girl gets three or four years of education, her life will be changed forever, in terms of her ability to see things differently.

Q: The best three or four years of her life.

PIELEMEIER: Yes. We understood that three or four years were the minimum time needed in school. Obviously, more is better. One of the other things that I should mention is that we had a very innovative training program. This did not involve sending people to university to get degrees. This program was organized and started up by a young Brazilian, Miguel Fontes, whom my predecessor, Howard Helman, hired. Miguel was about 22 when he was hired for this job. When I met him, he seemed to be considerably older than that, certainly more sophisticated, and had more presence. He ran this training program. The idea was to bring Brazilians together to work on a common problem, even though they came from different sectors and backgrounds. Sometimes, for example, in dealing with drugs, people in the Brazilian judicial system wouldn't cross the street to talk to people in the educational system. The same thing was true of people dealing with the health system.

The idea involved the use of "partners." We used this idea both in the "Partners for the Americas" program and the contract for training with SUNY [State University of New York]. The first stage was to identify key issues which weren't being addressed or were very timely. Then, whether the issue dealt with "anti-trust" or if it involved drug education, we would bring together key people to talk about what kind of short-term training would be most useful to them during a three week trip to the United States. In other words, what were their needs?

We would discuss their needs with them, perhaps in a half day session. Then, maybe two weeks later, we would have another half day session with the same people. The SUNY office would put together information on what kind of training was available, and how we could meet those needs through a program tailored for them in different parts of the United States. By the time they were ready to travel they had met together several times and gotten to know each other. Then they spent three weeks together, visiting these various locations in the US The last part of the training program involved sitting them down for two days and having them prepare an "action plan" on what they would do when they went back to Brazil.

In at least two cases this type of "joint action plan" resulted in the creation of new NGOs [non governmental organizations]. A group from Sao Paulo established an NGO dealing with drugs which was "cross sectoral," an NGO that continues to function effectively today. The same thing occurred after bringing together lawyers from throughout the Amazon area and other parts of Brazil. When they returned to Brazil after attending one of our training programs, they established the first Brazilian "environmental law" NGO.

We saw this training not as an isolated training program, but rather as part of our overall program, which we would try to build on after they returned to Brazil. We would provide funds to bring the people in the training program together even after they came back to Brazil.

Q: Why would they get together after they returned from the United States?

PIELEMEIER: After they returned to Brazil, we would bring them together and would also bring down a speaker from the United States they had selected, for example, to talk about "anti-trust" issues.

Q: After they had traveled to the United States.

PIELEMEIER: Yes, this would be part of the “action plan” they prepared at the end of training.

Q: As a group or...

PIELEMEIER: As a group, yes. There would usually be between seven and 10 people, at a maximum, in one of these groups. They would travel as a group during this two or three week period of travel in the United States. This was obviously a good opportunity for these people to get to know each other.

Q: And they were from all over Brazil.

PIELEMEIER: This would depend on what the focus issue was. For example, a group studying drugs in Sao Paulo would come from that urban area. The members of the environmental law group came from places which made the most difference in addressing national issues, from Sao Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, as well as the Amazon.

I tried to encourage the AID Training Office to take up this kind of program, using training money.

Q: Well, that covers your second tour in Brazil. You were there for how long?

PIELEMEIER: I was there for three years [1991-1994]. We had a lot of visits, including one by Vice President Gore, and one from Mrs. Hillary Clinton.

I would like to say something about working out of an Embassy.

Q: Yes, I would like to talk about that.

PIELEMEIER: We thought that we had a unique program. In effect, we were "forced" to work out of the Embassy. That's the way it was when I got there. When I called on the Ambassador, he said: "What you're planning to do with this program is probably much bigger than I had in mind. I want this to be a smaller program. I have received limitations on U.S. government 'direct hire' staff for Brazil issued in Washington. You are the only "direct hire" person, and there will be no other 'direct hire' staff working for AID here. We also have limitations on how many local staff we can hire. So we have to live with what you have presently."

Well, eventually, the Ambassador "mellowed" as he became more aware that the AID

program was doing good things that were appreciated by the Brazilians. We ended up getting one other "direct hire" US employee, a health and population officer. This was Jennifer Adams, who was wonderful. We were also able to hire a few more local staff. I think that we went from three local staff, when I got there, up to about 10 when I left. It turned out that I hired just about everybody who is there now. We gave responsibility for project management to Brazilians. We found that worked well. This took a lot more "hand holding" and a lot more editing, in terms of their writing in English. We had to be very careful that they knew what to do and how to operate within the framework of the AID regulations.

However, in an advanced, developing country like Brazil I could hire a Brazilian who had a Ph. D. degree from Harvard to help to run the environment program. I did hire such a person. This woman was a recent graduate in biology. She was "dynamite." AID was able to hire a person like Miguel Fontes. The salary levels in Brazil at the time were still "reasonable" [in other words, "low" by American standards]. When we advertised for positions, we were overwhelmed with applications. I think that shows that, in the right setting, you certainly can work with local staff and have them manage projects successfully.

On the administrative side we worked through the Embassy. They provided our office space and just about everything else, except that we had our own vehicle. We had no driver. We drove ourselves. However, Brasilia wasn't that big, and is so far from other cities that one doesn't drive a car out of Brasilia. You fly to other places. The joint administrative arrangement is called a "FAS" [Foreign Administrative Support] arrangement. Generally, this system worked all right. I was a member of the embassy committee overseeing the FAS. I had to spend a lot of time on it to make sure that systems were fair and AID got its share of the administrative support, without paying too much.

Another thing which affected our program was our philosophy of "concentric circles." We had a team approach. The core of the team was the AID staff. The immediate concentric circles included our AID contractors and grantees and other elements of the embassy. For example, part of our training program involved dealing with economic issues. I got the Economic Section of the Embassy to manage that part of the program. When we dealt with democratization, I got the Political Section to send somebody to an AID training course so that he could be the project manager for the democracy program. We didn't have the personnel resources ourselves. We tried to draw in other elements of the Embassy and make them part of our team.

We did the same thing with USIS [United States Information Service], in terms of trying to encourage them to know more about our program, so that we would get more PR [Public Relations] attention devoted to it. Many times we identified candidates for their training programs or they identified candidates for our training programs, because they complemented each other. Their key training areas were often the same as ours, on drug education, for example, since we all worked within the overall embassy strategy.

Q: I imagine that in terms of the democracy program they were trying to do the same thing in that respect.

PIELEMEIER: We were going very slowly on democracy and governance. We didn't have much money available, so we tried to do things without spending money. We arranged for a little bit of training and we tried to do a little bit of "anti-corruption" work. This was just getting off the ground when I left Brazil. Unfortunately, at the same time funding was being further cut back by the AID Latin American Bureau. There were clearly a lot of things that AID could do in that area.

In terms of the "concentric circles" idea we thought of our NGOs as part of our team, though at a different level. I think that many AID staff have a kind of "we-they" attitude toward contractors and grantees. They see themselves as being responsible for fiscal management and "keeping contractors or grantees in line." What evolved in Brazil was an attitude that the contractors, grantees, and other people were more a part of our team, and we still follow this practice. We were trying to draw them in to help us to achieve our objectives together. We did a lot of "participation work" with contractors and grantees before it became, I guess, the "fashion." This was because often the grantees and contractors who worked in the field were very experienced in Brazil and often knew what was going on better than we did. So we would try to utilize their ideas and their suggestions on the environment, AIDS, or family planning programs.

Q: In terms of your experience in Brazil, you obviously had two different perspectives. How would you compare and contrast the AID strategy in Brazil in terms of these two periods of time and how AID approached Brazil?

PIELEMEIER: I think that, in general, each of the various strategies was probably appropriate for their times. In the 1970s AID had an opportunity to be a major donor, and Brazil was the right country in which to implement a major program. While there were political problems in working with a military government, there is no doubt that the activities of that era really helped stimulate a long term economic growth process which has been reasonably successful, though there are still lots of problems.

Q: That program came out of the "Alliance for Progress"?

PIELEMEIER: The "Alliance for Progress" was one of the stimuli behind it. When the Brazilian military regime took over [in 1964], this made it easier for economic decisions to be made on a technical basis, rather than on a political basis.

Q: Was the rationale for such a major US involvement in Brazil decided on in the context of the "Alliance for Progress" climate?

PIELEMEIER: Brazil was the most important country in Latin America and, according to Brazilians, it still is. I've recently heard something which I think is still largely correct. If you ask most Americans: "What are the three largest economies south of the Rio Grande River" in terms of political units, most of them will start with Mexico. Then they might

say: "Well, maybe Argentina, Venezuela, or Brazil." Well, in fact, the three largest economic units south of the Rio Grande River are Brazil, the State of Sao Paulo, and the Municipality of São Paulo. Until recently, at least, these three political units have had a larger GDP [Gross Domestic Product] than Mexico.

So Brazil is the "giant" of Latin America. It is still very important from the security and political points of view. Generally, what I saw in Brazil during my first tour in the 1970s was generally successful. When I returned to Brazil 20 years later, I was pleased to see things that remained from that period.

Q: Did you see in your earlier period in Brazil any interaction between the AID program and US foreign policy interests? Did you get the impression that our security interests were trying to dictate what we should be doing or why we should be doing it?

PIELEMEIER: During the early period [1971-1973] I was probably too young to know much about that. In a very large Mission I wasn't privy to discussions of that kind. I think that most of the IDI's [International Development Interns] were focusing more on how to get things done than on broader foreign policy issues.

I think that the AID strategy in the 1990s is also generally acceptable and appropriate. AID is only one element, and a rather small one, in overall US foreign policy toward Brazil. There are probably 18 US agencies represented on the Country Team in Brasilia. It is clear that AID had a role to play and that the Brazilians appreciated it. I think that the Brazilians will continue to appreciate it.

Q: Did you find that the State Department was supportive of what you were trying to do in the fields of family planning, environment, and AIDS, or was it not supportive?

PIELEMEIER: I was pleased to find that under two different Ambassadors and several DCM's [Deputy Chiefs of Mission] the State Department was "right on board." State Department representatives weren't "intrusive." At times, especially when we got into democratization and some of the political activities in which they wanted to take a "front seat," this was appropriate. So we didn't try to "freeze them out." We tried to use them, employing both our skills and their skills. In general, I thought that the relationship between the State Department and AID, in the Brazilian context, was a good one.

The Ambassadors were pleased with our aid program. The Ambassador there now has been very helpful.

Q: Do you find that, even with a small staff, it's easy to manage a multi-million dollar program?

PIELEMEIER: Part of the management aspect involved "buying into" already functioning global bureaucracy projects in family planning and HIV/AIDS, so we didn't have to do a lot of the program development work, as we did on our environment and training programs. In some cases we worked through AID Regional Offices in Bolivia or

in Peru. We could do this when we needed their help. We also called in help from AID Washington for various things.

Q: Were you involved in making grants, negotiating agreements, and all of that?

PIELEMEIER: Oh, yes. In fact, there were times when I was forced to be the Contracts Officer because the AID people in the Procurement Office in Bolivia weren't sure that they knew enough about the matter and refused to sign the agreements. They said: "You take the responsibility. You sign it." So I would sign some of the agreements.

Q: Were you involved in the approval of projects? Was that decentralized, or did you have to send everything to Washington?

PIELEMEIER: Basically, we would handle program approval on a "strategy basis." For example, we developed an AIDS strategy for our new AIDS program. We obtained Washington approval for a five-year program. After its approval, we made all the operational decisions in Brasilia.

Q: Then you would design the project?

PIELEMEIER: Yes. We would design the overall program.

Q: Did that involve the traditional process of project design or did you have a complete strategy with all that you needed?

PIELEMEIER: In this case we were working with "sub projects" and "sub activities." The "sub design" of the activities was mostly left with the users themselves, NGOs, state governments, or private sector groups. They would choose and design the activities for themselves. We would set up the criteria for approval. In most cases we would have proposals coming in from many groups working with drugs or with AIDS.

Q: But this was a different programming approach than the traditional one, where you had a big project put together and then you got all the "t's" crossed and "i's" dotted before you could move forward.

PIELEMEIER: Yes, that's right. I think that the approach we used in the 1990s was more appropriate to a country at Brazil's stage of development, where Brazilians had the technical resources to design projects. Brazilian organizations can often do that, although sometimes, they still need American or European help for that purpose. I think that it would have been an embarrassment to use the old type of programming techniques in a country like Brazil at this stage of the game.

Q: Well, we can go back to this later one. Now, let's go back to when you left Brazil the first time in 1973. What happened then?

Joined the USAID/Africa Bureau to work on project development - 1973

PIELEMEIER: The AID Mission in Brazil was beginning to "downsize." I could have stayed on. However, one of the things that happened when the AID Mission moved to Brasilia, with its very sterile atmosphere, was that many of the spouses were very unhappy. It was a tough place to live.

This was also a time when women's consciousness activities were increasing. I know a group of women in the AID community, drawn from the contractors and grantees, including my wife, wondered what the hell we were doing there in Brasilia. They couldn't work because the Brazilian Government wouldn't allow them to work. And there was almost nothing to do in the new red-clay capital of Brasilia.

My wife decided to get her own international career credentials. As she put it: "If I'm going to traipse around the world with you, I'm going to get my own career." She decided to go back to school. At our request, we were transferred back to Washington. She attended Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore and now has a Ph. D. in international health. She works as a professional in that field.

In the early 1970s the Latin American Bureau of AID felt very strongly that any young person who went to Brazil on assignment should stay in Latin American work. First of all, at that time the Latin American Bureau was the "premier" bureau in AID. When I indicated an interest in going to Africa, they could not believe it. Buster Brown in the Latin American Bureau had found me a job in Washington and was very disappointed when I did not accept it.

However, I had a sense that working in Africa might be more interesting, I'd been a Peace Corps volunteer there and could speak French. I felt that opportunities to get greater responsibilities were more likely to be found in AID's least popular regions. So I decided to take a job with the African Bureau of AID and never returned to Latin America until later on when, as I have said, I returned to Brazil in 1991.

The African Bureau of AID was a very small bureau in 1973, but I remember that it had a lot of people at the very senior, GS [personnel category] levels and fewer senior Foreign Service officers. Africa was the "low man on the totem pole" in terms of its budget. An African personnel assignment was seen as "less prestigious" than one in Asia or Latin America. As I remember it, once you were working on Asian or Latin American affairs, you tended to circulate around those regions and not leave them, perhaps spending your whole career there. Every once in a while the Latin American Bureau of AID might "take" someone from Africa, but they would never "give" anybody to Africa, unless they really didn't want them.

Anyway, I chose to go to the Africa Bureau and began working in the Project Design Office, or PD, which was headed by Princeton Layman. Working with Princeton Layman was one of the high points of my career. Princeton had been in South Korea with the very successful AID program there. I believe that he had a Ph.D. and had very good academic credentials. He was very studious, very thoughtful, and a wonderful manager. He was

very good with people. He managed a large PD office, which he had recently taken over, staffed with a group of people, including me, who sort of "landed on his doorstep." He had to make them into a working organization and did so, in a marvelous way.

I remember staff meetings of the PD Office where he would make sure to say something positive about the work of everybody in the room, and especially the people who would not be recognized otherwise. I know that I felt that I was a real part of the organization. He always had time for people when he saw them in the halls, always had a good word, and was always helpful and available. I'm sure that he worked until 7:00-8:00 PM every day and sometimes later. I remember that at one point he and I decided to play tennis in the evening after work. The only time he could find to play tennis was after he had finished work, had gone home, had dinner, and had then worked a little more! Then he felt comfortable about relaxing. On several occasions we would go off to a tennis club and play tennis at 10:00 PM. [Laughter] He would get up early the next morning, ready to go! Princeton was a wonderful "mentor" and support for me.

I think that Princeton was attracted to the Africa Bureau by Sam Adams, the AID Assistant Administrator for Africa at the time. I never had much contact with Adams but I know that he was a great change for the African Bureau and brought it a dynamic vision. I think that he had been Ambassador to Niger.

At this time David Shear was also in the African Bureau as the head of the Sahel Office. Like Princeton Layman, David was a real dynamo. The bureau program seemed to be fairly staid when I got to the African Bureau. There were loans for the construction of bridges across the Niger River and other examples of isolated, capital development programs. There was not much TA [Technical Assistance]. However, it didn't take long for that situation to change. A major drought hit the Sahel area in 1974. With his excellent insights and planning capacity, David Shear persuaded Congress, with the support of Sam Adams, to provide special funding for relief, first of all, and then development in the Sahel area. AID had not had field offices for a long time, and perhaps never, in that francophone region.

There was a lot of activity. The program immediately started to blossom. People were brought in who knew something about "Francophone" [French-speaking] Africa. I was the Project Development person for the Sahel, the only person in Princeton Layman's office who dealt with that area. We were gearing up a huge program of relief and development, and so, as a young officer, I had more responsibility than I ever deserved and probably could effectively handle. However, eventually more people came along, and the exciting part of that element of my career was helping to design major activities in what were then Upper Volta [now Burkina Faso], Niger, Chad, Mali, Cameroon, and Senegal. At the time, we had no aid missions in most of those places and, sometimes, very little Embassy presence.

To deal with this situation, we put together large design teams. I led an eight-person team to Chad. There was a small Embassy there, but we had to go to Yaounde [Cameroon] to write our report, since there were no facilities in N'Djamena to prepare a report on Chad.

The Chadian Government had practically never heard of AID previously. The teams going to Niger, Upper Volta, and elsewhere faced a similar situation. We had to work with the French, who were the dominant aid donors, and the FED [European Development Fund], which was the French acronym for the European Community aid organization. Both were somewhat hostile to US involvement in this area. They certainly did not want the US to come in and take over their role as being the primary support for developmental activities and the primary advisers to the African leaders of these francophone countries.

We did some overall, strategic planning and a great deal of project work. I'm sure that many of those initial projects were not very successful, given our lack of experience in the region.

Q: What was the strategy that you were supposed to be following, or was there one? What were all of these field trips supposed to be accomplishing?

PIELEMEIER: Basically, we were trying to encourage the recovery from drought and to prevent further droughts from having such an impact. Some of the projects involved included working on new irrigation systems. Water would be husbanded and used more appropriately. Intensified agriculture and improved agricultural systems, including irrigation, were encouraged to make it more difficult for future droughts to occur. Normally, there are periodic droughts in the Sahel area. That was one objective.

Another objective was to improve the livestock system [to reduce the] loss of livestock due to drought. For many of the people, livestock were the major sources of wealth in the Sahel. There was very poor "off take," very little value added to these animals that traditionally graze the southern borders of the Sahara Desert. We sought to find ways to integrate the livestock systems of the Sahel area with faltering out areas in the rain forest and with coastal markets. Improving the coastal marketing systems and protecting the Sahel's food supplies were other objectives.

Some integrated rural development projects were designed. Roy Stacy was responsible for designing one of these projects in Upper Volta. Those integrated projects involved more general objectives, sometimes dealing with health, education, and some other activities.

Q: One other thing. How much did you understand the situation in which you were getting involved? You know, there was some concern that these so-called "parachute teams" would rush in and design a program, whether it was realistic or not. Was that a fair question or...

PIELEMEIER: We were the epitome of "parachute teams." There's no doubt about that. I remember that there were times when I was writing two or three PIO/Ts a week, preparing detailed scopes of work for these teams, selecting consultants, and then getting them off and into the field.

I think that we realized, and David Shear especially realized, the difficulties of working in this area. So he, and we in our project office, tried to "beat the bushes" to find people who had experience in the Sahel. We turned up a number of people who never had anything to do with the world of AID previously. Perhaps they had been anthropologists working in the area. These included Alan Hobin and Michael Horowitz, and others. I worked with a fellow named Bill Morris from Purdue University, who was a British agricultural economist. He knew a great deal about the region but had never worked with AID before. We made up for our shortcomings and experience in the area by trying to find people with experience in this area, wherever we could find them. We also tried our best to work with FAC [French sponsored African Development Fund] and the FED. The UNDP [UN Development Program] was extremely small. We tried to take time to understand what the other donors were doing and why.

I think that those efforts went reasonably well. When these projects moved into the implementation phase, they ran into considerable problems, because we had to have people with a knowledge of French to work in these countries. When you have projects in the fields of agriculture and livestock, you don't find many American "aggies" [agriculturalists] who speak French. So staffing these posts was particularly difficult.

At one point I learned that the project I had designed in Chad was about to be staffed and headed up by an AID employee who was going to be the head of the office. He was known to be a "total loser." I was so chagrined that the project I had designed was going to be headed by this "total loser" that I went to see William Haven North, the Deputy Assistant Administrator of the African Bureau of AID, about this issue. I now realize that it really wasn't "appropriate" for me to bring this matter to him. Nevertheless, I finally arranged a meeting with him and got in to see him. He said: "What's up?" I explained. He looked at me and said: "Interesting situation, isn't it?" He didn't say anything more. I realized that the conversation was now closed and that this was an issue that he wasn't going to deal with. [Laughter] So I went on to some other topic and eventually left his office.

I remembered that example. I had learned that when you are a manager, there are issues that are not worth your time dealing with, or are not appropriate for you to deal with.

Q: Well, you didn't know what to do.

PIELEMEIER: Or a manager says: "Thank you very much. That is your problem."

Q: Did you end up hiring this person?

PIELEMEIER: It wasn't my choice. The personnel people sent him out there, and the project failed. So that is what happened to him.

We did a lot of work and had to be fast on our feet. We went out to Chad, intending to design a herder-controlled, range management project in one region of the country. Six weeks later we left Chad, having designed a totally different project, because it was clear

that the project we originally had in mind wasn't going to be feasible. Those were the circumstances that we were working under. Staffing the various programs was quite difficult.

Q: There were also the big, regional projects. Were you also involved in designing those?

PIELEMEIER: I guess that I was involved in designing some of the regional health projects.

Q: I was thinking of the big agriculture projects, including integrated pest management and some of those.

PIELEMEIER: I wasn't involved in that. For whatever reason, I was involved in designing two major, regional health projects. One was an integrated health project covering most of West Africa, for which Herman Marshall was responsible. Then I was in on the ground floor in designing our contribution to the onchocerciasis program, to try to eliminate "river blindness" from the Volta River basin. Then there were follow up programs to encourage development in some of the areas after the larvae causing this disease had been destroyed. I think that it was during that period that I first ran into you when you were AID Mission Director in Ghana. Ghana was part of the region affected by the onchocerciasis program.

Also, Ghana was included as part of the strategic analysis for the "entente" states which I directed.

Q: How long were you in this position?

PIELEMEIER: Long enough for my wife to finish her studies at Johns Hopkins. I think that I was in Washington for about three years. Nancy had finished her master's degree and her Ph. D. course work and had also begun to do some work in Africa, related to a potential dissertation topic. We were very lucky that when the next "push" came in the AID African Bureau for new activities, we got in on the ground floor of that, too.

Q: Let's discuss this a little bit more before we go on. How did you find the Sahel to work in? You had worked in Brazil, which was a fairly sophisticated environment. How did you find the Sahelian countries to work with?

PIELEMEIER: I wasn't living there, so I didn't deal with it on a daily basis, though I visited what later became small AID offices. Often, I was on TDY [Temporary Duty] in Abidjan [Ivory Coast] and worked out of that regional office, the so-called REDSO [Regional Economic Development in Service Office. AID still mostly worked in that area with a very small number of trained, African cadres and with a lot of French advisers, who were in decision-making positions in the French speaking countries. So the atmosphere was very different from what it had been in Brazil.

Trying to train African cadres was a major part of any AID effort in that area. However,

many of the Africans didn't want to go to the U.S. for training. They didn't know enough English to do it. It was not easy to find training programs that would work. This was definitely an American foreign aid program being carried out in a region where we had little experience and didn't have much of a "comparative advantage," except perhaps in some technical fields. For example, we knew about "range management." The French don't even have a word for this, because there aren't any "ranges" in France. When you try to translate this word into French, it doesn't work out very well. Our livestock specialists from Texas or from Idaho and other places were dealing with issues in the Sahel involving the range which they understood fairly well. AID also brought a good deal of expertise on agricultural research to the Sahel.

We had a lot of technical information and knowledge on traditional agricultural practices in the area. We had a lot to offer in this regard which the French didn't have, although they were pretty good on water control, with ORSTOM [French Overseas Scientific and Technical Research Office] and other organizations.

Q: But you had seen that some of the projects didn't really work. Did the livestock project work? What were the problems?

PIELEMEIER: I left the area before I was really able to see these projects fully implemented. In fact, they were just beginning to be implemented. Many of these projects have now been going on for several generations. They were probably adapted after a couple of years of field experience. This was the case with the Niger cereals project, one of our major efforts. Later on, about 15 years later, Niger Cereals was still around in some form. The ORD [Office of Regional Development] project, the integrated, rural development project in Upper Volta, went through a couple of "redesigns" over 10-15 years. This was probably necessary, given the haste with which things were originally done.

I think that the livestock project in Chad didn't last too long. I don't know whether it was redesigned or not. Many of these projects went on for some time, but I think that their "cost efficiency" was pretty low. I'm sure that performance will improve over time with people who have greater experience on the ground and more knowledge of how things really work in that area.

Q: Thinking back, would you have done anything differently, or wasn't there really much choice?

PIELEMEIER: Of course, I think that I would have done some things differently. I think that we would have done better with smaller activities and projects. We went in with one fairly large, multi-million dollar project in each country of the Sahel. There is, of course, always pressure to "obligate" funds, special funds, involving special "earmarks." To get more money, you have to obligate the funds you have to show that additional funds are needed. So I'm not sure that the option of small activities would have been feasible, without essentially reducing the overall funding levels. There were some small activities related to drought relief called AIPs.

Q: They were "Aid Impact Programs"?

PIELEMEIER: Yes. These Aid Impact Programs were quite innovative in terms of their structure. Certainly, the documentation required for review and approval was much less. Financial reviews were much less detailed. The Sahelian countries could not satisfy any of the financial reviews that a normal AID program would have required of them, because they had, at that point, almost no trained personnel. However, the Aid Impact Programs were very innovative. They allowed the AID Representatives who went out to these countries to do some wonderful and very creative things. The AID Representatives handled these small programs by themselves, without major Washington involvement.

Q: Can you remember any examples, offhand?

PIELEMEIER: I can't recall any of these smaller activities. I believe that some work was done on the development of alternative sources of energy, which was beginning to be considered at the time in the Sahel.

Q: Did you have any exposure to the Club du Sahara, the multi-donor, coordination mechanism?

PIELEMEIER: Very little. It was just being established at that time. Dave Shear and Sam Adams were in the lead with that. My office was more of a project office and was involved in ensuring that our project activities got off the ground. We had almost no involvement at that level.

The Club du Sahara, of course, continues to exist now, more than 20 years later. Several institutions have been established, which were unthinkable in that era. It is just amazing to see what has been created and how it has been sustained.

Q: John, you were really in on the first wave of the program after the drought, with famine relief. The rehabilitation phase involved trying to get something moving. That was sort of a "rush period" to get things on the ground, I guess.

PIELEMEIER: This always seems to be the case.

Q: Well, let's move on from there. You were in Washington three years and then...

PIELEMEIER: Three years. AID had gradually become involved in a few other places in West Africa such as Guinea which were "Francophone" but were not Sahelian.

I should mention that I also had a very interesting experience in leading the first AID team to Cape Verde after Cape Verdean independence was achieved from Portugal. The Cape Verdeans, as well as the Angolans and Mozambicans, had been fighting for independence against a very right wing Portuguese Government, which was eventually overthrown. The new socialist Portuguese Government allowed these former Portuguese

colonies to establish their independence, which they were relatively unprepared for.

I was working on Africa. Since I spoke Portuguese, I was asked, or I may have volunteered, to go to Cape Verde with the first AID team. This was only two or three months after independence. There was a new, socialist government which was running these islands. The drought affecting the Sahel also seriously affected these islands. The Cape Verde Islands had a perennially low rainfall. Over the past century or so Cape Verde has exported about half of its people to Massachusetts and Rhode Island, in part because the islands are too dry and too poor to feed large numbers of people.

We decided that the best kind of program would be to deal with resistance to drought. We had food resources available, so we were thinking about a "Food for Work" program of some sort. A team of four people was put together to visit Cape Verde, two of whom were Portuguese speakers, myself, as I had been in Brazil, and then one other fellow, Jim Marr. We communicated with the Cape Verdean Government, essentially through commercial Telex, as there was no American Embassy there, and the Cape Verdians had no other means of communications.

Arrangements were made for a date for the team to arrive in Cape Verde. There are seven major islands in the archipelago. Our team of four people arrived early one morning on the island of Sal, where the international airport is, after traveling from the United States through Lisbon [Portugal]. The other three members of the team were fairly bulky people, wearing big coats and carrying a briefcase in each hand, with documents and so forth.

We arrived, and the Cape Verdean customs and immigration people looked at us and said: "Well, you can wait until everybody else goes through." I thought that this was because we had "official" passports. However, the reason for the delay was not that we carried "official" passports or that they wanted to give us special treatment in a positive sense. They just didn't know that we were coming. We were probably the first Americans to have arrived on their shores representing the US Government since independence. The Cape Verdean customs and immigration people wanted to show that they were "eternally vigilant." So they took two of us, myself and another person, off to a room and the other two off to another room and locked the door behind us. The authorities then said to us in Portuguese: "What are you doing here?" I remember that they pointed to a metal case on the wall and said: "Do you know what's in there?" I said: "No." Then they said: "Armas" [guns]. They said: "We take care of our own right here. Now, what are you doing here?" They clearly suspected us of being intelligence agents or something of that kind.
The question was how to deal with this problem. They had had no communication regarding us from the capital of Praia. I finally said: "I have a telex in my bag, if I can get to it, that invites us to come to Cape Verde." Eventually, we arranged for me to have access to my bag, and I got the commercial cable out. Meanwhile, the authorities were communicating by rickety telephone with Praia, and they finally realized that we were there legitimately. So they released us from our room and the other two guys from the other room. They took us over to an abandoned Portuguese Air Force base. We were sitting on the porch of a little building that stood on stilts, about six feet above the

ground. They gave us old bread and rancid butter for breakfast. There were chickens down below us, picking through trash. I think that this was just about the worst breakfast that I've ever had. They also gave us really "rotten" coffee. Then they took us back to the airport, where we had several hours to wait for the next flight to take us to Praia, the capital.

So the four of us decided to rent a taxi and go around Sal Island. The airport had been used by South African Airlines in the past as a refueling stop on their flights from South Africa to the United States, since the airline was not allowed to fly over Africa. There was supposed to be a little place where the beautiful South African stewardesses used to go and sunbathe, either in the nude or in skimpy bikinis. It sounded as if there was a good beach or some things to see.

We found a taxi driver and thought that we had agreed on a price for going around Sal Island for two hours. We went around the island and found the trip pretty uneventful. We returned to the airport and tried to pay the taxi driver. He said: "Oh, no, it costs more than that." He quoted a price that was about twice what we had bargained for. We felt aggrieved and said: "No, that's not right." We argued with him at the edge of the airport. There were passengers standing around, waiting to get on various planes. People started to be attracted by the argument. The taxi driver started raising his voice and eventually started talking about these "imperialists" who had come to Cape Verde to take advantage of him. I noticed on the wall of the airport a sign saying: "Be eternally vigilant against the capitalists and people coming to take away our revolution." So as the argument got louder and we had more of a crowd watching it, we saw a policeman and we had the bright idea of getting the policeman involved, in the thought that he would help.

That was wrong. We called the policeman over. He basically and obviously was on the side of the taxi driver. Nobody was going to be supportive of Americans in this situation. So we finally wound up, not only having to pay twice the agreed upon fare, but we were looked at in a hostile way by everybody at the airport. We finally flew off to Praia. As we drove into Praia from the airport, I remember noticing a lot of people playing softball. I thought: "Gee, has softball gotten to Cape Verde?" Later, I found out that the softball players were Cubans. There were groups of Cubans all over the islands. One weekend we went to another of the Cape Verde islands. I remember sitting on a bench with one of my colleagues in front of the hotel. There were two, swarthy looking men on a bench about 10 feet away from us. I started to hear a noise “psst, psst,” that seemed to be directed at us. I looked over at the two men and saw that they were trying to attract our attention. Then they loudly whispered “James Bond, James Bond.” The two men were Cubans trying to have some fun with us Americans.

The truth was that there were Cape Verdians who had decided to take us out to look at potential project sites. They would stop and say: "Let's stop here for a while. We want you to know that you should take this information back to the United States. We don't like it here. We have families in Massachusetts and Rhode Island and we don't like this socialist regime. We sure hope that the American Government can do something about this." So the government’s fears were not totally without some foundation. We were

unexpectedly thrown into a really "hot" political situation.

Q: Did you come up with a program?

PIELEMEIER: We did come up with a program. I remember driving over the tops of Cape Verdean mountains at incredible speeds and over roads with drop offs thousands of feet, straight down, with no railings and no gravel roads. We designed a food for work program that emphasized road building and terracing along the roads. As I understand it, it was generally a successful program. Eventually, a strategy was developed calling for greater AID involvement in Cape Verde, despite general uncertainty. Gradually, a program was developed, and we stationed an AID Representative there. Jim Marr went back as the first AID Representative there. There were several generations of programs which, I think, were reasonably successful.

Q: Were you there in Cape Verde for the start of the program?

PIELEMEIER: No. I was there for the first visit, which was the most difficult, because of the political situation.

Q: What was your next assignment?

New assignment in Southern Africa - 1977

PIELEMEIER: My next assignment was to southern Africa. My wife and I were ready and anxious to go overseas. The Sahel program there was pretty well designed and ready to go into the implementation stage. About that time there were riots occurring in South Africa, related to Soweto.

Q: What year was this?

PIELEMEIER: That would have been about 1976 or 1977. Young people were flowing out of South Africa and into neighboring countries such as Botswana, Swaziland, and Lesotho, especially. There was a growing refugee support program, initially, I think, with help from the UNHCR [UN High Commission for Refugees]. However, the U.S. Government also wanted to help the refugees. As tensions mounted in South Africa, pressures on the neighboring states grew. These were small states, and their economies were being taxed because they were handling an increasing number of refugees. So donor country assistance was sought, and AID became involved.

I was assigned to a regional job in Southern Africa. I was stationed in Botswana. The regional office was in Swaziland. I was the only "regional" AID person in Botswana.

Office of Southern Africa Regional Coordinator [OSARC]

Q: This was under the OSARC program?

PIELEMEIER: Yes. As I understand it, the unusual location was because the American Ambassador under whom we served was accredited to three countries. He was resident in Botswana and he wanted some additional representation in Botswana, which was actually more important politically in the southern African context than Swaziland or Lesotho.

So I was assigned to Botswana. It was a wonderful assignment. As a Regional Project Design Officer, I traveled throughout the region. There was a lot of money available and a lot of project design to be done, not just for dealing with refugees but also with development activities in the region. AID's programs grew rapidly. Part of the challenge in this job was to move across the region without getting "hung up" in South Africa, where travel restrictions and police controls were very tight, as you might imagine. Petrol [gasoline] was controlled and hard to come by.

I can remember more than one time when I had to get special permits to buy gasoline on a weekend because, let's say, I had finished a job in Lesotho and was traveling by car back to Botswana. Driving was much easier than taking two different plane rides through Johannesburg, changing flights and so forth. It was easier just to drive back to Botswana. Often, I would have to get special permission from the local magistrate's office to buy gasoline and sometimes to travel at night.

There were times when it was pretty "chancy." A lot of the Afrikaner magistrates in the small towns were not necessarily excited about having English speaking or American "expatriates" come to the region and then clearly doing something to help the countries bordering on South Africa. So they sometimes made things difficult for us.

I remember one particular time when I was driving back from Lesotho to Botswana. The border closed every evening at a certain hour, when you were going into Botswana and leaving South Africa. Usually, the border would be closed at 7:00 PM, although it seemed that some of the border stations, somewhat surprisingly, closed at different times. I was driving back to Botswana in a rental car that I had picked up. It turned out that when I started driving it, it developed some problems. One of them was that the windshield wipers didn't work. Another problem was that when I got up to a certain speed, the dashboard started "beeping" in red. It was clear that the car wasn't meant to go at that kind of speed. Nevertheless, I had to go at that speed to be able to get to the border on time and before it closed. At this point, it started to rain, and I was on a muddy road. [Laughter] I was going through one of the then ethnic "homelands." Finally, after racing along through homeland, I came to the border post at the entrance into Botswana. I think that it was five minutes before the border post was supposed to close, according to what I understood. It turned out that I had the time wrong, and the border post had already closed.

However, there was a road paralleling the Botswana-South Africa border on the South African side. This road led to another border post. A person at the first border post said that the other border post would be open for another half hour, if I could get there. It was about a 30 minute drive to the other border post. So I raced along with my dashboard "beeping" at me and trying to see through the rain, without the help of the windshield

wipers, on another, muddy road.

I turned a corner and found two huge, camouflaged, strange, semi-military vehicles blocking the road. The vehicles belonged to the South African military forces, operating on the border with Botswana. They were very surprised to see me driving along the road. They flagged me down, stopped me, made me get out of the car, and began to search it. I knew that this would take some time and clearly would make it impossible for me to get to the other border post on time. The young men in this military detachment were speaking Afrikaans together and dressed in camouflage-type uniforms. I had the sense that they were "tough guys." They were big, strong fellows. So I made my case that if they searched the car and took everything out, I would have no chance to make it to the other border post on time. So they said quite nicely: "That's quite all right. We'll give you a note which you can give the people at the border, and that will get you through without any problems." They seemed to take a very positive attitude toward all of this.

So I got back in the car and started to drive off. One of the soldiers yelled at me in broken English as I moved away: "Burn it, baby, burn it!" I raced down this road and came to the other border post. It was, indeed, still open. The people at the border post were processing my papers, and it looked as if everything was going smoothly. I thought about it and then pulled out the piece of paper which the South African military people had given me, written in Afrikaans. Then everything stopped. They came out and totally searched my car! [Laughter] They took everything out of the car, found nothing, of course, that was "incriminating," and allowed me to pass into Botswana. As I learned later, the note essentially said: "We didn't search this guy. You people do it."

In any case there were other occasions which were not as happy with colleagues and other people. South Africa was a tough place to work. However, I think that the programs were good ones.

Q: What kind of programs were you designing?

PIELEMEIER: A variety of programs. For example, one project involved designing and building a road around the southern perimeter of Lesotho, which would give access into the mountains of that country and essentially open up a whole region to markets and to make their products available elsewhere. Lesotho was a very poor country at that time. Its people wore blankets around their shoulders and rode horses through the mountains. They were a very picturesque people but very poor. We also designed several agricultural projects.

Q: What was the rationale for the road and these regional projects?

PIELEMEIER: Within the OSARC area, the projects no longer had to be regional in scope. The programs could be important for any of the three countries themselves. They were simply funded out of a common "pot." That differentiation was clarified later as it became clear that other and more permanent programs were being designed and that separate AID Missions would be required in each of the countries. In fact, AID Missions

were set up in these countries within the following two years.

Q: What happened to them?

PIELEMEIER: The road projects worked well. I did the design work on them. It was fascinating, working primarily with a man from Ethiopia who was the Permanent Secretary of Public Works in Lesotho. Manpower was so short that they imported expatriates, in this case an African expatriate. We had to work through a difficult session with the Ambassador, who wanted the road involved to be built "today." He didn't want to go through the normal design process. In part because of some of the complications that resulted from that, there were some "hiccups" along the way and some claims afterwards. However, the road was built and, I am told, is a surfaced, all-weather road.

Q: Were there some issues involving costs?

PIELEMEIER: There were, and there were some issues about how much design is required before you move into the construction phase. That was the issue that related to the Ambassador, who wanted to skip as many steps as possible in the normal process of design and detailed engineering before we moved into the construction phase.

Q: Do you remember where this road went and what the names of the places involved were?

PIELEMEIER: I don't. The road went from just South of Maseru [capital of Lesotho] in an arc paralleling but essentially just inside the border between Lesotho and South Africa.

Q: Did the road go to Quacha's Nek?

PIELEMEIER: Yes! Very good. The road did go to Quacha's Nek. Were you ever there?

Q: Yes, I once visited Quacha's Nek.

PIELEMEIER: When did you go?

Q: We'll come to that later. At any rate...

PIELEMEIER: That's a fascinating area.

As I remember, in Lesotho there were range management projects dealing with livestock. There were health projects, and there were some educational activities. For refugees AID mostly helped with the construction of hostels for refugees. That was, I think, a contribution to a UN fund, which made it easier.

There were projects in Swaziland. At that time Swaziland was relatively better off. It was also a very traditional kingdom and was not as receptive to some of the newer ideas which the donor countries wanted to move forward with.

Q: Do you remember anything more about the agricultural products, for example, and what they were trying to do?

PIELEMEIER: Range management in Lesotho primarily dealt with range issues and conservation, because of the hill sides and the overgrazing that was occurring, with increasing animal populations. Hillsides were being denuded. Men in Lesotho would go off to South Africa to work. Almost all of them worked in South Africa. They would send back money to their families, and the money would be "banked" essentially in cattle. The people would bank the money and purchase more cattle. The cattle were herded by young boys in particular. Sometimes, even young women would herd the cattle on the hillsides. However, the number of cattle was increasing because more revenue was coming back from South Africa. Range management was really very critical in Lesotho.

In Botswana we had a difficult time obtaining permission to do anything in the agricultural area. AID was a "new donor." The British essentially had a "hammer lock" on the aid donor community and on the Botswana Government's decisions regarding the donors. This is a good example of how you get yourself involved in such activities. My predecessor was unable to "get us in the door" in Botswana to deal with rural development or agriculture, which had critical problems. The rainfall in Botswana was very low, and there was a lot that American technology could do to help with this problem.

We had to go through a British expatriate, who was very well known and who was a compatriot of Robert Chambers, who was also well known in East African circles. This British expatriate had worked in Kenya and in Tanzania with Chambers and others. He felt that he knew what should be done for rural development in Botswana. He was in a key "line" position in the Botswana Ministry of Planning.

Ironically, the way we found our way through the door, so to speak, was that I was reading some academic journals. I found an article dealing with the time when this British expatriate had served in Kenya and was a co-author of an article on the subject. A couple of the other authors of this article were Americans. Among the co-authors I recognized the names of people who were associated with one of the Washington consulting firms, DAI. I contacted the people at DAI. They said that they knew this British expatriate and had had a good relationship with him. They said that they would, of course, be interested in working in Botswana.

I went to see this British expatriate, who said: "Well, American expertise is just not up to it. You don't have the experience that we have in Africa and can get from other sources." I said: "Well, I think that we can bring some real experts, including people whom you may know." Then I rattled off the names of two or three of these Americans with whom he had worked in Kenya with DAI. His attitude changed completely. Within a week we had a request for assistance from him! It's sometimes amazing how you find an opening.

Q: Was the health project in Botswana?

PIELEMEIER: That project was in Botswana. The manpower capacity in Botswana was very limited. Botswana came to independence very late. The British had hoped to keep these countries [Botswana, Lesotho, and Swaziland] as protectorates, essentially to protect them from the apartheid regime in South Africa. The British felt that if these three countries became independent, they might easily be overrun, essentially economically or politically, by their larger neighbor, South Africa. So it was only relatively late in the game, in the African timetable, that the British began training significant numbers of people to become civil servants.

Many AID programs were initially aimed at bolstering the civil service. In the health field there was training of nurses and "mid-level" personnel throughout the health system. That was a critical project.

Q: How did you find the health establishment to work with?

PIELEMEIER: We found it "fractious." We found people ensconced in senior positions who were old "enemies" of other local people in other positions. Trying to weave ourselves through the resulting difficulties was probably beyond our cultural capacity. [Laughter] So it was very hard, and there were problems.

One interesting and very successful project in the region was already functioning when I arrived. This project involved bringing in expatriates and placing them in operational positions in the Botswanan Government. They were called the OPEX program, or Operational Experts Program. The individuals so involved were charged with identifying local individuals who would eventually replace the "expatriates." In such cases we would send a Botswanan off for training in the United States on a special program, probably to obtain a master's degree. The person would come back to Botswana two years later. Then, after six to 12 months working with the expatriate, he would eventually replace him. There were several advantages to this program. First, it was based on a government request which said that they truly wanted an expatriate in these positions. The expatriates weren't "forced" on the governments in any way. Government officials had a chance to review the candidates. Often they interviewed several candidates directly. This tended to provide an infusion of fresh and often fairly young "blood" into these programs.

Some of the people working on the development projects were former Peace Corps volunteers who were willing to live and work in medium size cities, not necessarily in the capital. We had people working on road maintenance in the Kalahari Desert, heading up road maintenance depots. Several of these people later became USAID employees. They liked what they saw and they had good contacts with USAID personnel. When AID began hiring engineers or agricultural specialists, these people were available and were interested in AID. Probably, at least half a dozen to a dozen such people wound up working for USAID.

Q: Did you find that the program worked well, in terms of phasing out the Americans and turning over the job to Botswanans?

PIELEMEIER: In most cases it worked well, because the Botswanans were clearly in control and they knew what they wanted. The Botswana people were wonderful to work with. In fact, Botswana was a wonderful country to work in because, while there weren't a lot of highly skilled and trained Botswanans, the ones that were there were extremely competent. The Vice President of Botswana has traditionally been an economist, which I thought was a good rule to follow.

Q: An economist?

PIELEMEIER: An economist. This shows in the effective economic policies that Botswana has followed over the years. They have had very strong ministers of planning and technicians in the Ministry of Planning.

Q: Why do you think that Botswana is so different from other African countries? In Botswana they seem to have much more control and are much more definite about what they want and what they don't want, in their terms, rather than in your terms.

PIELEMEIER: I suppose that one could write a few books on that, and I suppose that some people may have done so. It is an intriguing question. I think that a couple of factors that bear on this question are:

1) Their economic situation has always been as important as anything else, in the overall political structure. This has been demonstrated by the fact that economists have been assigned to key, political positions. 2) Botswana is a homogeneous country. There are not several different tribes. Basically, one ethnic group accounts for about 85% of the population. Because it is homogeneous, there are no deep divisions influencing economic and political positions. Furthermore, I think that the quality of Botswana leadership has had an impact. I think that leadership is extremely important in any country. This is really something that makes a difference. Botswanan leadership has been continuously of high quality. There have been two Presidents now for about the past 30 years. They were popularly elected, but there wasn't much opposition because there hasn't been any strong, opposition party. Nevertheless, Botswana has an open, political system that allows for some change.

Q: Is the system really democratic or not?

PIELEMEIER: It is democratic in a way that they would consider democratic. We might regard this system as not having as many options as we would like to see. Obviously, the ruling party has more resources to campaign than an opposition party would have. However, in general, if a cabinet minister is regarded as "corrupt" or does things that are "shady," to their credit the Botswanan leadership quickly investigates and often gets rid of the person involved. So the leadership was very important.

Q: What about Lesotho? How did that country stand?

PIELEMEIER: Lesotho had a much more difficult, political situation to deal with. Power changed at the top of the system several times during the four and one-half years that I spent in southern Africa. That meant that the cabinet ministers changed, also. With the changes in leadership, we found it more difficult to carry out long term development projects. At that time, and this was fairly novel, the aid program tried to build up local, non governmental organizations in the health sector, for example. This was aimed at strengthening their capacity and to work, to a certain degree, on decentralized programs.

Swaziland was a "small boy" among the states neighboring South Africa and didn't receive as much assistance. I always wondered why we even HAD an aid program in Swaziland.

Q: What was our interest in having these aid programs? Was this left over from the earlier exchanges, when we were building up for the first time?

PIELEMEIER: We started on these aid programs in connection with the refugee situation. Gradually and over time, the countries of southern Africa banded together in what was called the Southern African Development Coordination Conference, also known as SADCC, to obtain assistance from aid donors like ourselves. The first phases of SADCC were overtly development oriented. They were not political, because it was felt that that would "threaten" the South Africans in a way that the SADCC group did not want to "threaten" them. Initially, there was cooperation in southern Africa, involving not only those three countries but also Malawi, Zambia, eventually Zimbabwe, when it gained its independence, and finally Mozambique, Angola, and Zambia. These countries all started at this initial phase. Even when I was in southern Africa, the first meetings of SADCC were being set up. AID was involved in providing some small funding to get some of these meetings "off the ground" and to provide some technical assistance and conference funding.

Over time SADCC has become a viable, regional program, with regional transport links and other kinds of programs that, I think, have been successful.

Q: Did you have any contacts with SADCC?

PIELEMEIER: Yes, it was based in Botswana. Its formation was on the basis of a Botswanan initiative.

Q: What kind of programs were you talking to them about?

PIELEMEIER: At that point it was national planning, and transportation was vital in that connection. Zimbabwe was just gaining independence. The question was, how do you find ways to move goods around the region without going through South Africa, which was becoming "off limits?" In this context ports in other areas were critical. Rail links, highway linkage, and airports were considered as places for projects. There were some other linkages that were looked at, in terms of potential, industrial production or trade in agricultural goods across borders. This was trade that perhaps hadn't occurred before.

Again, this was at a very initial stage while I was in Botswana. From what I understand SADCC has been as successful as any of the regional programs, all of which have their limitations.

Q: Did SADCC have much of a staff? Whom were you working with?

PIELEMEIER: At that time SADCC really didn't have a "staff." The work was done by a couple of people in the Botswanan Ministry of Planning who spent some time on this, cooperating with some of their colleagues in neighboring countries. It probably wasn't until a year or two later that they reached the point of developing a Secretariat.

Q: What was their strategy about the role of the various countries? Was there some special approach to that? You had had the Sahel experience, and so on. Was this approach the same or different?

PIELEMEIER: This was very much a home grown, southern Africa run program. They wanted to take it very slowly. Botswana has always been very cautious, politically, and has avoided antagonizing South Africa. So they wanted to go gradually and carefully. At that time the Portuguese had just left Mozambique and Angola. The new leadership in those countries was quite far to the Left, much farther to the Left than the Botswanans themselves, for example, or the leadership in Lesotho, Swaziland, or Malawi, for that matter. There were really stark, political differences within the region. So the countries starting SADCC, Botswana and their other colleagues, wanted to go slowly because they were also a little uncertain about what their African neighbors would want to do with a program like this.

Q: Was that the time when there was a big study of southern Africa?

PIELEMEIER: Yes. That's a very good point. There was a large study of the development potential of southern Africa. I believe Roy Stacey was very much involved in that. I did part of that study. Tom Quimby, I believe, was the Office Director for Southern Africa at the time. I wrote one or more of the monographs, perhaps including the one on Botswana.

Q: Not the sectoral pieces but the country studies?

PIELEMEIER: No, I did the country piece on Botswana. There was a broader study which, I think, the team in Washington was responsible for.

Q: Do you remember what the message in the Botswanan study was?

PIELEMEIER: Essentially, it set out a development strategy which we ended up following with our subsequent, bilateral program.

Q: Not in a regional context but in a country framework.

PIELEMEIER: We did look at regional opportunities as part of that study. It was a

combination of regional opportunities and essentially national development and goals in Botswana. As you say, it was somewhat similar to work which had been done in the Sahel area. It looked at regional opportunities as well as at programs in specific countries.

Q: So you were there at the beginning phase of many of these projects but not for the implementation phase.

PIELEMEIER: The implementation aspects that I was around for were all focused on Botswana. They were not regional in scope. We did a lot of work with agricultural extension and training. There was a very successful project to expand the capacity of the agricultural training school, with the help of South Dakota State University. They had very good people.

Q: Was this agricultural training program part of the Botswanan Agricultural University, or did that come later?

PIELEMEIER: That became the Agricultural University.

Good work was also done in the educational area, focusing on primary education. That grew out of the work of the hostels and working with refugees. We had a primary education curriculum reform program.

We did initial work in the field of natural resources. We helped to develop a cadre of small enterprise officers in the Government of Botswana. They were located throughout the country and helped work on small enterprise activities, for the first time. That was part of the rural sector project which I designed. Botswana was a country which could only take small amounts of money. So since we couldn't program much money in individual grants, we put together a rural sector program and asked several ministries to compete for those resources, with small projects. The initial manager of that program was Bill Jeffers, a former Peace Corps volunteer, whom we hired and who is now the Director for Southern African Affairs in AID in Washington. We hired Bill to manage that program and help us look at the various proposals that were coming forward.

We also did initial work with wildlife in Botswana. This was the first program to deal with wildlife. As I mentioned, we initiated the rural enterprise officer cadres in the government. Some of the work we did in the agricultural sector led to a major program in agricultural research. Botswana was very lucky to get David Norman, through AID funding, to come to work and live in Botswana for four years. David was one of THE premier agricultural research specialists in the United States, a farming system specialists. He and some of his university colleagues came to Botswana and did a two-stage design and implementation program.

Most unfortunately, three out of the four years that he was in Botswana were periods of drought. So actually, very little was accomplished, in terms of agricultural research. It was really a tremendous loss.

However, these programs were generally successful, in part because Botswana wanted them and gave them their support. We were able to get good, technical experts to come and work in the country. I think that this was a generally successful program.

Q: Were there any infrastructure projects?

PIELEMEIER: We reviewed some infrastructure projects but we didn't go forward with them. We reviewed building a road and improving the "track" across the Kalahari Desert to the Western part of Botswana. I was involved in that. I remember driving across the Kalahari Desert with an engineer from the REDSO office in Nairobi [Kenya] and a couple of other people. We were literally driving on "tracks" of sand, or in what southern Africans call the "spoor," the Afrikaans word for "track." Once you get out of the track, you tend to fly off the road, one way or the other or upside down. It's just like driving on glass. Until you get your wheels correctly onto the "spoor," you often find yourself sliding. Then you have to dig yourself out or be pulled out by someone else.

Q: The sand was the problem.

PIELEMEIER: Oh, very much so. I hate to mention this, but it's true that while we were on this trip in the Kalahari Desert near the end of the trip whoever was driving somehow got out of the "spoor," and we got stuck. While we were trying to dig ourselves out, which took quite a while, the vehicle's engine continued to run. This had been a long day's journey. Eventually, the engine of this Ford F250 overheated and "froze up." This was literally in the middle of the Kalahari Desert. As it turned out, we were finally able to have the vehicle towed to Ghanzi in the far western part of Botswana. The vehicle was "total loss." The engine was totally destroyed. Bringing in a new engine that far out was a very difficult task. I think that we eventually sold the vehicle. It's the only time that I've ever been in an AID vehicle which was essentially destroyed.

Q: My goodness!

PIELEMEIER: We decided at that point that the traffic on the road, which was equivalent to about 10 vehicles a day, did not warrant surfacing the "track" or improving it with AID resources. I understand, from talking to somebody recently, that that road has now been paved. However, that relates more to the opening up of Namibia. At that time Namibia was not independent. Now the road is part of a Trans-African Highway scheme.

Q: Did you have anything to do with the railroad at that time?

PIELEMEIER: The railroad ran North and South into Zimbabwe. It was a “rattle trap” railroad. Like many things in the Rhodesian days it was put together and kept together with "chewing gum," wire, string, and anything else that they could find. We did not get involved in improvements in the railroad. I think because the railroad had to depend on a South African port.

It was decided not to improve the railroad to improve access to imports. Ports were a real

problem. Namibia was not yet independent, Mozambique had just become independent, with a Leftist government, and aid donors were reluctant, at least initially, to make resources available there. Many of the initial studies focused on how to get goods to this area, without depending on South Africa.

I must say that we in the region were all concerned about the future of South Africa. There were many studies done, not by AID, but by scholars and political scientists, on options for South Africa. I think that one of them, by John St. Jorre, was extremely well done. It saw the only hope for South Africa as breaking its society into "racial configurations" involving Asians, coloreds, blacks, and whites located in their own particular areas with their own local control. I don't think that any of us imagined that what happened eventually, under Nelson Mandela, could ever happen. I can't remember anyone talking about a peaceful transition to black rule in South Africa, that is, with black majority rule of the whole country. It seemed to be just unthinkable.

Q: Were you aware of any efforts by South Africa to "destabilize" the country in which you were working?

PIELEMEIER: We were aware, from time to time, of kidnaping in Botswana. There was an isolated grenade thrown here and there. Most of these incidents were directed toward South African refugees located in Botswana, Lesotho, or Swaziland. Usually these were aimed at a particular leader, perhaps trying to kidnap that leader and take him back to South Africa. Of course, there was a lot of political activity going on.

Some of the better known South African musicians at that time were actually living in Botswana. So you found Miriam Makaba, for example, in Botswana. Who was the man who performed the "Lion Song"? (Hugh Masekela) Anyway, they were living in Botswana, to the degree that they stayed in Africa.

So there was some tension because the South Africans would object to Botswana allowing refugees to "do too much." The South Africans said that this would be "destabilizing" for South Africa. And they had the power to do something about it. Botswana, for example, had three airplanes in its air force. Botswana had a very small army. Botswana really had almost no capacity to defend itself. Lesotho and Swaziland were even worse off. Lesotho was totally surrounded by South Africa. Swaziland was surrounded by either South Africa or Mozambique.

Q: Did you have any sense of what the Botswanans were doing about this situation or how they were handling it?

PIELEMEIER: They were very cautious, as they had been in almost all of their political dealings. They were very conservative and very cautious. I think that, in some cases, they probably forced some of the more active refugees from South Africa to go elsewhere.

Q: Well, anything else on your mind about southern Africa?

PIELEMEIER: No. Botswana was an excellent country to work in. I think that anyone who worked there at the time thoroughly enjoyed it. There is a "Friends of Botswana" group which still gets together. It is composed of contractors and AID people. It meets somewhere in the United States every year. Those who attend these meetings reminisce about their experiences in Botswana. It was a very happy, development community when I was there. There was a lot of cooperation with other aid donors as well. Some of the most important livestock and grazing reforms that we have seen in Africa were designed in Botswana and southern Africa. This was done with Norwegian money as much as American money, but often there was American expertise involved. It was a very popular place.

Q: How about relations with the American Embassy? The ambassador was serving in three countries at the time.

PIELEMEIER: Generally, these were small communities. We had several Ambassadors during the time that I was there. We had very harmonious working relationships. The Ambassadors knew that the development projects were critical and very important, and they supported them. They usually did not get too involved in them. They let the AID personnel and specialists go about their business, using the procedures that we were supposed to be using. Only once was there an acceleration of the program.

Q: They were not pushing some pet project or something like that?
PIELEMEIER: Well, you always have that in any country. An Ambassador gets particularly interested in a given program, and sometimes they ARE good projects. In the last analysis you have to be prepared for them to be turned down, at some stage, by someone, maybe not you.

Q: When did you finish your tour in southern Africa?

Deputy Director USAID Liberia - 1981

PIELEMEIER: That would have been in 1981, when we were transferred to Liberia.

Before we leave southern Africa, let me just mention one other thing that has just come to my mind. I should mention Bob Friedline, who was the AID Representative when I arrived in Botswana. I think that he did a very good job. Then, when we became an AID Mission, Lou was appointed Mission Director. He was somewhat cantankerous but was otherwise an excellent Mission Director who really knew his job and did it well. I've always admired Lou a lot as a Mission Director and learned a lot from him.

Another thing that I also wanted to mention is that when I was moved up to be the Assistant Mission Director, taking on managerial responsibilities, I realized that I didn't have any particular management training. Most people in AID had had no such management training at that stage.

So at one point I went back to Washington, went into the Training Office, and talked with

Dan Creedon, who was the head of a part of the Training Office, if not of the whole office. He had been involved with my IDI [International Development Intern] training, and I had a great deal of admiration for him. I asked Dan where I could get some management training. He said: "We don't offer management training, but if you can find a course, we'll fund your attending it. Use the catalog for the United States Civil Service training programs or executive leadership programs. Here are a couple of other catalogs as well." I said: "I've heard about a program in North Carolina called the 'Center for Creative Leadership.' Have you ever heard of that?" He said: "No, but if you have any material on it, bring it in, and we'll look at it."

The Center for Creative Leadership is one of the premier management training organizations in the United States. It has what is called a "Looking Glass Program," which helps you to look at your management style. It had been going for about 10 years at that point. To AID's credit, I was eventually given AID funds to attend a course there, the first agency employee actually to go there. My fellow students in the course were from Procter & Gamble in Cincinnati, the US Navy, a bank in California, and one other civilian employee of the US Government. It was a wonderful experience. I think that one or two AID employees went there later. Not too long after that, I think that AID decided to initiate senior management training programs.

Q: How long was the course there?

PIELEMEIER: It was a two week program. In the course you learn a lot about yourself and you learn a lot about management methodology and theory which most of those in the course didn't know. This shows how open people were at that time to new ideas. Basically, if you came up with an idea, the attitude was that they would let you do it.

Q: Very accommodating.

PIELEMEIER: Yes. As I said before, my next post was Liberia. We were interested in going to several places, either back to French speaking Africa, because we knew French, and the Sahel programs were now well under way, or elsewhere in Africa. Liberia hadn't been particularly high on our list. However, the AID program there was large, important, and a troubled program. I was informed that I would go to Liberia as Deputy Director of the AID Mission. The new Director, who was going to arrive almost at the same time that I was scheduled to arrive, was Lois Richards. Lois had been in Kenya previously. She was a bit older than I was and had held some key positions in the African Bureau of AID.

We were told that we needed to go and "clean up" the program and the staff.

Q: What year was this?

PIELEMEIER: It was in 1983. There had been a coup d'etat in Liberia, and Sergeant Doe had taken over as President of the country. We were providing assistance to Liberia at this time. It was a shaky situation. We were trying to encourage a move back to civilian rule through elections, but it was clear that that wasn't going to be easy. There was no internal

fighting at this time.

The AID program was fairly large. Lois Richards had a very direct and forthright style of management. She was very clear in saying what she thought, especially to her staff. She did not accept products that were not done well and she let people know it. So part of my task as Deputy Director was to become an intermediary to a certain degree and a "buffer" between Lois and the staff. The first thing that we did, which I think was a wonderful model, was to sit down and agree to divide up the "portfolio." She said: "I'm not going to supervise everybody and I'm not going to ask you to supervise everybody as the Deputy Director." Sometimes, Mission Directors do that. She said: "Your background seems to be more programmatic and design. You supervise the technical offices, and I'll supervise the Comptroller and the Executive Officer."

Q: Where did the Program Office fit in this structure?

PIELEMEIER: The Program Office was part of my responsibility. There was generally a clear division of authority, and we were able to express that to the staff. They knew how it would work and also knew that she was the ultimate boss. For key decisions I would basically have to take them to Lois. We had an excellent, working relationship. Several staff members left Liberia of their own accord, early on. They saw the handwriting on the wall. We worked very, very hard. Lois worked extremely hard to locate and recruit new personnel, which is how you do this. Finding suitable people is basically hard work which requires more than just letting it be known through the system that you need someone. We worked at that jointly from the very beginning and got some excellent staff, many of them younger and newer people who came to the Mission either because they knew Lois or me.

I think that the program blossomed. We got more money and were able to change the focus of the program somewhat. We didn't "terminate" many of the projects, but some of them we looked at carefully, evaluated them, and decided to "redirect" them. In general and in most cases, we found good allies within the government to work with and to provide program assistance to. AID and the US Government was the aid donor of first and last resort for the Liberians. They came to us first for everything. We were the major donor in the country, dealing with all issues, including program assistance, civil service problems, and project assistance. You name it. They came to us.

Q: What was our overall strategy? What were we trying to accomplish?

PIELEMEIER: We were working essentially to keep other aid donors "in the game." With program assistance we would repay debts owed by Liberia, usually to the IFIs [International Financial Institutions]. Then, as a result of that, we would encourage the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the African Development Bank to remain involved in the country. We placed conditions on all of our program assistance, linked to reforms, especially in terms of tax and customs administration, both areas where we had technical advisers or PASAs (Participating Agency Service Agreements) from the U.S. Bureau of Customs and the Internal Revenue Service. To the degree that we could

do so, we integrated the program assistance conditions with our project assistance activities. Especially within the Liberian Ministry of Finance and within the Ministry of Planning we had several advisers dealing with financial reform.

We had some local currency that we managed as well. We used this money to restructure the organization and system for dealing with it. It was a very challenging program. Liberia is a country with a large petty "corruption" problem. Corruption may have also been at the very top, but there were no cases that I could think of where AID resources appeared to be misused.

Liberia is a tough country! Electricity went "off" for six months of the year during the first year that we were there [1982]. This was because the Liberians had not paid their bills for purchasing fuel to generate electricity. They traditionally imported fuel for six months of the year and depended on hydroelectric power for the other six months. When the rains stopped, the dam which produced the power for the Monrovia area no longer produced electricity, and they had to use diesel fuel for power generation. They hadn't saved enough foreign exchange to be able to purchase diesel fuel for power generation. They also did not maintain the generators. Only one electricity generator was working, which meant that we had electricity on for six hours and then off for six hours during most of the six month, dry season period. None of us had our own electricity generators at this point. The country virtually came to a standstill during this period.

Taxis used to buy gasoline for each ride. The custom was to buy a little gasoline for the expected ride. Paying for the fuel was part of the charge. Since there was often no electricity, you had to pump the gasoline by hand. The lines around the gas stations were many blocks long. Grocery stores didn't have electricity generators, and perishable foods spoiled.

At that time my wife had just had our second child, born in the US. I had come back to the US for the birth of the child and returned to Liberia ahead of my wife and the new baby. When she came back to Monrovia, the power went off. Here we were, living in a city where the temperature averages 90 degrees Fahrenheit, and the humidity averages 90 percent. Rainfall amounts to 30 feet per year. That is, 360 inches of rain a year in Monrovia. Our poor little baby girl had no air conditioning and even no functioning, electric fans. The only relief you could get from the heat came from fanning yourself. However, we managed to survive. There was a lot of hard work done by Alan Swan, the Executive Officer of the AID Mission, as well as Mark Anderson, his assistant. Eventually, we placed food freezers in the AID compound. All of the families would bring their food and place it in those few freezers, which would be run by the AID generator. You would decide what you were going to have for dinner on a given night and then go to the AID compound, get your meat out, take it home, and cook it. It was a year later that the AID Mission was able to complete the procurement of generators for household use. That took care of the problem.

Q: Did you and Alan Swan try to address the overall problem of power in Monrovia, including the procurement of diesel fuel and so forth?

PIELEMEIER: The problem was that Liberia did not have enough foreign exchange to buy diesel fuel for the generators during the dry season. That was part of the program assistance package. I remember that, at times, AID resources were used to buy diesel fuel for the Liberian electricity generators.

We had a wonderful Ambassador, Bill Swing, who has gone on to be Ambassador in all of the "hot spots" in Africa. At one time or another he was Ambassador to Haiti, Nigeria, and Liberia. Now, I believe, he is going to be Ambassador to the Democratic Republic of Congo, the former Zaire. Ambassador Swing is my vision of the perfect Ambassador. If I think of what an Ambassador should be, I think of the way he handled his job. He knew everyone in a large, US Government Mission. He knew the children and knew their names. He found time for everybody. He was relaxed but extremely knowledgeable.

He was also very "gutsy." There would be times when he would be called, in the middle of the night, to see President Doe, who would send over a car to get him. Ambassador Swing would go by himself. He would get into the car, which would take him to the Presidential Mansion. When he arrived at the Presidential Mansion, there were armed guards around him, I think at times even brandishing weapons in his face. The guards would walk Ambassador Swing down to wherever President Doe was, in his bedroom or wherever he might be, for several hours of discussion. At the time there was a lot of "mumbo jumbo," "voodoo" type stuff going on in the Executive Mansion, related to President Doe's very rural upbringing. Ambassador Swing had to "play this game," survive in it, and teach things to President Doe. In some ways Ambassador Swing was trying to "teach" Doe how to be a leader.

Swing never talked about these things openly, but we heard about them through other sources, people who, perhaps, had seen some of his most confidential cables. It is amazing to reflect on what Swing went through and how admirably he was able to do it.

Q: How did things work with the Liberian Government at that time?

PIELEMEIER: It was frustrating, because, while we could control the use of our resources, we couldn't control the use of the resources and revenues coming into the Liberian Government. These resources often were not used for the highest priority activities, as we would see them. Sometimes, these resources disappeared into politicians' pockets or were used to buy Boeing 747 airplanes. So that was very frustrating. Monrovia is obviously a difficult post to live and work in. However, among the expatriate community the camaraderie was wonderful. People would head out to one of the few beaches and lagoons for the weekend and relax, play "Scrabble," and so forth. We have some wonderful memories of that.

I worked with groups like the OICI [Opportunities Industrialization Center International], whose headquarters are in Philadelphia. OICI had a very good program in Liberia. Reggie Hodges was the Director of the OICI office in Monrovia. He was a wonderful fellow. Henry Barrett, one of the people who worked with Reggie, is now an AID auditor.

He is an American who lived in Liberia for many years.

Q: Were you able to get anything done? Did you have anything to do with this program?

PIELEMEIER: I think that there was some impact. There were some improvements in the health area, when we decided to move away from the Government and started working with PVOs [Private Voluntary Organizations].

Q: You were not involved with the JFK [John F. Kennedy] Hospital at that time?

PIELEMEIER: The JFK Hospital had been completed and was pretty much a "lost cause." It was a hospital that was built with political influence, I think during the Kennedy years. It was not maintained. There were no funds for maintaining it. There was no expertise to run it. It was a place where people "went to die." People went to other hospitals if they could possibly do so.

We did not try to resurrect JFK Hospital, that "white elephant." We went to work elsewhere in the health system. We had a very good program in the education sector, working on the reform of primary and secondary education. The first education sector analysis that I've been part of was truly absorbed by the host Government and utilized was one carved out by Joan Claffey and Henry Reynolds. Henry was the Education Officer. I think that he's now the Deputy Director of the AID Mission in South Africa. They did a marvelous job on this analysis.

I can't say that all of these changes, and the work in the agricultural sector as well, were successes, because in part, only a few years after we left Liberia, the country slid into civil war, which has gone on for over six years now. This civil war has just stopped, but, frankly, I think that most of the improvements we made can no longer be seen.

Q: Was the Monrovia Consolidated High School going at that time, or had that deteriorated also? This was one of the earlier education projects in Liberia.

PIELEMEIER: I'm not familiar with that high school. We were working with the system as a whole. We were concerned with teacher training and the curriculum, so I'm not familiar with that school.

Q: Anything else about Liberia at this point?

PIELEMEIER: Only that shortly after I left AID, we brought in a very high level team, essentially to provide help at the highest levels of the Ministry of Planning. It was headed by Frank Kimball, a former AID official and a Mission Director. This was a major initiative aimed at really changing things, making things different, turning the situation around, and opening Liberia up to foreign investment. The purpose essentially was to make an effort to wrest "control" of the finances of the country away from the political leadership.

This very high-powered team stayed for a year or two and left the country. I think that attempt was essentially a failure. It's an example of a country whose highest levels of leadership really do not want the same objectives that we were trying to work towards. It was almost impossible to achieve what we sought.

Q: But this was an effort to try to discipline the management of their finances?

PIELEMEIER: Yes, essentially through Liberian officials who were going to be in operational positions.

Q: And it didn't work.

PIELEMEIER: It didn't work. On the positive side we made good use in Liberia of the resources we had. We did a better job of managing aid resources than any other aid donors did. I think that we responded well to the requests we were getting. There was a good sense of harmony between the Embassy, the AID Mission, and other groups. In general, however, many things went well.

Q: Was there anything about the AID Mission approach to the educational sector, methodology, or contents that you think were particularly at fault?

PIELEMEIER: It went very slowly. Clearly, the approach was to use "joint teams" of expatriates who would come out to Liberia for fairly long periods of time to work, side by side, with people in the Ministry of Education. They were truly doing a collaborative analysis of the educational sector, in a slow but careful process of deciding what steps should be taken. The number two ranking Liberian in the Ministry of Education was a very strong, tall, forthright, young Liberian. He and Henry Reynolds worked together beautifully. Both of them were very, very able people. They directed this analytical process in such a way that the result was seen as essentially a "Liberian product," with American help.

I think that this Liberian official, whose name I have since forgotten, has left Liberia. I think that he now works at the World Bank as an educational specialist.

Q: Did this program effort involve primary education or the whole system?
PIELEMEIER: If I remember correctly, this involved primarily the secondary educational system.
Q: Throughout the country?

PIELEMEIER: Yes.

Q: Okay. Anything else in Liberia?

Joined USAID/PPC and then Special Assistant to Counselor of the agency

PIELEMEIER: Only that, when we found that the public health system was not

responding to traditional assistance, I think that it was a very wise decision to move to working with the non governmental groups [NGOs], many of which were initially religious organizations.

Q: Such as?

PIELEMEIER: A group called CHAL [Christian Health Association for Liberia] was one of them. I think that it was our major intermediary, which then funneled resources to other religious groups which ran hospitals and clinics up country.

Liberia remains a place where the roads are very poor. Going to visit projects in Liberia required a real effort, even at this time. There is a lot of rain and a lot of logging trucks on these roads which tear up the roads even if they were maintained reasonably well.

Q: Were you working with the Peace Corps at that time?

PIELEMEIER: We did a lot of work with the Peace Corps. We linked into the Peace Corps in the health sector and in agriculture. They were wonderful people to work with, especially in the more isolated areas of the country.

However, the Peace Corps had a tough time as well. We had a room in our house which we called the "E. T." room, meaning "Early Termination." However, "E. T." had also been a figure in one of the Steven Spielberg movies. We had an arrangement with the Peace Corps Director, Rudy Watkins, that if there were volunteers who really had cultural problems and were thinking about "early termination" of their tours of duty, we would give them a dose of real "Americana" by coming to live in our house. We had two small kids. We had normal, American food and we had a room for these people to stay in. We would take them to stay in the "E. T." room for a week, talk to them, and help them decide whether to return to their positions or to terminate their tours. Both my wife and I had been Peace Corps volunteers, so we could talk about volunteer experiences. We probably used the "E. T." room seven or eight times during our tour in Liberia. About half of these Peace Corps volunteers went home, and half of them went back to their posts.

Q: You played a very valuable role. Where do you think that the AID program had any lasting effect and took root, as you look back on older projects and despite all of the more recent turmoil in Liberia?

PIELEMEIER: I haven't been back to Liberia since our tour of duty there. I think that, frankly, with the fighting which has now gone on for six years, the only possible, lasting benefit is in the Liberians who will now return to Liberia and help to rebuild it. Several of the people whom we helped to train, as well as others who were already trained and were working with us, are in the US or in Ivory Coast, Ghana, Nigeria, and other places. If they go back to Liberia, they will take with them some of the skills they learned through working with or being trained by our AID Mission.

However, unfortunately, I am told that, in terms of infrastructure, it is now virtually all

gone, in terms of both the education and health systems. I would imagine that everything is now destroyed and forgotten.

Q: So when did you leave Liberia?

PIELEMEIER: We left Liberia in 1984, after a three-year tour. I had been working in the African Bureau of AID for almost a dozen years, after my initial tour in Brazil. I was interested in seeing other developmental issues and problems. I had several offers from the head of the African Bureau to do interesting things in Washington, since we had now been overseas for seven and one-half years. We thought it was time to go back to Washington. We wanted our children to spend some time growing up in the U.S. The African Bureau had some good positions available, but I really thought that I wanted a change of pace in terms of the kinds of problems I was dealing with, as much as anything else.

However, the AID system did not help that process. I found it very difficult to get a decent and equivalent job in another regional bureau. Regional bureaus had their own "favorites" whom they were trying to place.

My wife actually found a job before I did. She had been a PSC [Personal Service Contract] Health Officer in Liberia and had a background in nutrition. She found a job, initially under a PSC as nutrition adviser in the policy office (PPC). Because there was no health policy adviser in that office, she did that job as well. Eventually, when that job was advertised in the GS [Government Service] system, she applied for it, won it, and eventually was the Health and Nutrition Policy Adviser for several years.

About the only thing available to me was a job in PPC in the Budget Office, under John Hummon. I took this job and was responsible for coordination with the Department of State on EHF [Economic Support Fund] budget matters. I also was doing "oversight" for the Asia and Near East Bureau programs. This was not a "Senior Foreign Service" position, although meanwhile I had been promoted into the Senior Foreign Service. It was a difficult job, involving reworking budgets.

Q: So you took this job.

PIELEMEIER: I took the job. Frankly, I didn't have any option. I was redoing budgets almost on a daily basis for different scenarios and presentations. It was very much "green eyeshade" work. The work with the ANE [Asia and Near Eastern] Bureau was more interesting, but the bureau didn't want PPC people involved in any significant way in reviewing their activities. I was not even allowed to sit in on ANE staff meetings.

Charley Greenleaf was the Assistant Administrator of AID at the time, and Rocky Staples was his deputy. They essentially said: "Well, we'd like to have you help us, but..." Essentially, they were saying: "We'll call you, don't call us." That was not what my role was supposed to be. I was supposed to be more involved. I tried in various ways, but they were generally very careful. So it was a frustrating job.

Q: Weren't you working with the Department of State at that time?

PIELEMEIER: I worked to some extent with the Department of State on the EHF budgets but I was new to this. I learned the process but essentially my boss, John Hummon, did most of the negotiating himself.

Q: How did you find EHF different from the funds you were used to working with?

PIELEMEIER: The apportionment process was a nightmare. It had to go through OMB [Office of Management and Budget], which kept a tight leash on EHF funding. So it wasn't just AID and the Department of State deciding that funds were needed for a particular activity. You had to convince OMB in addition, each time. They were people you had to get to know and to cultivate. They were truly from a different world.

Q: What about the rationale for AID assistance? How did you find that?

PIELEMEIER: As to the rationale for AID assistance, this varied, of course, from country to country. During the Cold War it was clearly oriented to our military bases overseas, in many cases. I learned a lot from this job. I don't think that I did much but I learned a lot about EHF. I learned how to work with the various regional bureaus in the Department of State. However, the EHF program still had a different focus. The program was mostly oriented toward Latin America, but that involved mostly Central America. That emphasis was also Cold War related. Very little of it was oriented toward development.

It's a difficult job, and the analysts in PPC were in a tough position, as they always are. Supposedly, they have control of the budget that goes up to the AID Administrator. However, it is difficult to get access to the regional programs and to play the role that you want to play. This could be positive, but it is often seen by the regional bureaus as negative.

I made one trip to an ANE Mission Directors Conference. I believe that this meeting was held in Cairo. I also managed to visit Morocco and Jordan and had a chance to see how those programs operated. It was very useful to see the differences in development situations and to understand and get to know a lot more about the ANE program.

However, after one year in that job, I had a very lucky break. Marshall "Buster" Brown, a person whom I had known when I was in the Latin American Bureau, was Counselor of the Agency for International Development. He worked in the office of the AID Administrator. He was the Senior Foreign Service Officer in AID. Ken Scofield, his Special Assistant, was going off for an overseas assignment. Brown was looking for a new Special Assistant. He knew that I was around in Washington, though I don't know how he knew that I was frustrated with my job. When Brown asked me if I would be interested in working with him, it didn't take me long to say: "Yes."

I moved to a position that essentially involved convincing one person about something before you talked to the Administrator. This was a real "thrill." Peter McPherson, the AID Administrator at the time, was also a very good person to work with. Many of us had a lot of admiration for Peter.

Buster Brown had a very interesting work style. He had been the Acting Head of the Latin American Bureau for many years, having come up in the DR, or project design ranks. He did one overseas tour and then served in Washington. I think that, for family reasons, he decided that he did not want to go overseas for many, many years. He guided the Latin American Bureau and many of its Assistant Administrators, who tended to be "political appointees." He was essentially "the hand behind the throne." When there was no one actually "on the throne," he essentially ran the show in the Latin American Bureau. He was a very powerful fellow, someone whom people in the DR office admired, respected, and lauded and who provided inspiration to them and helped them figure out how to do their jobs. I have heard some very senior people in AID, for example, Carol Peasley, Scott Smith, and others, talk about how wonderful Buster Brown was as a "mentor" to them.

Anyway, I worked with Buster Brown. As he had moved into the position of Counselor to the AID Administrator, he spent most of his time on his couch, rather than at his desk. He would sit on his long couch and read, or he would lounge on it and read. He would say: "I'm not supposed to be someone who is 'aggressive' in this position. If people want me to resolve something, I'll do it. If Administrator McPherson wants me to do something, I'll do it." He did not aggressively move into areas which other, senior AID managers were responsible for.

Q: Was that how he described his function, and had you begun to adjust to it?

PIELEMEIER: The function of Counselor to the AID Administrator is whatever the AID Administrator wants to make of it, as I understand it. It's the senior position. It was created because originally, there was a Deputy Administrator of AID, who was a career person. Over time, this became a second, "political appointment," along with the Administrator. Then people began to say: "Well, you need to have somebody in the AID front office who is a career, Foreign Service person. So it was decided to create the position of Counselor to the AID Administrator. I think that Frank Kimball was the first Counselor. I was not in Washington at that time.

I don't know how Buster got this job, but he evidently decided to handle this position as he would have liked it when he was in the Latin American Bureau. That is, not having people "breathing down your neck." So he didn't breathe down people's necks but took on special roles and special jobs. Once we had a "workshop" for AID Administrators run by Peter Drucker, a very well-known management consultant. I was responsible for putting that workshop together. It was held at Julia Chang Block's wonderful house near Dupont Circle in Washington. I was kind of a "fly on the wall."

At the workshop, one of the things that Peter Drucker said was that, if you have special

tasks, don't take your senior personnel and ask them to do that, in addition to the regular jobs that they have to do. He said: "Give somebody time to do it right," as a kind of special assignment.

That was what was often done with the Counselor position. The Counselors were given special assignments. They had time to do these things right, without being totally absorbed in operational, day to day, activities. This position became one from which you could "think" broad thoughts about where AID should go. You could join forces. You could bring in expertise to work on particular issues.

Q: What kind of issues were you concerned with?

PIELEMEIER: We dealt with a lot of policy issues. We dealt with issues related to the offices of the Auditor and the IG [Inspector General], and how the IG's office was working with AID. I recall that I wrote a policy paper on program assistance. There had previously been no policy paper on when we should use program assistance, when we shouldn't, how it should be used, and how it related to "tracking money," which the Auditors were after at the time.

Q: Was there any overall "message" in that?

PIELEMEIER: I have to say that I can't remember what the "message" was. I think that it was essentially that you should use program assistance as much as possible to take advantage of conditions and get significant reforms, rather than treat program assistance as a simple kind of cash transfer. However, there were a lot of details and nuances there which were important.

I remember being asked to oversee the preparation of a report by Smith Hempstone, to be made public, lauding AID's success. He was a journalist who had a column syndicated in "The Washington Star" and other newspapers. I worked with the Deputy Administrator, Jay Morris, in providing support to Hempstone in the preparation of this report. I gathered a lot of material and talked with Hempstone. He ended up with a very good, published document on some of AID's accomplishments over the years. Hempstone, to my surprise, then went off to be Ambassador to Kenya, where he became a "thorn" in President Daniel Moi's side. He was a very visible Ambassador and did a lot to encourage political reform in Kenya.

Sometimes you also come up with your own ideas, which you push forward. In one case I was asked to work with Haven North, a senior official who is the head of CDIE, I believe, on "indicators" of development success. There was a task force to develop a list of such "indicators" which, somehow, I was asked to be involved with. There may have been earlier occasions when AID looked at "indicators." I'm not sure that I would have known of them, but certainly there have been continuing efforts to deal with "indicators."

I enjoyed working on these "indicators" very much. The problem is that it is almost impossible to get technical officers to agree on what "indicators" are. And once you have

these "indicators" agreed upon, it's almost impossible to get all AID Missions to report on them. I think frankly that the idea of aggregating "indicator" information to show to Congress is probably "over built" in AID now. It's not worth the time, the effort, and the manpower that goes into it. First, because you can't get everybody to work on the same "tracks" because, for example, you won't gather the same kind of information in Botswana as you do in Liberia or India. The problems are very different. Secondly, I'm not sure that there is a real audience for this information. One thing that Buster Brown was very good at was really knowing the people on Capitol Hill. Essentially, he used to say that Congress doesn't have time for this kind of detail, anyway. What they want is some anecdotes and success stories which they can use in their speeches. Nobody is going to read all of this detailed information, except somebody on the staff of a Member of Congress or Senator. And this Congressman or Senator probably isn't going to make the final decision on your aid budget, anyway.

Q: Where did this idea of identifying "indicators" come from?

PIELEMEIER: I think that it came from individuals on Capitol Hill and people working with them. There are a few people who thought that "indicators" were important.

Q: What was the view of AID Administrator McPherson?

PIELEMEIER: I'm not sure what his view was.

Q: He was very strong on wanting "targets" for the aid program.

PIELEMEIER: Right, and understandably so. However, what I think happened is that the technical people tend to take this task much further than somebody with McPherson's background would ever have imagined they would ever go. It gets down to "how many angels can fit on the head of a pin" type of discussion. Technical officers love to debate this, even though it frustrates them. People at the top never could imagine that this detail would ever be needed. So there is a "disconnect" somewhere along the way, and it means that reality is lost sight of.

However, it was an interesting exercise, and in the course of taking part in it, I met many people in the agricultural and other sectors, people whom I have really enjoyed working with.

Another exercise that I took the lead on related to our agricultural programs. We had a lot of pressure on our agriculture programs from US Congressmen and especially from Senator Bumpers [Democrat, Arkansas], on our efforts to build up the agricultural sectors of various countries receiving aid from the United States. He felt that such countries tend to export their food to the United States or, at least, no longer import U.S. food products. Brazil was a wonderful example of that, because in the 1950s and 1960s AID helped start a seed multiplication program and a highly successful agricultural research program in Brazil. With all of Brazil's wonderful natural resources, eventually Brazil became an exporter of soybeans and corn and a major competitor of the United States. Senator

Bumpers and others used that example. They looked at South Korea and other places in Asia. They said that AID was building up competitors for the American farmers. They said AID shouldn't have an agricultural program.

So I was assigned to work with people in the Global Bureau on this matter. At this time I guess that it was called the Science and Technology Bureau. We worked very hard to develop a strategy for showing how, in the long term, the US benefited from development and growth in Third World countries. We pointed out that our exports to those countries actually increased, though they were exports of different kinds of products, including other kinds of agricultural exports. We pointed out that, in the long term, it was to our benefit for those people to have more money. We put together some packages of information that were used by the Public Affairs Office and which the Administrator of AID used in his presentations to Congress and in his speeches. I think that this effort was reasonably successful.

There are two other things that I would like to mention. One is that we prepared the first draft of a contract between an AID Mission Director and the Administrator of a regional bureau or the AID Administrator. This concept is now being used in the "re-engineering" process.

Another matter which I thought was really of critical importance and which used some of the skills I had developed in the Budget Office was my involvement in a review of the budget of the S&T [Science and Technology] Bureau. The S&T Bureau was led by Niles Brady, who had been the head of this bureau for a long time. As I had been a "field person," it was very clear to me that people were using different standards for budgets in Washington than they were using in the field. In the field you're not allowed to have resources "in the pipeline" for over 18 months, for example. You reviewed mortgages carefully. Projects could go on for no more than five years, or 10 years, if they had two phases. However, the Global Bureau didn't seem to obey any of these rules. They had projects with very long pipelines, and projects that were 20 and 25 years long, yet they continued to ask for more resources for those projects even when development resources were beginning to shrink in AID.

At one particular time this difference hit me strongly. I spent about 36 hours on a full-scale analysis on my own of the S&T budget and their project pipelines. I brought it back for a major meeting and presented it. This just about knocked Niles Brady out of his chair. I remember that his Deputy at the time, who had been in the Global Bureau virtually forever, just about attacked me physically. What was very clear was that they were asking for resources which would take their pipelines from 36 months up to 54 months, in the case of some of these projects. They said: "Well, we're doing grants, and you're doing other things. This is the way grants work."

Well, this argument was specious. I think that this was the first time that they had ever been challenged on their budget. They didn't even have a Program Office in the Global Bureau. They had no one who would be "at the gate" carefully to review the requests of the Technical Officers and the funding that they wanted. There was no, "normal" system

of evaluation, no periodic evaluation and control. Essentially, there was no programmatic review. It was all a purely "technical" review. We tried to present the view that this was anomalous by comparison with the rest of AID. We asked why the rest of AID should follow one set of rules, while the Global Bureau followed another one. This was especially important when it came to "fighting" for the same funding, which was limited.

Eventually, this discussion led to several agreements on reforming the procedures of the S&T Bureau and the manner in which they followed such procedures. It was decided that the Office of the Counselor of AID and PPC [Program Office] would watch more closely to ensure that these procedures were followed and that the S&T Bureau would indeed be in step with the rest of the agency.

This is the kind of thing that I could only have done from the position I held at the time. And only, in part, because I got my boss to agree, once I explained it to him. I asked him: "This is going to cause a lot of problems. Should I put this forward?" Buster said: "Go for it!"

There were so many fascinating things going on during the year when I held this assignment, but I should mention one thing in particular. Buster Brown was also very clearly worried about AID and its future because of the fact that senior officers were being "forced to leave." They were either being required to retire, because of the institution of the Senior Foreign Service personnel system or they would leave the agency, even when they became "01" officers but did not get into the Senior Foreign Service. There was no room for a good, technical officer who wanted to remain a technical officer, rather than a "manager." To remain with AID, you are almost "forced" to become a member of the Senior Foreign Service and a "manager." He felt that that was inappropriate and that there should be very senior, technical people who rise up through the ranks but remain Technical Officers and don't necessarily have to spend their time dealing with management issues.

I think that Brown had pinpointed an issue and a problem that soon became very evident a few years later when AID forced people to retire in the later years of their career. You found people who had been essentially "forced out" at age 43, because they had been promoted fairly quickly, very early in their career. Others, including myself, were "forced out" before we were 50. However, Technical Officers also had to decide whether to remain as "01" officers and never be promoted again, if they wanted to remain in their technical jobs. The alternative was to obtain employment somewhere else.

One other thing that I should mention is that Buster Brown's office took a practical view of the world and saw itself as a kind of "protector" of the AID Missions and operational bureaus abroad. There were several times when we "gleefully" quashed PPC [Program Office] initiatives advocating policies which would constrain the operations of the agency. We felt that the PPC was trying to go "too far" in terms of regulations and policies.

Q: Did you feel that there were a lot of political pressure from the Administrator of AID

and other people in terms of personnel, money, or policies? Were they trying to push you one way or another?

PIELEMEIER: In terms of the agency as a whole, there always are some political pressures which are absorbed in the regional programs and elsewhere. No doubt about it.

Q: One of the big initiatives during the time was, of course, creating the Private Enterprise Bureau and all of that. Did you have any views or involvement in that process?

PIELEMEIER: I didn't. I wasn't involved in that at all. It had been created by the time I was assigned to that office.

Q: That position certainly gave you a good, overall picture of the agency and how it operated.

PIELEMEIER: That's exactly it. There's probably no better place to view the agency and to see how its various areas function and to understand it from an overall, managerial point of view. I think that at one point, I had some time before I went off to the Industrial College of the Armed Forces [ICAF] for a year of senior level training. The Counselor of AID at the time was Ray Love. I told him that I had some time on my hands and volunteered to help him. If he had any need for my services, I would be happy to help him. At the time he was preparing a response to the annual Audit Report of AID, which the Inspector General's office had handed down. This report focused on managerial reforms in AID. I drafted a response for him fairly quickly. I sat in the Controller's Office and worked with the senior Controllers. From the knowledge that I picked up from working in the Administrator's Office, I was able to understand the relationship between the Management Office, the IG Office, the GAO [General Accounting Office], and all of these "very heavy" reports that were around. In this response which I drafted, we recommended several improvements in how audits were used, how financial management could be reformed, and other things. I think that this was the first report of this kind which AID had ever done, in responding to the Audit Report. I think that this is now done on an annual basis by the people who handle "Re-engineering" as part of their systems and operations analysis.

Q: Did you have any dealings with the Inspector General's Office?

PIELEMEIER: We had some indirect dealings with the Inspector General's Office, primarily encouraging them, to be frank, to "stick to their knitting." There was a feeling that the Inspector General's Office was becoming involved, not in audits, but in the traditional evaluation function. We felt that this evaluation function was being taken over by the Auditor's Office under General Beckington, who had been there for a long time. We felt that this office should do audits, primarily audits requested by AID Missions, rather than taking on its own "agenda." More and more, the Auditor's Office was setting up its own agenda and spent most of its time looking at “their issues” such as program assistance, the use of local currency, and certain host country contracting techniques.

We discouraged that practice. We tried very carefully to encourage the Inspector General's Office to become more a part of AID, rather than separate from it. Now, obviously, that's a very "political" question. Peter McPherson, the AID Administrator, was the key "interlocutor" on that. However, I remember doing some analyses of the audits which had been done and how the IG Office was using its resources. I helped to put together some recommendations on how we thought the IG's Office might be better used to serve the agency.

Q: Did these recommendations have any effect on the IG's Office?

PIELEMEIER: None at all. As far as I can tell and under the next AID Administrator, who was not as good a manager as McPherson had been, conditions in this respect deteriorated significantly.

Q: We can go back to this later, but what was your sense of how AID operated?

PIELEMEIER: One of Buster Brown's major activities was to "rope in" [slow down] Peter McPherson, the AID Administrator. McPherson was a man of new initiatives, and he had lots of them. In fact, at times you could count them up, and there might be as many as 50 new initiatives on the table which hadn't gone away. Everybody was supposed to be working on them. Part of the whole task was to "rope in" McPherson and determine what are the four or five major things that AID should be working on. However, McPherson was a "builder." I think that he was also good in terms of working on the role of AID in the US Government. He was trying to take on tasks which the Treasury Department now has taken on, such as the review of multilateral bank funding and lending. He thought that AID, as the U.S. government's premier development agency, should be reviewing these loans because we would know more about whether they were feasible or not, rather than the Treasury Department, which would simply look at them from a financial or political point of view.

Eventually, McPherson set up an office in PPC [Program Office] to review and comment on MDB projects. However, AID's overall role in that function has now diminished. We have some input, but it is fairly minor, and the Treasury Department is carrying out that role. In fact, Peter McPherson moved to the Treasury Department when he left AID. One of the things that he did there was to increase the capacity of the Treasury Department to prepare careful analyses of lending. One now finds people from the Treasury Department who call themselves, "Third World Economists." These "Third World Economists" work on these kinds of issues.

Q: What were some of the initiatives that you can recall?

PIELEMEIER: McPherson was in his second term as AID Administrator. He had been AID Administrator for five or six years by the time I was assigned to his office, so many of these things were already "on the books." There was an initiative to deal with the "threat" made by Senator Bumpers [Democrat, Arkansas]. This was important and took

time.

Also, to a certain degree Buster Brown and his office, and I was his only staffer, did not get involved in day to day political pressures. We were seen more and more as dealing with "in house" issues proper to AID and trying to resolve them.

Q: Were you dealing with Congress at all?

PIELEMEIER: Very rarely. Sometimes, Buster Brown did, but I did not. In fact, almost never, except on this agriculture related issue raised by Senator Bumpers on exports and imports of agricultural products.

Jay Morris was Buster's deputy. Many people in AID thought that Jay didn't do very much and didn't understand what his role was. Sometimes, I'm not sure that Jay understood what his role was, either. However, he was a very good "politician." He dealt very well with Congress. He was a wonderful speaker. He was the easiest guy to brief. I often briefed him for meetings with prominent people. Later, when I was Director for South Asia, I remember briefing him for meetings with Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto, from Pakistan, who was coming to Washington on a visit. Jay would spend about 30 minutes on a briefing paper and then would know the subject. He would be able to make the key points desired and respond to questions. He was politically a "quick study." I'm sure that he was of value to Peter McPherson in dealing with political issues. He was a pleasant man to work with. He worked with the Hempstone study and several other matters that I was involved with.

After a year working under Buster Brown, Buster was thinking about moving to a different position. We had done a lot of work together and, frankly, I think that we worked extremely well together. He wanted to help me to do well with my next assignment. So he, I think, promoted me for an opening which was becoming available in the ANE [Asia and Near Eastern] Bureau as Director for South Asia. Julia Chang Block was the Assistant Administrator of that bureau. I was interviewed and was eventually chosen to be Director of the Office for South Asia.

Director of the Office for South Asia - 1987

At that time the Office for South Asia covered Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, including the "cross border program" of assistance to Afghanistan in opposing the Soviet invasion of the country in 1979. This "cross border" program was just beginning to grow. This regional program involved a huge amount of resources, when you think of it, and a lot of people. I believe that the total population of these countries amounted to between 1.6 and 1.8 billion people.
In terms of resources, we had hundreds of millions of dollars going into Pakistan each year. We had a significant program, amounting to almost $100 million per year in India. We had a $60 million in Bangladesh. There were smaller but still substantial programs in Sri Lanka and Nepal.

So this was a really interesting job, involving a different part of the world. I had previously worked in Latin America and Africa and now I was going to see development from a South Asian perspective. I was Director of the Office for South Asia for about three years. I thoroughly enjoyed it. We had good Mission Directors in those AID Missions. They didn't need a lot of support from Washington in terms of their various programs. We tried to "service" them from our office. I had a wonderful group of people in the Office for South Asia. They included specialists, people who had worked in the region and were knowledgeable about it, as well as others who were also very good. All of them had wonderful senses of humor. Some of them included Bob Dakan, Jeff Malik, Art Silver, and Bill Sugrue, who came in as the India Desk Officer, Ann McDonald, Jim Manley, who has since died, and Mitsy Lyker, who came in later. They were tremendously likable, and there was tremendous camaraderie. Most of the language spoken around the office was "Asian English," lauded with a sense of humor. I think that it was an office that functioned well. It was very supportive of the various AID Missions, which was our primary function.

We had one major crisis that I was responsible for handling on behalf of AID. There were major floods in Bangladesh. These were periodic floods. The Ganges and the Brahmaputra Rivers came down from two different sides of the Himalaya Mountains. When there was high rainfall in the mountains or the snow melted too quickly, the floods would eventually end up in Bangladesh. Dikes would break, there would be flooding, and villages would be wiped out, with thousands of people drowned or otherwise killed. At a "G-7 Meeting" [Group of the Seven Most Highly Industrialized Countries in the World], the French Prime Minister, Georges Pompidou, and especially Mme. Pompidou, his wife, who had visited Bangladesh, wanted the G-7 countries to take a major initiative to keep these floods from happening periodically. So the question was: "Are the donors going to set aside some resources and do something on a large scale to protect Bangladesh from future catastrophes?" If such a major initiative were to be taken, what should it involve?

The French view was that the G-7 should finance the construction of a system of dikes and canals and control the Brahmaputra River and that part of the Ganges River that flowed through Bangladesh. The Japanese were expected to provide a substantial part of the funds required, but they didn't particularly have a technical view on the matter. The U.S. government was going to be involved but didn't have a lot of resources to offer. We clearly did have a view, which we presented. We formed an interagency task force, and I was the U.S. Government representative for dealing with this matter. This included going up to the UN in New York and acting as our representative at meetings there.

Our interagency task force decided that the worst thing that could be done would be to copy what the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers had done to the Mississippi River. That was essentially trying to control the flow of the rivers in Bangladesh. The view of the task force was that rivers should not be controlled with major dikes. Controlling rivers is very expensive, and, eventually, those controls will break down, with even greater loss of life than we have previously seen and the loss of the capital invested in an unsuccessful effort. We had wonderful, technical advice from the office that dealt with water control and management, which was part of the Global Bureau of AID, as I recall it. Tony

Garvey was the senior Technical Officer.

We devised a program which financed a major study of the whole river system. We contracted with Peter Rogers from Harvard University and with a former State Department officer to carry out the study. Peter was a very well known hydrologist, with a great deal of experience in South Asia and also elsewhere in the world. Peter and his former State Department associate prepared the so-called "Rogers Report," which argued against the French position. It said that the worst thing you can do is to try to control a river. Basically, the aid donors should try to do very little in that sense. The report advised that we should do more in terms of preparedness and help villages to be adaptive to their situations. The floods provide fertility for the soils in Bangladesh. The floods provide the "life blood" for agriculture in this area.

We then tried to convince the Bangladesh Government of the wisdom of this position. However, they wanted lots of donor money. The more money they received, the better. The Bangladesh Government was in favor of the French approach of building dikes and canals to control the river system.

We spent a lot of time working with the Japanese, because they would be a key source of funds. We tried to convince them to come over to our point of view, by meeting Japanese representatives in Bangladesh and going to Tokyo. I formed a wonderful relationship with a Japanese Foreign Service official, who was responsible for their aid program. He later was posted to Washington as a Political Officer in the Japanese Embassy. We spent several Thanksgivings together here in Washington with him and his family.

We provided technical advisers to the Government of Bangladesh. The other aid donor countries did as well. There was a negotiating process, and there was "medium ground" adopted between the various positions. Eventually, however, the major funds provided have not been used for building huge, expensive dikes. More adaptive approaches have been accepted.

Q: What does the term "more adaptive approaches" mean?

PIELEMEIER: Basically, some sorts of controls may be placed on the rivers, but the "more adaptive approaches" involve feeding the water out into the rural areas of Bangladesh, rather than controlling the water along the rivers. One uses sluices, gates, and other things to allow the water, during the peak season, gradually to branch out in a way that provides water to fertilize the ground. This is done rather than trying to control the water by using dikes and canals constructed with concrete and steel.

Q: What about the villages?

PIELEMEIER: The villages are located on relatively higher ground. Controlling the way the water moves out from the dike controls and into the countryside makes it possible to prevent the villages from being inundated, under most circumstances.

Keep in mind that rebuilding villages costs very little. It costs very little to rebuild a Bangladeshi hut. You just need some reeds, sticks, and a little bit of time, and the huts are there again. So it's not like what we think of in the States, in the sense of solidly built structures being damaged by rampaging water. While I worked in the region, I was fascinated by programs of the Grameen Bank and other programs that I saw, working with small scale entrepreneurs in Bangladesh.

Q: Didn't the World Bank have some big levee construction programs in Bangladesh?

PIELEMEIER: The World Bank was involved in the water control program, but its input involved mainly engineering. IBRD environmentalists had very little say in what the World Bank did in Bangladesh. We had a combination of engineers and environmental specialists working with our team. I think that made a big difference in adopting what we saw as a more balanced approach. We had some social scientists working with us as well. The World Bank people that we dealt with were almost all engineers, and they were talking with Bangladeshi and French engineers, for the most part. This was not at all a multi-disciplinary approach. So the World Bank was part of the problem, from our point of view.

Q: There has been a major and quite critical reevaluation of their program. Well, let's take some of the other countries that you oversaw. What did you think of what we were trying to do and what did you think about the situation in the other countries that you were working on?

PIELEMEIER: These were fascinating countries. I learned from people who had spent much more time in the region than I had.

I think that India is a wonderful example of development. The Indians have controlled their political system in a democratic way for many years. India is a giant. It seems to look like Russia or China. I would compare it to Russia, China, Canada, and Brazil. All of these countries have certain similarities in terms of their economies. Because they are such large economies, they tend to be self-sufficient, and they traditionally have closed their borders to imports.

India is very similar to Brazil, in that there are a lot of family enterprises which have been developed over the years. The various sectors of the economy are very family-oriented and protectionist. If you move to modernize these economies, you have to deal with those families. The economic situation breaks down essentially into an oligopolistic structure. India, under Rajiv Gandhi and others, has tended to take two steps forward, in terms of liberalization, and then one step and maybe two steps back. It's a very "lurching" process which has to do with the political forces there.

Q: Did you have any role in that process or were you trying to do anything in connection with it at that time?

PIELEMEIER: At this time we were dealing with a technical assistance program. We

were not dealing with "macroeconomic" issues. The aid program did quite a bit to introduce private sector initiatives into India, especially in the energy and environmental fields. This involved working on private development and private power and also working through private banks to make funds available to encourage innovative research on new products. This was done, using basic raw materials from India. For example, we encouraged new ways to process asparagus or to can it, so that it can be exported to the European market and be more attractive.

Q: How did that work?

PIELEMEIER: Those were wonderful, success stories. I personally had very little to do with them but I had a chance to see them. In fact, just a month ago, there was a front page article in "The Wall Street Journal" on an officer from the AID Mission in India who has just done something similar by privatizing the water and sewage system in the capital of one of the major states in India. The article went through the various roles that he performed in trying to cajole and use technical advice and advisers to move things forward. In India aid donors have to step back and look carefully at where they can play a role and lead.

We had some very good programs dealing with child survival in India. That was initially where a lot of our child survival success occurred. I believe that there is a "Home Visitor Program" which was initiated with some AID advisers involved, who worked in the State of Gujarat and a couple of other states. Then it was adopted by all of India and, subsequently, throughout much of the world.

At this point our aid program to India involved a lot of food aid and a lot of innovative use of food aid, especially in the poorer areas of the country. I visited some sites near Madras in southern India. I found that food aid was absolutely essential for the "untouchables" and other groups.

Q: Did this involve "food for work," or was it just the provision of food?

PIELEMEIER: I don't remember whether this involved the "food for work" program, in terms of building agriculture-related projects, drilling wells, and building water storage tanks in exchange for food.

Q: Did you find that that was an efficient way to work?

PIELEMEIER: Well, it was what we had. In some cases there was a desire to use "cash for work," rather than "food for work." In fact, this led to the monetization of food aid [extending food aid in the form of money]. From a practical point of view, this is a very good idea. Some of those programs involving the monetization of food aid were being tested in India, maybe for the first time. Then they used the cash resources to pay people who were working on projects like building wells and that sort of thing.

On this occasion in southern India I met some of the most destitute people whom I ever

met in my life. They were working on some of these projects. Clearly, they and their villages had been helped by these resources. These people were "outcasts" and groups not receiving much assistance from the government or from other sources.

India is a fascinating country. I remember getting on a plane to go to Madras. I was sitting next to an older woman dressed in a traditional Indian "sari." I wanted to chat with her. I thought that it would be nice to do so but I wasn't sure that she spoke English. I tentatively made a few remarks, and it was clear that she spoke English. Then we talked more generally. She was a medical doctor and a trained, research specialist who had a Ph. D. She had been trained at Johns Hopkins University in the United States. She was going down to Madras to attend an international conference on child survival. Not only could this woman speak English, she was the "creme de la creme" in terms of her educational attainment in India. However, you could not tell this from her dress. Practically speaking, you could not distinguish her from a village woman. The practice of dressing inconspicuously and other such things make India fascinating.

There was also a very strong Family Planning and Child Survival Program. The program was very health-oriented. A lot of the basic research dealing with child survival and the use of oral rehydration packets stemmed from work which AID had financed in Bangladesh. Clearly, these were ideas that Jim Grant picked up on and then were very successfully marketed for UNICEF [UN Children's Emergency Fund]. All of this goes back to AID-funded research. AID did not, as is typical of its programs, try to make this program a kind of "magic bullet" to make it attractive to carry out more widely and to popularize it. AID technicians don't do a very good job of that, and it takes someone like Jim Grant to use these ideas to raise money and to get more money for development.

The programs in Bangladesh were difficult to implement. There were periodic changes in the government, and there was a lot of opposition to privatization in the agricultural sector. People, even American staffers, were caught inside buildings, with irate employees fearing privatization outside throwing rocks at the buildings. There were several incidents like that. There was a great deal of leftist opposition to privatization in the agricultural marketing area and in the input supply area. Privatization was one of the conditions for our providing food assistance. It was very successful. I think that it was quite successful in getting changes made.

Q: You mean that setting conditions really works?

PIELEMEIER: Yes.

Q: People were willing to make a change?

PIELEMEIER: Changes were made eventually. It took time and effort, but there were enough resources available that it was attractive to people to make these changes. Once again, the combination of technical, program, and project assistance together worked very nicely. In some cases it involved food aid, as well as program assistance.

Q: Can you give some examples of success in imposing conditions?

PIELEMEIER: Clearly, for example, opening up the fertilizer market to imports and opening up the agricultural marketing system were examples. Previously, the government had been the only purchaser of key agricultural produce. The private sector was allowed to get involved in this area. There were improvements made in the marketing system. There was a marketing board which has continued to function, I think. There was a grain storage system which was quite elaborate. AID had been involved in funding this program, using resources acquired under PL 480 [US Public Law 480 on the sales abroad of surplus agricultural products].

Some of the conditions imposed had to do with the management of this system which, I think, were based on very good analysis and turned out quite successfully.

Agriculture and health were the areas in Bangladesh where the AID Mission was primarily working.

The program in Pakistan was more politically oriented. Part of our money was provided in the form of cash. Some of it involved transfer assistance. I think that there were CPs [Coordination Precedent] on some of the program assistance. Jim Norris was the Mission Director. I did not personally get that much involved in the program, because it was in good hands. We had a very large, private sector energy program. I think that Pakistan was the first country where we were really trying to privatize major energy producers and encourage private sector production of power that could feed into distribution lines that would be managed by the government. This was along the lines of some of the State of California programs.

Q: How did you go about privatizing energy generation?

PIELEMEIER: This involved years of work and large amounts of money from the World Bank, the IFC [International Finance Corporation], and other donors, including private banks. Essentially, a private sector company would have to purchase energy systems and then have the resources to run it. They would have to enter into debt to obtain the resources to purchase these energy generating systems. There was a very elaborate system. These private sector companies would either be owned by Pakistanis or by foreign investors. First of all, we had to have Pakistani legislation to allow the foreign investors to do this. I think that this was a very slow process. I understand that it has had some success in Pakistan.

Sri Lanka is a very fascinating little country where AID financed the major irrigation system, the Mahaweli system. This system provided water and therefore opened up the agricultural potential for the whole central and eastern part of the island.

Q: We were the major financiers of this irrigation system?

PIELEMEIER: We were the major financiers. The World Bank was also involved, but

AID did most of the design work and invested tens of millions of dollars. We also provided technical assistance to this project. I think that this was generally seen as a successful program.

When I was involved with the South Asian region, most of the construction on this project had been completed. They were basically moving toward settling people in these areas, encouraging agricultural inputs and outputs and marketing their agricultural products.

The private sector was the focus of the program, in general, in South Asia. We were also trying to build up a stock exchange in Sri Lanka, for example, working with the Privatization Commission. Peter Bloom was the AID Mission Director at the time. He had a very good background for this kind of work.

In Sri Lanka, we were also dealing with an insurrection, which has been going on now for 15 years. During part of this time there were "lulls" and a potential for reconciliation between the warring parties. We had a Rehabilitation and Reconciliation Program which we financed in the "marginal areas" where the "Tamil Tigers" [as the dissident group was called] had control. This program involved rehabilitating the irrigation system and rebuilding housing that had been destroyed.

On one of my field trips to Sri Lanka the people in the AID Mission had decided to take me farther into the dissident area than they had ever gone before, since there was a lull in the fighting. We traveled in an Embassy-related vehicle, as this was an Embassy-related team. We went up to a province, whose name I can't remember. The District Officer, who was the local government official responsible for that area, had done a very good job of coordinating with the "Tamil Tigers" and with other government officials. There was a large Indian military camp very close to his headquarters. At this time the Indian Army was involved militarily but unsuccessfully in Sri Lanka. However, I could see that there was a squash court in the Indian military camp.

On the last day of my visit the District Officer had seen enough to feel confident about his visitors. He took me and two of my colleagues from the USAID Mission to visit rehabilitated irrigation sites. We came to the first such site, and there was nobody there. At the other site there had been many people around, thanking us for our assistance. So we wondered what was going on at this site. We walked around the perimeter of the irrigation area and came back to a little house, where we had parked our vehicle.

When we came back to the house, there were two, very tall young men in camouflage uniforms standing there with their rifles. There was a third person there who, it turned out, was the Regional Director for the "Tamil Tigers." He had come to meet me. [Laughter] I suppose that this was a major, diplomatic initiative of some sort. This was totally unexpected but had been arranged by the Sri Lankan Government DO [District Officer], who put this meeting together. We sat down. The Tiger leader wanted to talk about programs which he thought were not working well. He said: "First of all, the engineers are pocketing some of the money allocated for this program. They say that the

work is done and that it has been contracted out. However, only part of the work has been done. They say that it is finished, but you people don't come and inspect it, and in fact it's not finished. Then they take part of the money which should have been used."

So we had a good discussion. When we got down to details, it turned out that the project he was describing wasn't a project that AID was involved in. It was being financed by other aid donors. However, this was something which could have happened with one of our projects. Then the "Tamil Tiger" leader expressed concern about a housing project which, it turned out, was financed by the UNDP [UN Development Program]. We tried to be receptive to his suggestions and to explain to him what we were doing. In general, I felt that I was potentially talking to the next "governor" for that province. If there was a reconciliation and an election, the "Tamil Tigers" would probably win, and he would probably be the leader for that region.

The "Tamil Tiger" talked about having dropped out of high school because he had been fighting. I sensed that he was probably 11 or 12 years old when he first joined the "Tamil Tigers." He had aspirations to go on to university studies. He had given up on his aspiration to be an engineer in order to fight and had been fighting for 10 or 12 years. He had generally been quite successful as a military leader. I had to feel some admiration for these people for their tenacity. On the other hand, this insurrection had destroyed much of Sri Lanka.

There never was a reconciliation. The next week after we left that area, a UN vehicle went up there and was "hijacked." Visits to the area stopped, and soon afterwards fighting began again. I have no idea what finally happened there. This situation has "fluctuated" now for probably about 15 years. It was interesting for me to have been involved in one little "snippet" of it, and to see the face of a Tiger leader.

Q: And to discuss the political situation with you and so forth. Was there anything further that you discussed?

PIELEMEIER: We talked about reconciliation between the various groups. Basically, the housing for the Tamils was separate from the housing for the Sinhalese, as had been the case in these villages before the insurrection began, but still within the same, general area. The whole approach of the Reconciliation and Rehabilitation Program was that people would have to live side by side and that there would be a democratic process of some sort.

What the "Tamil Tigers" wanted was total control of certain areas. There were areas where they were outnumbered and areas where they were not outnumbered. Where they were in the majority, they wanted control. In areas where they were not in the majority, they had been going through a process of killing other groups, massacring groups of Muslims or Buddhists and essentially forcing them to flee the area concerned. So this was a kind of "scorched earth" approach.

I won't go into further details, but there still are some good assistance programs in the

central and southern part of Sri Lanka which were successful. I think that it was a very good program.

Nepal is another area which was very fascinating. We were working with private sector forestry issues, through community control of forests, which was a new initiative. For the first time the Nepalese Government was under pressure. The King of Nepal was under pressure. It wasn't long after I was working in the region that the King was forced to give up his political power, and democratic elections took place. There have been typical back and forth developments as to who controls the government. The forestry programs were very innovative. I think that, generally, they were seen as successful. There were also significant health programs, involving the introduction of Vitamin A pills into the hillside communities to deal with a vitamin deficiency which was very severe.

Q: Were there any remnants of the Integrated Rural Development approach?

PIELEMEIER: Yes, I went to a forestry project in the southern part of the country.

Q: How was that project working?

PIELEMEIER: I think that it was seen as a moderate success. It was moving into the third phase, I believe.

Q: What year was this?

PIELEMEIER: This would have covered the period from 1985 to 1989. AID was only one of several donors of assistance. I never evaluated these projects carefully myself but I think that there were strong and weak points. In general, rural development programs were too extensive for those countries to handle. There were too many things going on at once. They didn't have the human resource base to be able to manage them from the local point of view. Aid donors were trying to do too much. Frankly, aid donors didn't do a very good job in working with each other. This was true of most of the African cases that I have known, and the situation was similar in South Asia. So that's why most of us more or less abandoned the Integrated Rural Development approach. AID did a lot of work with national parks in Nepal, setting up the first national parks and conservation programs.

Nepal was the place where I first rode an elephant. While doing so, we also chased down a tiger.

We did a lot of work on environmental and agricultural issues. A lot of the focus of the program was on agriculture, including agricultural marketing and production. We worked on the development of alternative crops which could be introduced into the Indian market, for example. But Nepal is a very poor country and, except for the cultural differences, the Indians see it as an appendage of India which should be a part of India.

As we dealt with Nepal, we also had to deal with the issues related to the headwaters of

the major rivers which flowed down through India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan and were the "life's blood" of those countries. What was done with these rivers was also very critical. Some of these rivers have been dammed by Nepal for the production and sale of electricity. These projects have largely been World Bank related, but some of them are in the RAPTI.

It became clear that the Afghan "Cross Border" program was going to grow rapidly. I was essentially faced with the choice of spending more time on the Afghan program or spending my time backstopping and supporting the programs in the other five countries. As I am not a "Cold Warrior" by inclination, I decided to do the latter. The Afghan "Cross Border" program was managed by Larry Crandall, out of Islamabad, Pakistan. I was involved in going to Pakistan from time to time, accompanying Julia Chang Block and others on trips. I later worked under her successor, Carol Adelman. However, I was not involved in the management of the "Cross Border" program.

Q: Was the "Cross Border" program working at this time?

PIELEMEIER: I think that the "Cross Border" program was successful in terms of providing medical assistance and a modest amount of educational assistance to groups that were fighting the Soviet Army in Afghanistan at that time. I think, however, that the "macro" aspect of politics that was going on at the time has been pretty much of a disaster. That is more the case for Afghanistan than for Pakistan.

However, there were some humorous things that occurred, one of which I will relate here. Julia Chang Block is a very aggressive and very small, Oriental woman. I went on a trip with her to Peshawar, which is the city closest to the Pakistani border with Afghanistan and where many of the activities involved in the "Cross Border" program took place.

Julia visited an AID-financed, mule handling facility. This involved the importation of Tennessee mules to Afghanistan, because most of the local mules or donkeys had been killed in the fighting in Afghanistan over the years. They needed a re-supply of these animals. People decided to try out these Tennessee mules. The mules were placed into the holds of military aircraft, flown to Pakistan, and then transferred to a facility in Peshawar where they were trained to become pack animals. The Afghan pack handlers and users of the mules were there. This training facility was something to see. We took Julia to visit it. The head of the facility came out. Julia immediately grabbed this guy's hand and shook it, which was something which a woman doesn't do in that kind of traditional, Muslim culture. Women and men do not shake hands.

The conversation went on for a while, and Julia left this person and walked around the facility. Later, talking to Larry Crandall, I said that I had noted the man's astonishment when Julia shook his hand. I said: "What do you think he's doing right now?" Instead, Larry said: "He's probably cutting off his hand" because he had become "unclean" from having touched the hand of a strange, foreign woman. Julia had shaken his right hand, too, [and he would be forced to eat with his left hand, which was ritually "unclean"!]. So, culturally, this incident shows that we are not necessarily ready for dealing with the

Afghans.

I worked with the program in South Asia for three years. I had a major policy difference with the woman who replaced Julia Chang Bloch as the Assistant Administrator of the ANE Bureau, Carol Adelman. She had worked previously with U.S. private sector pharmaceutical companies. Her major policy initiative was to encourage private sector health activities. She was interested in dealing with what she saw as "new" health problems, such as dealing with the aged, chronic diseases like cancer, and heart problems. She wanted to privatize health systems throughout the ANE region.

I felt, and my colleagues in South Asia certainly felt, that a program like this might be somewhat appropriate for Morocco, Egypt, and Jordan, as well as more advanced developing countries on the eastern side of the ANE region, such as Thailand. However, we felt that it was not appropriate for such poor countries as Bangladesh, India, or Pakistan, which continued to have very high population growth rates, high infant and child mortality, and diseases that could be best addressed through immunizations. These were USAID's strongest program areas in the health sector. It came to the point where I clearly opposed Carol Adelman in her efforts to radically change the South Asian health portfolio. I supported the views of the AID Missions for which I was responsible in opposing changing what were very successful and very much needed health programs. Certainly, you can do more "social marketing" and other things, using the private sector. However, in my view you shouldn't essentially turn around 180 degrees, which was what Carol Adelman wanted to do.

It became clear that, to put it diplomatically, she did not appreciate my point of view. When positions in ANE became available for my next assignment, I was not being considered for them. She made the final decisions on leadership positions in her bureau, and she had decided she had seen enough of my independence. To the last I was hoping that there would be an overseas assignment available for me in the South Asian region, but she was not about to give it to me. The AID personnel people asked themselves what was to be done with me, and I was eventually assigned to a year of training at the Industrial College of the Armed Forces for a year. [Laughter] Very frankly, I think that is what happened.

Q: What happened to this policy of hers? Did anything come of it?

PIELEMEIER: It lasted only as long as she was in the job.

Q: So it never really penetrated to the countries involved?

PIELEMEIER: Oh, I don't think that it had any significant impact in the countries which I dealt with in the Office of South Asian Affairs. It had political support from people on Capitol Hill who thought that it was important. This was the kind of support that was absolutely critical. In the long run Carol's initiative did not make a major dent in the focus of the ongoing programs in South Asia and probably had marginal impact in other ANE countries. Some things on the margins changed. However, the battle took its toll as

scarce health funds were siphoned away from child survival to start new projects which met Adelman's priorities.

Q: Was there any reaction from the State Department about these issues?

PIELEMEIER: I interacted a great deal with State on issues throughout the region. Of course, I attended the State Department staff meetings for South Asia. We were involved primarily in the Afghanistan-Pakistan issue. There was a lot of interaction between AID and State on that subject and, of course, on the "cross border" program. There was also a tremendous amount of interaction with the Department of Defense and their programs. They used their aircraft to ferry wounded Afghani "mujahideen" back to the States for certain kinds of medical treatment. We were involved in this through the "cross border" program.

Q: What happened to the people on the side we supported? Do you have any ideas?

PIELEMEIER: Well, the side we supported was fractious. I think that there were nine different groups of mujahideen. The balance between them always seemed to be changing. One of the objectives, I think, was to bring them into a coalition so that they could fight successfully against the Soviet-backed regime in Afghanistan. For their own political reasons, they kept breaking apart. Even when the Soviets left Afghanistan, these groups continued to break apart into factions. This is still a major reason why there is no real peace in Afghanistan.

We dealt with some of these leaders. As I mentioned before, we dealt with Benazir Bhutto. At one point she was in the U.S. for a meeting with the President. We arranged the signing of a major project in Pakistan with her. I accompanied her to the Treaty Room, on the eighth floor of the State Department, where this agreement was signed.

Generally, there was a lot of interaction with the State Department. I think that, in general, the State Department felt that AID should follow State Department's guidance, especially on the "cross border" activities. I won't go into all of the issues related to the politics of that, but there was a lot of support from individuals on Capitol Hill. People from AID and State were in direct contact with those Congressmen.

Q: What were they pushing for?

PIELEMEIER: They were pushing for bigger "cross-border" programs and resources earmarked for the "cross border" programs.

In general the desk officers in the State Department working on India, Sri Lanka, or Pakistan, for example, saw AID as a modest part of the overall program. Bangladesh and Nepal were clearly the other way around. AID was the major US Government influence. So it differed, but I think that the relationships were good.

Attended the Industrial College of the Armed Forces - 1989

At the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, or ICAF, which I attended...

Q: What year was this?

PIELEMEIER: This would have been 1990-1991. It was a good "break." It was like a sabbatical, in a way. Some of the training was totally useless, such as mobilization theory. However, if you were a civilian, you didn't have to take a lot of the military course work. It was more...

Q: What courses were useful to you?

PIELEMEIER: The idea was to take lieutenant colonels or officers about to be promoted to lieutenant colonel and train them more broadly, give them an economics background, political science, political theory, international relations, international economics, and basically to broaden their scope. They had received pretty narrow military training. Previously, ICAF gave these officers an opportunity to interact with officers from other government agency personnel as peers. So the idea of this course of studies was a good one. About 40 percent of the class was composed of civilians to complement the military people.

There were only two AID people at ICAF this particular year. At the beginning of the year, ICAF gave all students a test on our political beliefs, which they would never give at any public institution now. The test contained some deliberately provocative questions. For example, this question was asked: "President Reagan is the reason why U.S. foreign policy has 'gone to the dogs.' Do you agree totally or partially, or do you disagree totally or partially?" Another question was: "Jimmy Carter's human rights policy was desperately needed and has made a very positive impact on American foreign policy. Do you agree or disagree?" So there were questions like that. Then the faculty would "score" you and let your "seminar group" know what your "score" was. If you wanted to divulge your score to others, you could.

The "seminar groups" at ICAF were composed of about 20 people. In my "seminar group" about 18 of the 20 were rated to the right of "zero" on the scale. This meant that, essentially, the "seminar group" was on the conservative side. In fact, some of the class members were quite conservative, which you might expect, as most of them were military officers. There was one Air Force Lieutenant Colonel who was rated a "minus three" but was still close to the center in his views. I was rated a "minus 43"!

Q: You were on the liberal side.

PIELEMEIER: I was on the liberal side by far, compared with the other members of the class. It became clear why I was in the class. I had been included to instill debate in the class. This was what happened throughout much of the class. I would raise issues and put forward points of view that they weren't used to hearing. Actually, it was quite a lot of fun. There was a lot of debating and discussion. Very sharply different points of view

were put forward. I learned to have a lot of respect for the military. I had never been in the military service myself, because of medical problems, as I mentioned previously. I very much enjoyed associating with many of the people in the class whom I got to know. In the second semester...

Q: What did you get out of it?

PIELEMEIER: A lot of things were beginning to happen. The Berlin Wall was down, Gorbachev was beginning to change things in the Soviet Union, and there was a lot of writing and discussion about what was going to happen with the "New World Order." I did a lot of research and thought a lot about the end of the Cold War and the implications for a development program and development strategy. In other words, what AID as an agency should be doing.

I also had time to do an "in depth" research paper. I decided to do a paper on a subject which had intrigued me over the years. This was the relationship between development and military expenditures in the Third World. The development agencies usually ignore host government spending on military programs. The host governments were often spending money on military programs, while we were pumping in money to finance health and educational systems. So I decided to do some work on the relationship between these factors.

I really enjoyed this work. I found a faculty adviser who knew something about the subject. I put together a paper which, in my view, pretty well exhausted the subject in terms of the written material available. I also talked with people at the World Bank to see whether they were considering placing policy conditions on military expenditures, to the degree that that was possible. I considered how aid donors could influence the military expenditures, at what level, and under what circumstances would such a limitation be possible. I came up with some hypotheses on how donors could influence the level of military expenditures and ways that they could go about it, as well as under what circumstances we could go about it. There were two parties to most conflicts. You had to do this with both combatants being involved at the same time. You had to be able to influence both sides of this debate.

It was clear that there were certain regions of the world, such as South Asia, where it would be very difficult to deal simultaneously with two traditional enemies, such as India and Pakistan. However, in other regions, such as Latin America, such donors might influence military spending. You could combine political negotiations and diplomacy, with the use of economic resources, to have some impact on reducing arms purchases within a given region.

So that was a fascinating exercise. Actually, my paper got the "DIA" [Defense Intelligence Agency] award for that year. Various agencies which had people assigned to ICAF gave out awards for different projects.

Q: Is that paper available now?

PIELEMEIER: At the time I was toying with the idea of turning this paper into a book. At least one person encouraged me to do so. However, this didn't happen, primarily because the person I was asked to work with at ICAF, and who was going to review it for me, never did it. However, he later published several articles on similar themes!

Q: Was the paper very long?

PIELEMEIER: It was probably about 200 pages long. It was fairly extensive.

Q: I was trying to think if there was some way that we could attach it to this interview. Is there some way that we could attach it to this interview?

PIELEMEIER: I'm not sure how relevant this paper is now. I'll dig it out and see if it is.

Q: That's not really the point. Take a look at it and see...

PIELEMEIER: Perhaps I have an "Executive Summary" of it.

Q: Perhaps we could include it with this interview. People might be able to use it as a point of reference.

PIELEMEIER: Various kinds of research is being done in this situation. It's a wonderful opportunity. I know that when Dave Shear was assigned to the War College, he wrote a paper which was the basis for the REDSO system. He put together the details of what that might mean for Africa. After his course at the War College was over, he came back to the African Bureau, and not long after that, they established the REDSO offices in Abidjan and Nairobi.

I got a lot out of this year in terms of learning about other US Government agencies. During this year I updated myself on how development theory relates to military theory and military resources. I learned a lot about why we the U.S. spends a lot more on military resources than we should. I also learned that there is even opposition within the U.S. military against a lot of these expenditures. I think that the military side of our budget is too large.

There were a lot of State Department people in these courses. I got to meet several of them. Again, the research paper was valuable. Near the end of this year at ICAF, it became clear that I'd been assigned back to Brazil, which was something that I must be thankful to Ray Love and Bob McDonald for. Roy knew that I had been in Brazil before. The Agency was looking for someone to replace Howard Hillman, the person who preceded me in Brazil. I had recommended Howard for the Latin American Bureau. However, my assignment to Brazil more or less came "out of the blue" for me. I was extremely pleased. I spent time doing research on Brazil and preparing for that assignment. I did papers on developments in the southern part of South America, especially "Mercosur" [Common Market of the South], one of the regional, economic

groupings that were forming throughout the world.

A final note on this War College assignment. Two things that you get from any War College assignment. They do a lot of testing to help you with being psychologically prepared for the latter part of your career. They teach "stress management." They almost demand that you do a significant amount of physical activity to ensure that you are physically well as well as mentally sound. There were facilities, including exercise and weight rooms, sports programs, and a golf course readily available. You were taught how to "monitor" yourself in terms of your stress levels and how you react to stress. All of that was very good. It is good for any senior manager from AID who goes to one of these senior training programs.

Q: We covered Brazil before, but this was your second time there. We had a long discussion about this time, when you were beginning to work with the voluntary agencies, private groups, and all of that. We covered that quite thoroughly. Was that your last assignment in AID?

PIELEMEIER: That was my last assignment. We were planning to come back to the US after three years because we wanted our son to finish his last two years of high school in the States. My wife was on leave without pay from her job with AID. About six months before I was supposed to come back to the U.S. I received a phone call from Bob McDonald, who was the head of Senior Foreign Service personnel assignments. He said that I was included in a list of people whose “time in class (TIC)” were not going to be extended further. There were 50 of us in that group that year.

Q: I remember. That was a terrible thing.

PIELEMEIER: Many of the people on that list were extremely talented. I was very pleased to be part of that group, actually.

Concluding observations

Q: Let me ask you a general question of how you felt about the interaction between foreign policy interests and AID development assistance. Did you find that they were reasonably compatible, or did you find that foreign policy and security interests, political considerations, and other things were disruptive of what you were trying to do on the development assistance side?

PIELEMEIER: It really depends on the region. In general, I think that these considerations are reasonably compatible when reasonable people are involved. The more highly political these considerations get, then the more the White House and the President get involved. I think that development almost always tends to take a "back seat" to short run pressures. I think that in most cases these considerations are compatible. It is part of our foreign policy to encourage economic development. AID has to realize that it is only one part of this total foreign policy picture.

Q: Did you find that there were programs that you were working on which were "set back" because of political objectives and interests or programs that you had to get into which you didn't feel were appropriate?

PIELEMEIER: Only in two cases. There were times in Liberia when we might have said: "Let's not provide this cash transfer to the Liberian Government because the conditions have not been sufficiently met." However, there was pressure to "move ahead," just because we had to pay the debt and get the other donor funding flowing.

Q: So we paid the debt to Liberia so that they could get funds from other donors?

PIELEMEIER: Yes. That wasn't unusual. The ambassador at the time, Bill Swing, was an intelligent, reasonable man who took AID's concerns seriously. I can't even say for sure that I feel badly about any of that.

I think that the "cross border" program from Pakistan into Afghanistan, which seemed laudable at the time, may have been carried out as well as possible. There were a lot of auditable issues related to that and a lot of political pressure to make that program grow. There was probably a lot of money wasted because of the foreign policy imperatives involved. That would be the one example that I could think of which, in my view, was questionable.

Remember that I hadn't worked in Central America, where a lot of money was spent for political purposes. I didn't work in the former Soviet Union or Eastern Europe, where money was spent very quickly. In most areas where money went in very quickly, such as the Sahel and southern Africa, and even in Bangladesh and in programs like that, we were able to design and manage those programs well.

Q: Looking back at the programs that you were associated with, in designing and so on, do you think that the foreign assistance program, in the perspective that you have of it, made a difference?

PIELEMEIER: Absolutely.

Q: How would you characterize them?

PIELEMEIER: In many ways AID has been an initiator of many kinds of programs.

Q: Could you elaborate on that?

PIELEMEIER: We talked about the child survival program in Bangladesh and about the ORT and immunization work across Africa. There were programs which I saw in Brazil during my first tour, in the 1970s where institutions were created with AID help, and when I went back to Brazil 25 years later, they were thriving. The Institute for Public Administration provided assistance to neighboring countries. It was so successful. The whole agricultural sector in Brazil grew, in part, because of the AID inputs. In southern

Africa I think that a lot of our programs were helpful in terms of developing institutions and programs that were much better than they would have been otherwise. I think that, throughout the world, you find individuals now in key positions who were trained, usually at the master's degree level, with AID resources. Now you often find junior cadres who were sent to the same U.S. schools for training, but with host government rather than AID funding. The senior people knew that the institution in the United States was a good school and they continued to have ties with it. I think that the overall participant training program has been very successful. It built a knowledge of American and utilization of Western technology and a basic understanding of how the "First World" works.

So in general if you look across different areas, such as health and family planning, there were clearly major successes. I evaluated the whole HIV/AIDS portfolio a year or so ago. We were basically the donor who decided what the short list of interventions should be, that would make a difference - a three-pronged approach to dealing with HIV/AIDS. This approach has now been adopted by all of the major donors. Again, it was the technical leadership which AID provided. We were the first donor to work with HIV/AIDS in most countries.

In the environment area, I think that we had a lot of success in terms of being the major donor involved in promoting parks and conservation. Certainly, the World Bank and many others have been far behind us. They have essentially adopted hints and ideas that we helped to develop. They are now using them with their own resources.

Q: What about your experience with program assistance, using the "conditionality" process? Do you think that this was the right approach?

PIELEMEIER: I think that this approach has worked wonderfully. In Madagascar, where I worked recently, I saw an example of program assistance melded with project assistance. One of the conditions precedent for receiving $6.0 million in program assistance was...

Q: Was it just balance of payments assistance?

PIELEMEIER: No, this money was going to the Madagascar Ministry of Finance. In this case the Madagascar Government had to raise the "stumpage" fee for logs which were cut in the country. The "stumpage fee" is a sum of money which the logger pays when he brings a log out to the road on his truck. He goes through "check points" where he is supposed to pay. This fee was raised from a minimal amount to what one could sell that product for in the market place in the capital. The funds derived from "stumpage fees" were set aside in a separate account, which pays all of the salary expenses of the Madagascar Forestry Service. So that one condition precedent has allowed people to be paid their salaries throughout the Madagascar Forestry Service.

Program assistance was the easiest way to do it. We had some technical people who worked on an analysis of what the "stumpage fee" should be and how to set up the fund

for paying salaries. I think that this was a wonderful mechanism. In certain places it can and should be used more.

Q: Well, you may want to cite other examples later, but how would you characterize AID as an agency in the development community, and so on, as a foreign assistance agency?

PIELEMEIER: Right now?

Q: No, from your experience.

PIELEMEIER: On the basis of my experience, I think that it is the first among equals among the bilateral donors. Despite the financial resources which the various development banks have, I feel that AID had better, technical skills. I'm not sure that that is the case any longer. We provided leadership, and there are still areas where we can provide leadership. Our "in country" presence gives us the ability to provide what other aid donors have not been able to do. With a corps of high quality technical and program staff with experience you won't find any aid donor better placed than AID to influence a given situation.

AID resources are "constrained." They are "constrained" more and more by budgets and ear marks. This tends to constrain flexibility. AID also constrains itself in many ways.

Q: Such as?

PIELEMEIER: It is difficult to make small grants. There is also the review and approval process for NGOs [Non Governmental Organizations]. There are general control and financial management obstacles that you have to go through to make resources available, especially in small amounts. Many of us would like AID to wear "sandals," as it were [i.e., to be simpler] and to provide small amounts of money here and there. This could make a difference. However, we are pretty "heavy" as an aid donor. We wear “big boots.” AID is not as "heavy" a donor as some organizations, but we are pretty "heavy." We would be better off wearing shoes, if not boots [i. e., being simpler]. We should lighten the administrative load that we are carrying. Frankly, some of the other aid donors are more flexible than AID is. So AID should work at becoming more flexible.

Q: How would you characterize your career in AID?

PIELEMEIER: I thought that I was very lucky. I have trouble thinking of more than one person whom I didn't like during my whole career. I have found wonderful people to work with in AID. Normally, AID is dealing with issues in circumstances that are hard to beat in terms of a useful career. That is, improving the lives of people who are often desperately poor but definitely can use the help AID can provide.

Q: If you were to advise someone going into a career in AID, where you spent a career, what guidance would you give them. What would you say to them about what works and what doesn't work, how you approach your job, and so forth?

PIELEMEIER: The major thing that I would say is to try to see the "big picture," try to go outside of your particular "niche," and try to see the various elements of how AID works. They should try to see that AID itself is quite limited. To find out what works in the development area, you have to look carefully at the programs of other donors at programs in countries outside of the region where you have been serving, to think broadly, use academic research and try to "keep a hand in" on what is going on in academic circles and other, related areas.

Q: In working with the aid recipient country, are there any particular techniques that you would recommend?

PIELEMEIER: There have been generations of donor assistance. Back in the days shortly after former colonies obtained their independence, aid recipient countries often did not have the manpower to be able to deal "one to one" with donor countries. We are well past that stage in almost every country in the world. More and more as a small aid donor, AID has to find ways of contributing and helping individuals and individual programs, in specific ways that will help those people and programs to achieve their objectives.

That means that you have to have language skills, cultural sensitivity, and a very limited ego. You have to realize that it's not just “your” program that you're dealing with.

I've enjoyed doing this. I've appreciated your suggestions and questions. This interview has brought back a lot of memories that I thought that I had lost.

Q: This has been an excellent interview. Thank you very much.

PIELEMEIER: Thank you.

End of interview