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

LEONARD ROGERS

Interviewed by: Mark Tauber
Initial Interview Date: April 18, 2017

This oral history transcription was made possible through support provided by U.S. Agency for International Development, under terms of Cooperative Agreement No. AID-OAA-F-16-00101. The opinions expressed herein are those of the interviewee and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Agency for International Development or the Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training.

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INTERVIEW

Q: Today is April 18. We're starting our interview with Len Rogers with the question of where you were born and raised.

ROGERS: I was born in Boston, Massachusetts, during the Second World War.

Q: What year?

ROGERS: 1943. My dad was in the Marine Corps, a career Marine officer. We lived all over the East Coast and actually he had a tour in London and a tour in Frankfurt where he had a Navy billet as the aide to the commander of the U.S. European Command, a guy named Handy. From there we came back here to Washington and I have lived in Washington, actually Arlington, for most of my life with a few intermissions.

Q: So, given how you moved around where did you do most of your schooling?

ROGERS: I did schooling in military schools and in local schools when we lived off base. Actually the most interesting schooling experience I had was in London where I went to an English private school and had a great experience, got a fabulous education,

probably the best academic education I had my whole life. And went to a military school over in Germany. We actually lived in a house that had been expropriated from a senior official in IG Farben. So, one of the things I've tried to figure out is who that guy was but haven't really pursued it too much recently. Maybe when retirement slows down a bit.

Q: Which city in Germany were you in?

ROGERS: Near Frankfurt; a little town about eight kilometers outside of Frankfurt called Schoenberg, up in the Harz mountains. A beautiful home, really the best house I ever lived in. It was great. It was an interesting time, soon after World War II, in the early '50s. Germany was just recovering from the war and in very difficult shape. We'd go to the local pool and many of the young men there were mutilated from war wounds. When we were in London the Brits were in difficult shape too. We had a bomb shelter in our back yard. So an interesting and somewhat shocking experience.

Q: Now, are there siblings in your family?

ROGERS: I have one brother, a younger brother who actually may have benefited more from the academic program in England than I did; turned out to be one of their best students whereas it was a struggle for me because I'd been in schools in the States and they weren't as rigorous as the English schools.

Q: Now when you say the English school was more rigorous was it more rigorous just in the sense that they covered more material or were expectations of homework different or how-?

ROGERS: I would say they covered more material; they were more disciplined in their approach; they had better teachers. I can't remember exactly. I really wasn't old enough to evaluate the teachers but they got a lot out of me. They were very demanding as well. Not so much in homework; I don't remember having all that much homework. I just remember the classwork being very challenging and interesting and with a fast pace to it.

Q: As you moved around did your mother work or was she more of a homemaker?

ROGERS: She was a homemaker until we got back here and she went to work. My parents actually got divorced after my dad went back overseas, went to Okinawa. We stayed here. I went to high school at Washington-Lee here in Arlington and from there went on to college.

Q: Okay. So, in terms of your- because obviously now that you can compare the British elementary and I guess maybe middle school education, the military school education and finally the suburban or Virginia education, how much time did you end up spending in the Virginia high school, in Washington Lee?

ROGERS: Actually, we came back earlier than that. I went to middle school here as well. It was called junior high then.

Q: Oh, I see.

ROGERS: Swanson Junior High. Washington Lee was an outstanding school, very demanding. We had the second highest number of National Merit semifinalists after the Bronx School of Science in New York. Much of Arlington at that time was government civil servants, so the kids were all expected to do well and lots of them did.

Q: Now, while you were going to high school in the U.S. did you also become involved in any of the extracurricular activities?

ROGERS: Not so much. I participated in a few clubs but not so much in extracurriculars. I mostly enjoyed my friends when I had free time and goofed around. Probably didn't get as much out of high school as I should have but I enjoyed the experience.

Q: And that's the important thing. But what you did have was a childhood where you had seen and been exposed to international environments very early in life.

ROGERS: True. One of the interesting things about Arlington Public Schools when I first came back from Europe was racial segregation. When I was in Germany, I had gone to integrated military schools. But this was a period called "massive resistance" in Virginia. Brown vs. the Board of Education had outlawed segregation in 1954, but Virginia fought the ruling. Arlington was then and still is pretty liberal; it chose to resist the resistance and integrated the schools while I was at Washington-Lee. So, that was an interesting experience.

Q: So, about how large was the student body in Washington Lee back then?

ROGERS: It was probably 2,300 kids, 700 or 800 kids to a class. So, in my senior class I think they had 720 or something like that.

Q: Wow, that's-

ROGERS: It was a big high school. I hear of all these high schools out in Fairfax and beyond, but not many of them were there in those days. I think Annandale was there, maybe Marshall, but the far suburbs were dairy farms back then. The population explosion and related development in greater Washington has been astounding, not always for the best.

Q: Sure, sure. So, then once Arlington had decided to integrate roughly what was the demographic in terms of white, African American, if there were other nationalities?

ROGERS: I would say the first year, of the 720 or so kids in my class, no more than five or ten were African American. And I doubt there were many Hispanics. The Hispanics were either the children of professional civil servants or of diplomats from overseas. We

didn't have any sense whatsoever of immigration into the area. There were almost no Asians. It was a very homogenous high school and community.

Q: Alright. Now as you're going through high school are you thinking about- did you begin thinking about career or in general where your interests lie?

ROGERS: I was pretty good in science and I was vaguely interested in medicine at the time. I didn't spend a lot of time thinking about it, and I don't recall in those days ever having a system of counselors like they have now. I don't remember being engaged and encouraged to think about a career at the time. I think the expectation was a career would unfold later. You weren't expected to think about what you wanted to do when you were in high school; that was the purpose of college.

Q: Okay. And nobody sort of in high school sort of pulled you aside and said oh, you're really good at this particular thing; you really should be thinking about something-?

ROGERS: I don't remember anybody ever doing that. I think there is too much pressure these days to decide on a life's course early on.

Q: *Okay. Well then, what about college? Were your parents talking about that with you or what did you think about in terms of post high school?*

ROGERS: Well, this was after my parents had gotten divorced, and it probably would have been the case even before, so money was a big concern. I expected to go to a public school, and most of them were very economical in those days. I took a flier on a few Ivy League schools but didn't get in, so I never really had to worry about mortgaging my future. I sympathize with kids these days taking on so much debt. So it boiled down to a choice between the University of Virginia and the University of North Carolina, and at UVA they wore coats and ties to class in those days, and I didn't want that level of formality.

Q: So, wait. What year did you graduate from high school?

ROGERS: I graduated from high school in 1961.

Q: Wow. So, yes, you're right. Yes, they, yes. That was still before the big changes in dress and all of that, yes.

ROGERS: And Virginia was more conservative politically than North Carolina, particularly south of this area. North Carolina, particularly the University, had a reputation for being relatively more progressive. This was early in the civil rights movement, which was intriguing to me, and so I decided I'd go to North Carolina.

Q: Oh wait. So, University of North Carolina.

ROGERS: Yes.

Q: Did you have anyone there who you could claim for an address to get in-state tuition or-

ROGERS: No, but even so I think tuition for a whole year was a couple of thousand dollars. It was quite inexpensive. And I had worked a little bit myself. In high school I worked in the county library here in Arlington, and summers I worked construction and later in the Senate print shop on the Hill. So I had some money of my own but basically my mother was able to swing it and so I was able to go to college down there. Even though it was out of state it was still pretty cheap.

Q: But then of course once you're there you can eventually establish residency in North Carolina.

ROGERS: I don't think so. My family was here so I came back here. This was always my home.

Q: Okay. So, now you get to college and at that point you have to begin thinking about a major.

ROGERS: I did -- started out thinking about medicine but I found the science part of it more demanding than I'd expected. I was also starting to get interested in domestic politics. So pretty early on I thought I would be interested in political science and that's what I chose as a major. And stuck with it, did pretty well.

Q: And so you started there in-?

ROGERS: '61, the fall of '61.

Q: Right. And sure, the civil rights movement was beginning but did you see much of it on campus in North Carolina?

ROGERS: There was quite a bit of activity on campus. As I said, Carolina was quite a liberal school and North Carolina -- more than Virginia -- was a center of civil rights activism like the Greensboro sit-ins. So yes, throughout that period I followed the civil rights movement. Of course, this was during the Kennedy Administration so there was a lot of national activism and people who wanted to participate in places farther South coming to Chapel Hill, spending time there and then going on down into Mississippi and Alabama. I was not personally active that directly. I went to demonstrations and did some polling in the African American community in Chapel Hill through a political science class. I wish I had done more.

Q: You know, it's a very interesting thing; everyone I interview who went to college during the period of the Kennedy presidency and a little bit of the Johnson presidency all talk about the influence that Kennedy had in inspiring people to take action, whether it was in civil rights or with Peace Corps or with something. They all seem to have been-

their interests and their inspiration seems to have been kindled a bit by the whole Kennedy aura. Did that, was that also something that happened with you?

ROGERS: I think so partly. He was from Massachusetts, my home state, and was articulate and dynamic and part of that "Camelot" media hype. That was kind of fun and inspirational. But it was also the beginning of a national cultural and social transformation. The civil rights movement was a big part of that, but I think people were also beginning to break away from the post-World War II rigidities. Maybe understandably, I don't think the generation coming back from the Second World War was really interested in focusing on big social problems. They wanted to live their lives. That's what they did. But by the early '60s people were looking for change and Kennedy was emblematic of something different. So when he won the presidency I think he sort of carried on what the culture was already starting to embrace. It was a period of change -- not as dramatic, not as radical as say the post '65 changes in the country, but it was a beginning, it was laying the groundwork.

Q: Now how, except from your classwork how did you make the North Carolina campus sort of your home? Did you join a fraternity or did you get involved with clubs or how did you fit in there?

ROGERS: I did not join a fraternity on purpose. I didn't particularly care for fraternities. They were sort of the vestiges of the Southern tradition at North Carolina and so I basically fit in by making friends. I lived on campus the whole four years that I was there but had lots of friends who lived off-campus and in the larger community and I traveled around North Carolina a little bit with them, visiting their homes. This was before the university-- like the University of Virginia -- admitted women as first year students in the liberal arts college. So if you wanted to have dates you had to either date in the town which was a very small town or you had to go to the women's college which was over in Greensboro.

Q: Interesting, interesting. So, other, but other campus activities?

ROGERS: Clubs and club sports. Not so much social or academic clubs but pick up sports and played sports with my friends, even studied a little bit while I was there.

Q: Did opportunities for travel back overseas present themselves? Were you thinking about taking, for example, a year abroad or a summer abroad or any of that?

ROGERS: I don't think many people did that. There may have been some people who took off, particularly if they were changing major or were finding school difficult. But I don't think it was the sort of the positive alternative kids have today -- saying I want to have the experience of living overseas or I want to learn a language better than I possibly can here. I don't think that was very common in those days.

Q: Which brings up the question, were you studying a foreign language or-?

ROGERS: I did. I studied German, unfortunately. I'd had a little bit of German in school so I took German as my language in college. And I did fine in it, but it has never turned out to be useful. The times I've been back to Germany the Germans always wanted to practice their English and there weren't many developing countries where you could try German so I never got a chance to use it.

Q: Okay. So, as you're going through college, now there must have been some opportunities for you to think about what you were going to do with a political science degree or with the studies that you were undertaking.

ROGERS: I did take some international relations courses as part of my political science major. But my interest at the time was domestic politics, so I focused on that. As I say, I worked up on the Hill in the print shop, but nevertheless it was the Hill. So I had the experience and the opportunity to talk to people there and to say I worked on the Hill. I'd say my focus maybe all the way up until the beginning of my senior year was on domestic politics. But then I started to get more and more interested in international relations and think about the possibility of going into the Peace Corps. And I'd always been interested in Africa, so I pursued that. I forget what the leadup time was but probably by the middle of my senior year I'd made my application and so I got ready to go into the Peace Corps.

Q And at that time a lot of college students were thinking about it, I imagine. Were there, was it sort of a general trend on campus for a lot of people to be applying?

ROGERS: I knew some people who were thinking about it and maybe others that even went through with it, but not too many. There were lots of kids nationally. It seemed pretty competitive to get in those days. Maybe at schools like Antioch a substantial part of the student body decided they wanted to go into the Peace Corps. I don't think there were too many people who were even aware of Vietnam in '65, so I don't think that was a factor. The motivation was all pretty positive – the Kennedy inspiration, the adventure and the experience. The first Peace Corps volunteer groups as I recall were in '64 so you had kids going to Ghana, kids going to Chile. And so, without really knowing anything about it, I decided to apply, got accepted and got assigned to report for training to go to Nigeria. I had something like three weeks off after I graduated from college.

Q: And this was '64?

ROGERS: '65.

Q: Oh, '65. Okay.

ROGERS: I was in an agriculture and rural development group. We trained at Michigan State. One of my summer jobs had been working a construction project laying sewer lines and building man-holes. It was out by your neighborhood, out in Ravenswood. Do you know where that is?

Q: Yes, actually, yes, yes.

ROGERS: It was manual labor, non-union, working mostly with African Americans. I learned a bit from them, and had an interesting experience overall in addition to earning a little money for college.

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Q: Holy cow.

ROGERS: With that little bit of construction experience, Peace Corps assigned me to an agriculture and rural development group. So I went up to East Lansing and started my training. I did well and was there for about eight weeks. We then went down to Montserrat, which is in the Caribbean, for another month of training. Actually, our base was in St. Croix in the Virgin Islands and then we did a couple of weeks in Montserrat.

Q: They used the Caribbean islands essentially to accustom you a bit to what the climate would be and maybe what the surroundings would be like?

ROGERS: What the climate would be, what it's like to be in a different culture, what working on projects would be like. When I was on Montserrat I lived with a family for four or five days to see what it was really like living in a developing country. One of the unfortunate aspects of the whole training period, both at Michigan State and in the Caribbean, was you had the sense that you were being evaluated. And you were. Some kids were de-selected and so they didn't get to go overseas. I was OK, although I had a few things that happened that made me wonder whether I would make it or not.

Q: Would you like to share any of those experiences?

ROGERS: Well, maybe one of them. The group was an agriculture and rural development group. So in addition to language training and acculturation, we had some training at the farms run by Michigan State. We had 60 or 70 kids in all and 15 or 20 of them, including me, were assigned to the Eastern region. My sub-group was trained in Igbo, which was the language of the largest ethnic group in the East. I did great on the language, did great on the anthropology, but one day we were in this hot barn and this guy says now I'm going to show you how to castrate a goat.

Q: Wow.

ROGERS: And he said this goat is a little too mature, but we're going to do it anyhow. And so, this goat starts screaming. The barn must have been about 110 degrees. The goat was screaming. The guy starts to castrate the goat. I just passed out. So, I was concerned that they're going to look down on me for not being tough enough. I think I was just dehydrated, but the incident hung over me all the way to final selection.

Q: Yes. That's already remarkable that no anesthesia, they just came in with-. Holy cow.

ROGERS: There was another dimension to this incident that worried me. Peace Corps training officials had psychologists working on the selection process, deciding who would qualify. This was an all-male group, and during the course of training we had guys who were judged to be gay and were de-selected on the basis of their sexuality.

Q: And you say that they were judged to be, whether in fact they were or not was uncertain.

ROGERS: I don't think they were given the option to say, but I don't know that for sure. I don't know what the final process was. It's conceivable that they were questioned, they said yes, and they were told you're out of here. That's possible. It was something, fueled by rumors, that was overhanging the training program. I've had a skeptical view of psychology ever since as largely arbitrary and unfair. Anyhow, I made it through the training program, made it through the experience of the Caribbean and off we went.

Q: Okay. So, now whereabouts in, you said eastern Nigeria; was it close to the border or was it ____ or-?

ROGERS: I was pretty much in the central part of the Eastern region. It was a beautiful location. I was up on what's called the Udi Plateau, which is probably 1,000 feet looking down over the flood plain of the Niger River. I couldn't see the river from there but the view was beautiful. And I lived in a pretty good facility called the Eastern Nigeria Development Training Center, which had been set up by the Ford Foundation. Ford and the Eastern region's Ministry of Rural Development were running a program trying to establish oil palm plantations, with local farmers forming cooperative societies to clear the land and do the farming. The Peace Corps volunteers were to go in and organize the communities and set up the cooperative societies. Then the Eastern Nigeria ministry of Agriculture would come in and help to run the plantations, the agriculture dimensions, although they were notoriously unreliable and so a lot of that fell to us as well. It's funny. A lot of people scoffed at President Obama when he described himself as a community organizer, but Peace Corps taught me that's a really tough job.

Q: Okay, so now you go into the community or the small communities. They had never raised or cultivated oil palms before.

ROGERS: They'd never cultivated them. Oil palms grew wild and were harvested for their kernels and oil. But the hope of the Ford Foundation was they would become an important cash crop. It might have been a good idea at the time but in fact Malaysia and Indonesia had more land, better climate, more experience and more tropical rainforests that they could cut down and turn into oil palm plantations. So, I think Nigeria never became internationally competitive. It still had a potentially large domestic market. So I think if the war hadn't come, then it might have turned out to be worthwhile.

Q: And here you're talking about the Biafra war?

ROGERS: Yes, yes.

Q: But did the population take to the idea or-?

ROGERS: Well, there was a modest subsidy involved and you needed to put a lot of effort into energizing the community, but they were receptive. Part of the initial hook was the novelty of a white kid who came in, spoke a little bit of the local language. And the potential that this might turn out to be something good was also attractive. It turns out that the Igbo are very entrepreneurial and very willing to take on new ideas, very willing to accept the possibility that they could do more. It was a difficult sales job but it was possible. I personally got about three of these things going and it was a wonderful experience doing it. It was difficult and frustrating too. In one case the community donated land that didn't really belong to them so we got into a huge land dispute. And along with our surveyors I got chased off the disputed land by angry men with guns. Often we'd go out for a meeting and people just never showed up so you'd walk eight kilometers into a village, supposed to be meeting there and nobody shows up. It was hard work but very satisfying as it went forward. And the culture was fascinating and the cross-cultural experience was great.

Q: Now, the location also was reasonably helpful? You didn't end up having to, you know, go back to headquarters with various illnesses all the time.

ROGERS: I had malaria while I was there and it was a pretty rough case. There was a Peace Corps doctor in Enugu, which was the capital of the region and about thirty miles away. He was so impressed with the slides that I produced showing the malaria plasmodia that he sent the slides back to Washington for others to see. But other than that, and the occasional intestinal flu, I didn't really have any health problems. I didn't have any accidents. That was a big problem for Peace Corps volunteers in Africa..

Q: Did they give you malaria suppressants or-?

ROGERS: We had malaria suppressants. We took them; or we were supposed to take them. I don't know how it happened; I may have skipped a couple of weeks or a month or whatever. But I got it, so that was a couple of weeks lost.

Q: Yes, I can imagine. Okay. Now, the typical tour is two years for-?

ROGERS: Two years, yes. While I was there I got to travel in West Africa – Ghana, Togo and Benin -- and that was an interesting experience. I also got to see a bit more of Nigeria. Nigeria is very much a multicultural country. Friends and I went up to the north to see Hausa country, see the Moslem north of the country. The people where I lived were either animists or Christian. Religion sparked the conflict that ultimately precipitated the Biafran war.

Just after my group arrived in country, there was a military coup. A Hausa leader who had been elected was overthrown by an Igbo general and that precipitated a reaction by the Hausa. There was political conflict as well as social and religious conflict. The Igbo

general was overthrown in turn by a Hausa general. Igbo refugees came back from the north. You could tell it was leading to civil war. And as my tour ended and I was leaving the eastern region, the authorities crossed out Nigeria on my passport and wrote in Biafra. This was before any armed conflict but it was obvious the east was going to declare independence shortly.

Q: Wow. But at least you were lucky and your service did not overlap with that war.

ROGERS: That's right. My tour ended at the normal time.

Q: As you were completing the tour was Peace Corps personnel system talking to you about a second tour or what was the situation?

ROGERS: Theoretically I had the opportunity to extend for a year, but since the war was coming, it was clear there was no opportunity in Nigeria. Anyway, I was done. It was a great experience but I was ready to leave. I also wanted to see Europe. So I spent a couple of months bumming around Europe and then headed back to see what was going on in the States. While I was in Europe my mother had sent me a note saying you should get back here and figure out what's going on because the draft was looming. This was late summer of '67.

Q: And was there no, in terms of the draft was there no exception given for people who had served in Peace Corps?

ROGERS: No, you were given a deferment while you were in the Peace Corps, but after your tour ended you were still subject to the draft. And one of the dimensions of the draft that was so unfair was that it was based on the local area where you lived and the quota your local board had to meet. If you happened to be from a community where a lot of kids went to college and to grad school and were therefore given deferments for education, and you didn't have a deferment, you were almost certain to be called up. So, any poor kid without a deferment who lived in a community like Arlington or anybody like me just out of the Peace Corps was almost certain to get called up.

But I thought that I had an opportunity to join AID (United States Agency for International Development). AID had a pretty substantial program in Nigeria and from what I had seen I was interested.

Q: Oh, so that's how you even first became aware of USAID?

ROGERS: Yes, AID did a lot of work in agriculture in Nigeria. We had occasional contact with AID officers and I thought AID might be an interesting opportunity. I liked the development experience, difficult as it was. I wish I'd learned the language better while I was in Nigeria, but I was able to communicate and do the work, so I was okay. The Peace Corps also taught me that I liked a more structured job than community development. So, I thought AID would be a good fit.

I was even willing to go to Vietnam. So I came back, made contact with AID here in Washington, took the tests, and applied to join. I did great on the language aptitude test which was a big part of it. I interviewed with AID officers and everything was positive. And then I got this notice from my draft board saying they intended to do something with me, and I had to report for a physical. So, I went into AID and said why don't you take care of this for me because I'm on my way to Vietnam with you in any case. But they said sorry, we don't cross the draft board.

So I had to wait it out. It didn't take long for the draft board to say okay, report, get your physical, you're in. I thought the Army was actually pretty good at selecting an assignment for me. When I was in the Peace Corps I'd had the standard confidential security clearance, so the Army put me in the signal corps and trained me to operate some of the low level cryptography equipment that they used at the time. I thought I would be going to Eritrea where they had a big Army Security Agency base at Asmara. But it didn't get that good -- Vietnam instead. So after completing my military training, I went to Vietnam in June of '68.

Q: So, '68. ____ a big watershed year for-

ROGERS: Absolutely.

Q: -all the experience.

ROGERS: While I was in training for the Army, TET was happening in Vietnam and Johnson was escalating our involvement, there were lots of demonstrations against the war, Martin Luther King was assassinated -- the whole '60s turmoil was kind of shocking. I didn't have a sense of it in '67 when I was finishing in the Peace Corps; I was out of touch in Nigeria, two years behind the culture curve. It was a fascinating period actually, looking back on it, the '60s. I'd love to go back and live it over again. Lots of things I would have done differently.

Q: I imagine, yes. The military sort of intervened and the draft sort of intervened. Now, so the group that you go out with to Vietnam, did you end up doing signal corps work in Vietnam or-?

ROGERS: I did for a little while. When we got to Vietnam -- Biên Hòa was the name of the reception center, outside Saigon – the Army assigned you based on your training and their needs. So I was sent to the Fourth Infantry Division, which was up in the Central Highlands, outside the city of Pleiku. Soon after I arrived, I joined a convoy of the Second Brigade of the Fourth Division headed for a town called Ban Me Thuot. It was a beautiful little mountain town built around an old French hunting camp. While there, a few of us ran a little communications center – an MGC-17. In training we had been told these were obsolete, nobody's ever going to get assigned to one. But it was what we had, so we had to set up the station. It was hard work but an interesting experience as well. I worked there for a couple of months.

Q: Take a second to describe what the signal corps did in terms of actual work because it's obviously changed in the modern military how communications are done. But back then was it principally managing the movement of troops and supplies, did it include the airports, you know managing airports and-?

ROGERS: I am sure somewhere people did all those things. But I sent and received mostly classified messages between the Second Brigade and the 4th Division base camp. The messages might include regular status reports on brigade activities or they might be intelligence estimates of Viet Cong or North Vietnamese Army activity. If the messages ever got above my security clearance, then there were people who had higher clearance than I did and they would take over the communications center and send out the cable. Other people in our group set up and maintained antennas, field telephones, regular land lines, and necessary generators. So it was regular little communications hub.

Q: Oh yes.

ROGERS: Both within the Second Brigade and then between the Second Brigade and the division base camp.

Q: Now, the area that you were assigned to was also one of the hottest. Were you fired on regularly?

ROGERS: It wasn't actually that hot because the people who lived in the highlands, the indigenous people the French called Montagnards, were actually somewhat sympathetic to the Americans. They were hoping that the Americans would help them with their interests. They were a small minority in Vietnam. But it was obvious from the time I got there that they were going to lose whatever happened. Either the South Vietnamese were going to win and were going to come up into the Central Highlands and take over the land or the North Vietnamese were going to come south and do the same or encourage sympathetic South Vietnamese to come up. So, the Montagnards really didn't stand much of a chance.

They were a fascinating people to me because they were hunters and gatherers, and had an innocent and simple culture. They lived in small villages based mostly on extended families. They farmed an area until the land became depleted and then moved the whole village. The Central Highlands had enough land so this was possible. There were Vietnamese in the larger cities like Pleiku, but not many in the rural areas. So the Montagnards were pretty remote both physically and culturally. They lived in small thatched huts that they either abandoned when they set up a new village or could disassemble and move on an ox cart.

The main threat in the Central Highlands came from North Vietnamese Army troops coming south along the Ho Chi Minh trail in Laos and then crossing into Vietnam. There were some Viet Cong, even some VC Montagnards, but not so many. While I was in Ban Me Thuot with the Second Brigade we were attacked a couple of times. I remember in one attack seeing our helicopters being evacuated so they would not be destroyed, which

raised the apprehension level a bit. Any base camp with large numbers of Americans and their equipment was an attractive target, especially for mortars and rockets.

There were some major battles with the North Vietnamese in the Central Highlands like the Ia Drang Valley and Dak To special forces camp. But in general it wasn't as violent where I was as the rest of the country. I never felt personally that I was at great risk and I didn't know anyone from my signal corps unit in Ban Me Thuot who was killed.

But in any case, the army was fairly sharp about looking at people's experience and trying to match it up with what they needed. So they matched my Peace Corps experience against the needs of a civil affairs group that was going to work with several Montagnard villages. The mission was to consolidate small villages around the 4th Division base camp. One of the ways the base camp protected itself was to randomly shoot out artillery rounds at night. But they found that they were killing a lot of people and even more livestock and this was creating enemies.

Their solution was a series of civil affairs teams to work with these small villages -- perhaps thirty or forty people each -- and consolidate them into larger villages. The incentives, in addition to the fact that they wouldn't get shelled at night, would be help with their farms, healthcare, and a school for their kids. And they would have security protection. It was a reasonably attractive proposition from their point of view. So for my last 10 months in Vietnam I lived in a Montagnard village that had 80 or so homes—a total population of 350 people. There were 20 or so of us on the team. And since I had the Peace Corps experience, I was relied upon to keep liaison with the people and their needs, and to work on various village projects.

Q: And you were more of less able to supply it?

ROGERS: We were. One of the great things about the military, then and now, is money's not a problem. If we needed something, they were happy to provide. And of course the Army had medics, medics who had supplies and could get more. There was a hospital at the base camp. So the thing that was most appreciated was the health care that we were able to provide. Infant and child mortality was very high in the Central highlands and we were able to help with that. We introduced high yielding varieties of rice. And we set up a little school that worked well too.

Unfortunately, one of our early casualties was our medic, who was accidentally shot in the face and had to be evacuated. And the sergeant who first led our team was killed while on patrol outside the village. I was on leave in Hong Kong at the time. Another team member was killed when he was helping in another village. So for me, the reality of the war was more immediate on this small civil affairs team than it was on the larger infantry brigade I served with earlier.

Q: Later on, weren't the Montagnards among the refugee groups that the U.S. took after the North Vietnamese-

ROGERS: They were. Many of the refugees were actually from Laos, the Hmong; you remember the Hmong? They are a Montagnard group from the other side of the border in Laos. They helped and were helped by the CIA. But I don't think many of the Vietnamese Montagnard tribes were able to escape. I'm not even sure they made an effort to escape, and I've never heard the details of how the North Vietnamese came to treat them. It's conceivable that they promised them they wouldn't be harmed and they sought their cooperation and they got it. I don't know. Once it became apparent that the Americans were leaving I'm sure the Montagnards made the best deal they could. I never heard the ending to the story.

After I left -- I left in July of '69 -- the U.S. and AID remained in Vietnam until '75.

Q: So, now as you are leaving you still want to return to USAID?

ROGERS: Yes As I was leaving, I thought the experience in the Central Highlands was interesting enough and demanding enough and successful enough that it reinforced my idea that I still wanted to work for AID. I had the record from two years earlier when I had tried to join the Agency so I figured I would pick up on that. After unwinding for a few months in California, I came back to the East Coast. When I got back I started to get plugged back into AID.

Q: And that would be by now 1970?

ROGERS: Yes, early 1970. I think I came into AID in March of 1970.

Q: And when you came in at that time did they bring you in as a specialist in a certain kind of development work or was it you were hired and then they would figure out-?

ROGERS: At the time, AID had lots of Foreign Service officers coming back from Vietnam. Many hoped to be career officers, and AID wanted to keep them. I don't know whether there were any guarantees for them or not. But my understanding is AID felt an obligation to them as Foreign Service officers, so the Agency would post them to other Foreign Service posts. When I came back, I had to come into AID on the GS side and hope I could later get into the Foreign Service. They said I met all the qualifications and they were happy to have me. They gave me the option to interview a few places and see if there was a GS slot I would want that would also want me. So, it was a little bit of a negotiation. Some offices like Human Resources thought I had too much Foreign Service experience at that point and that I probably wouldn't stay and they said, you know, look somewhere else. I looked around some more and it finally boiled down to the Office of Food for Peace, which was a big operation, and the administrative budget shop which was not particularly big. But I thought they had some really good people there, so I decided to go into the administrative budget office. That's where I started my GS career. It was always my intention that I would be a GS in Washington until I could get established as a career AID person and then, after the Vietnam people got digested by the system, I'd join the Foreign Service and I'd go overseas as AID Foreign Service.

Q: I can totally understand that. Is that how it worked out?

ROGERS: It didn't work out that way. It took many more years than I expected for the Foreign Service to open up and by then life had interfered. By then I was married.

Q: What year did you get married?

ROGERS: That's a trick question. I think it was '73 or '74. I can remember the month and date but the year's tougher.

Q: So, it was sometime after you had rejoined AID or you had begun with AID?

ROGERS: Right.

Q: Okay.

ROGERS: It was after I was in AID for a while. My wife was a school teacher and liked her job and was highly regarded. And she'd already made adjustments to accommodate her career to a growing family. Staying GS seemed the best for us all -- and I was enjoying the work. When I ultimately got into the Bureau for Humanitarian Response, we worked worldwide, and I had a lot of opportunity to travel. After all is said and done, I had plenty of overseas experience – at least enough to satisfy me. But I started out in the budget office.

Q: And okay, so that would have been 1970 in the budget office?

ROGERS: Yes. It was an interesting time to be working in Washington. There were frequent and sometimes massive demonstrations against the Vietnam war. I worked up on Connecticut Avenue and can remember driving in from Virginia and smelling tear gas in the air. I remember early on, just a few months after starting, signing a petition of State and AID officers protesting the bombing and incursion into Cambodia. William Rogers was the Secretary of State. The Nixon White House apparently asked for the names of those who signed, a couple of hundred as I remember, and the Secretary refused. An admirable move in my opinion. I think the whole experience paved the way for State's dissent channel, which continues today. Later, a small bomb went off in one of the rest rooms I used at the State Department. Budget office work itself was comparatively dry.

Q: And how long did you remain there?

ROGERS: I was in the administrative budget office for a couple of years and then in the Agency's program budget office for several years after that. Overall, I'd say maybe twelve years as a budgeteer.

Q: Oh wow.

ROGERS: So, quite a while. It was a job where I could learn the nuts and bolts of how AID works. I had an overview of the entire agency and where people were, how they worked, what they worked on, what they were trying to accomplish, what support they needed, and especially what money they needed and spent.

While in the administrative budget office, when I first joined the Agency, I prepared the Agency's balance of payments report. It provided the details of what AID did – training, technical assistance, commodity support, cash, etc. – broken out by individual country. It drew on all facets of the Agency's accounting and reporting systems. When I got there, we were way overdue on our reports, so I had to go back several years to get us up to date. OMB – the Office of Management and Budget – was complaining so I had to grind it out. In the end I was credited with shoveling out the stables. I got to meet Ernie Stern to explain what we had done. He was head of Program and Policy at AID at the time and went on to be Chief Economist at the world Bank.

When I first got to the Program Budget Office, I was on the staff developing a new programming system for the Agency. It was called PBAR – Planning, Budgeting, Accounting and Reporting. It was the system AID would use to decide what it's goals would be in each country, how projects would be approved, what priorities we would set among countries, how we would measure success, how we would manage our money – the whole ball of wax.. So, just as OMB plays a big role in the Federal Government as a whole, the budget office at AID had a big role in management of the Agency as a whole.

Of course this required close work with external actors who influenced what AID did – State, OMB and the Congress – and with the geographic bureaus which had direct contact with our many fields missions.

Q: Now, at that time AID as an organization saw itself as assisting development. What were the principle methods that it believed were the right way to go about development? Because obviously this changed over time.

ROGERS: Yes. How we approach development has changed tremendously from those days. First of all, we had a lot more money. As a result, we were able to focus on economic growth. We were able to provide balance of payments support, to invest in large scale infrastructure, to train large numbers of professionals, to develop institutions. We saw ourselves as being in countries for the long term. We saw the success of the Marshall Plan and thought we could replicate it in the developing world.

And for better or worse, AID was much more independent of the State Department than it is now. That's most of AID. The Latin America Bureau, however, as a result of President Kennedy's Alliance for Progress, was even more integrated than AID is now with the State Department. So, there were interesting differences within the Agency in how it was managed. But the emphasis in those days in almost all countries was on promoting economic growth. We had major programs in Latin America in places like Brazil, Argentina, and Chile. By the time I joined the Agency, these were real success stories and

were on the verge of phasing out. And then you had countries in Asia like India and Indonesia and Thailand and South Korea that were making progress but were not quite there yet.

Q: Now, for those graduating countries what were the basic indicators for graduation?

ROGERS: Well, their economies were growing fast enough to absorb labor that was coming to cities from rural areas. Most had relatively strong agricultural economies. And their health and education institutions were doing a better job strengthening their human resources. AID phased out from providing substantial resources to providing technical assistance and advice. We worked closely with the World Bank which continued to provide lending for major projects. We still work pretty closely with the World Bank, but I think not as closely as we did in those days.

We phased down our field missions in graduating countries. In my early years, we had bigger field missions than we have now. We had more professional staff. Now you have an agency that relies heavily on contractors to do a lot of its work, particularly a lot of the technical work we once did. In those days we had people who were actually working in ministries. We staffed the economic planning offices of places like Indonesia with professional economists.

So, we had a series of countries which were graduating, we had a series of countries which were pre-graduation and would ultimately move on to graduation, and we had a lot of countries, particularly in Africa, which had further to go and more difficult problems. In my opinion, partly formed in Peace Corps, colonialism left Africa with some very difficult problems, including finding appropriate political structures. Since AID currently does not have the overall resources to promote economic growth, and we don't have the large field missions to provide quality advice and technical assistance, I'm afraid Africa has gotten the short end of the stick.

Q: One of the other things that I recall about the development approach that AID took in a lot of countries was one that did not shy away from infrastructure.

ROGERS: Absolutely. We funded huge infrastructure projects. We built dams in places like the Indus Basin; we built roads in Indonesia; we built telecommunications; we built power plants. I remember going to countries where local officials would proudly point out AID-funded infrastructure projects. The other thing we also did much more extensively than we do now is human resources development. We had these extensive training programs where we brought people to the States and put them through college and advanced degree programs. And we spent a lot of money on institutional development; spent a lot of money on bricks and mortar in universities and technical schools in developing countries. When I was in Nigeria we had a wonderful agricultural university that AID had essentially developed in the eastern region at Nsukka, and that was typical of what AID was doing in those days.

Q: Now, for another moment put on your political science hat and to what extent did AID respond to State Department or administration concerns about political situations in the countries that AID was working in in those early days, let's say before- up to 1980 or so.

ROGERS: I would say we were part of the political situation in those countries. We were big enough. We were out in the rural areas enough. By and large we had bigger staffs than the State Department had. We worked for the ambassador, of course, but I think we had a lot more autonomy. The head of AID was much more influential than I think AID mission directors are now, and I think that was good and bad. We became identified as part of the U.S. political process in those countries.

We ran what we called Public Safety activities in many places. That was where we worked with local police forces, usually as trainers. Our public safety officers were largely former U.S. police officials who worked with police forces in developing countries. A few of them got killed for political reasons. This was a very sensitive program. You remember the tiger cages in Vietnam? They were used to hold political prisoners. I doubt AID people came up with the idea, but inevitably we became associated with them because our public safety program trained the local police. There was even a movie which portrayed our program in Uruguay in a very bad light -- remember "State of Siege" which was directed by Costa-Gavras?

Q: Yes. Actually, I'm a little- I recall-

ROGERS: Anyhow, we were associated with the politics of countries even if our involvement was unfairly characterized at times. In my opinion, it's good for AID that we have evolved away from those specific programs of the distant past. To the extent the U.S. feels the need for police training these days, it is handled by State. But even today AID does have programs promoting democracy, and sometimes that may bring us into conflict in places like Russia or Egypt; but our democracy programs are substantially different from what we were doing in the 1970's.

Q: Even professionalization of the administration of justice and so on. The other question about this period is to what extent, you know, you used to be in the budget office and watching where the money goes; to what extent was AID making decisions that moved money relatively quickly based on its judgments or whoever was influencing it, its judgments on what worked, what didn't or where money needed to go in order for a given policy to be enacted? What I'm driving at here is was it easier to move money and move resources when you decided you wanted to do something or was the bureaucracy still relatively slow in order to make things like that happen?

ROGERS: First off, I would say we saw ourselves as a long term agency. Once we had agreed on our objectives and how we would achieve them, a great deal of the detailed decision-making on how money was to be used was left to the field missions. We had disaster relief for what was a natural disaster, and we moved as quickly then as we do now. If there was a political problem, we had an account -- Economic Support Funds or

ESF -- which could be used relatively quickly, but would involve State in the decision making.

We recognized the payoff for development assistance was long term, so the bias in those days was not to do short-term stuff, not to be fast and flexible and hit a problem and move on; it was much more we're in there for the long term. Of course there were exceptional cases when a unique opportunity or problem arose. We had the flexibility to deal with those. But sustainable development was seen as our mission. I would say that mind-set started to change when the collapse of the Soviet Union forced AID into being responsive to important countries in rapid transition to new governmental and economic structures.

The other thing to mention that may have had a bit to do with it was in Africa. I think we didn't see the return that we were seeing elsewhere in the world. So, we were a little less confident that we could do development in the way we were in the rest of the world. So there was a desire for more flexibility to shift resources around looking for opportunities than there was elsewhere in the world.

Now we have more instruments specifically tailored to responding to short term needs and opportunities; we recognize that countries in political and economic crisis need our attention.

Q: And the last question for this period of time is in terms of the mix of tools that you used for economic development, was economic support, ESF (Economic Support Fund) funds, PL 480 and so on, were they heavily used at that time or how would you describe those elements of development?

ROGERS: In terms of development instruments, we did grants like we do now; but we also provided large loans, particularly for infrastructure programs. So we had a different mix in that way. We chose the tool based on the problem. ESF was seen as political money. We could use it in any of the ways we used development assistance; but most frequently ESF provided balance of payments support. Often a straight cash transfer was the vehicle. We supported countries' balance of payments and that freed up resources they could invest for economic development.

PL 480 was similar. We provided grants for direct feeding programs, usually through private voluntary organizations like Care or Catholic Relief. We also provided huge amounts of balance of payments food aid. In effect, we financed agriculture imports so that countries didn't have to pay for agriculture imports themselves. A lot of this balance of payments food aid was on a loan basis. Of course some people criticize PL 480 for undermining local agriculture by holding down prices, thereby serving as a disincentive to local farmers. We had mechanisms in place to mitigate that effect, but there's still some truth to the criticism. But food aid also allowed the countries to maintain low prices for food which allowed them to keep their people fed and healthy. The balance of payments impact also helped countries focus on their own economic growth, and you're

much less likely to have food riots in a country that has low food prices and a growing economy.

Q: Right. Good. Okay. All of these are sort of the issues that you could deal with and observe from the Office of Budget in USAID but at some point you're beginning also to look at other parts of AID to work in and move out of the budget office to something else. How does this come about?

ROGERS: Well at this time I was feeling a little constrained in my career. I'd gotten about all I could out of the budget office. However, I was having a difficult time demonstrating much in the way of leadership ability. I had a very difficult time with public speaking. Whenever I made a presentation or even spoke up in a large meeting I struggled – almost like a panic attack and maybe that's what it was. I had never had a problem to that extent in school, though I was never an orator. I sometimes wonder whether it was somehow stress related to Vietnam. In any case, I got much better over the years and eventually was able to actually enjoy public speaking and Hill testimony. But I was considering jobs in other bureaus when I got an offer I couldn't refuse.

John Bolton, who was the new head of AID's Bureau for Program and Policy Coordination, wanted me to move up and become the deputy director in the budget office. I knew I could do the job, and John was a hard man to turn down. This was the beginning of the Reagan Administration. John was actually a very good manager and very supportive of his people. So, I spent 18 months or so as deputy in the budget office, maybe even a little bit longer than that. John pushed some bold and controversial ideas -- shifting funding out of the population program into economic growth for example. He seemed to enjoy the political controversy and that was a dimension of policy work that I hadn't experienced much of before.

But I always had my eye on going elsewhere in the AID bureaucracy and still had some hope of going overseas. I had a reputation for being a good budget person and knowing how the Agency worked, and all the geographic bureaus at the time needed good budget people. I got along well with the Assistant Administrator of the Asia Bureau, a guy named Charlie Greenleaf, and Charlie asked me to come over and be the deputy in the program office in the Asia Bureau. So I did. Asia Bureau at that time was one of AID's biggest, had some of its biggest programs and-

Q: Now what year is this?

ROGERS: Gee, this was probably around early '83 sometime.

Q: Yes, because that moment, you know the '80s is when the Asian Tiger groups begin their rise from poverty, all of the post-war including the Korean War, all of that dislocation and disruption into much stronger economies. So, it's a good moment for you to have moved into the Far East, Asia Bureau.

ROGERS: Actually, it was East and South Asia at that time so it had India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka as well. So, a lot of development ferment at that time. India was not quite as far along as the Tigers but you could tell India was going to be something special too. So, yes it was a wonderful opportunity and development was happening.

Q: Okay so a big transition takes place '80, '81 with the advent of the Reagan Administration and also with some, you know, changes in the- in Congress as people take more and more of a closer look at what development is and what it ought to be. And you had mentioned John Bolton so maybe this is a good way to approach the question of how did relations with USAID and Congress go as you go into the '80s?

ROGERS: The Reagan Administration was a shock for everybody and Congress in particular. You're coming off the Carter Administration and some fairly liberal politics surrounding issues like family planning and what that should involve. AID had a substantial family planning program in the '70s. And abortion was a concern in the Republican Party. So when Reagan came in it was almost inevitable that there was going to be a certain level of conflict with Congress.

John Bolton was a conservative lightning rod, and he seemed to like the role even then. He started out as the general counsel at AID and then recognized pretty quickly that was not a position of influence. So, he took over as the head of program and policy coordination, PPC. One of the things that we came up with -- I actually helped him come up with it because I was in the budget office in PPC at the time and knew there was an authority to transfer funds among appropriation categories. We came up with the idea that we would transfer money out of the population account into accounts for economic growth. The significant thing I think as far as John was concerned was we were going to take funds out of the population account.

As he knew it would, that caused a firestorm on the Hill and probably soured relations between John and the Hill for a long time. But I think it probably met his need, he made a point, he sent a signal to Congress that he was about to make changes. Of course it didn't go anywhere. The firestorm on the Hill was so intense that he backed off. But it did signal that AID was going to move in a new direction.

We also started to rethink what was necessary to achieve development; AID increasingly emphasized that country policies were extremely important. The Reagan Administration started to focus on the private sector -- privatization of state-owned enterprises and on business development -- as well as the importance of market economies, although in reality we were also subsidizing key countries like Israel and Egypt in many ways. Frankly, a lot of this was rhetoric. The differences on macroeconomic policy never seemed that great to me. The differences on population were huge.

In my mind, the big change for AID at the end of the Reagan Administration and throughout the following Bush Administration was the growing independence of Eastern Europe and the collapse of the Soviet Union. We were forced to respond virtually

overnight to newly free countries. And we didn't know very much about how to move away from socialist and autocratic societies.

Q: Let me ask you a question about Asia during this period because a couple of things happened with some of the key players. India begins to open up a more market oriented economy, not quickly but eventually, ___ Rajiv Gandhi and then subsequently. At the same time China begins its experiments with openings to some market locations, some free market locations. And you have the rise now of South Korea and Taiwan and to a lesser extent Indonesia and Thailand. Did our assistance programs or our development programs change in significant ways as these countries began these _____?

ROGERS: Our thinking certainly began to change, and the resources available for these countries started to decline, and agency staff in these countries started to decline. A sense of constraints was starting to impinge on what we could do in these countries. And at the same time these countries were starting to progress on their own. So we tried to respond to that by shifting more of our activities out of large scale projects into technical advice. And I think most AID people would say it was an appropriate transition at the time, that these countries were on the verge of being self-sustaining -- like Brazil and Chile already were. And so, you were starting to hear calls for AID to get out of places, to graduate countries as we did with South Korea. People started to talk about Thailand as a place where we could get out of, but still we had a pretty big program there and some security interests as well.

China -- just as a little bit of an aside -- was an interesting development dilemma for AID and the larger development community. China was a recipient of assistance from the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank and on a bilateral basis from the Japanese. But relative to the size of China and its economy, aid levels were small. I don't think anyone attributes much of China's economic progress to foreign aid. So China is kind of a problem. Why do you need aid of any form, why do you need development aid, if you can perform like China? And some people have said it's the Chinese themselves that are the answer to that, and the real underlying driver of development in places like Indonesia and Thailand is actually the Chinese businessmen who were there before China even started to develop.

Q: And certainly in Malaysia as well.

ROGERS: In Malaysia as well, yes. Chinese businessmen have periodically suffered from local uprisings against them, although there's a classic Chinese saying that the time to invest is when there's blood in the streets.

But anyhow, China's an interesting development problem. AID wasn't focused on China and never really has done anything with China. Although, in one of my later jobs I did get to go to China a couple of times and see some minor programs that we did in China.

Q: Now, the other thing I just wanted to ask is we're now talking about a relatively long period from early '80s going through the Reagan Administration and so on, are there

aspects, other internal aspects of growth and changes in USAID as an institution that you want to think back on and remark about?

ROGERS: Well, I would say AID was accommodating to reduced resources. You know, you had eight years of the Reagan Administration and then four years of George H.W. Bush, and I think there was a Republican bias even in those days against foreign aid. People didn't talk about the Republican base quite the way they do now but even then there were a lot of Republicans who were skeptical of foreign aid, skeptical of the idea that it really accomplished very much. And so, I think we had this sense of contraction in AID.

But at the same time you had Eastern Europe breaking free and the collapse of the Soviet Union, and these same Republican administrations wanted to focus on those programs and to provide assistance to formerly communist countries. And AID had to adjust and figure out what we wanted to do and how we wanted to do it, to help privatization in those countries and promote democracy and to shift resources to those countries. And we had to accommodate these new responsibilities in spite of workforce and budget constraints. New programs in Europe came into our Bureau, eventually dominated our responsibilities, and Asia was hived off. We got the money to work in these countries but the management resources and operating funds never were quite adequate. And the rest of the Agency saw us as raiding them.

Q: Wow.

ROGERS: And so you had the rise of the contractors. Instead of using direct-hire AID staff, instead of developing our cadre of expert foreign service officers, we began to rely more and more on contractors. This was not a brand new solution to various staffing shortages, but I think it peaked here. These weren't career U.S. employees, and in theory you could get rid of them when demand slacked. Bud demand never slacked, new demands emerged, and we became a less capable organization than we would have been if we'd been able to develop a larger professional workforce.

Q: Now where are you as this change happens as the assets need to move from Middle East, Asia, wherever else they are to put together enough to do the mission objectives in Europe?

ROGERS: Well I'm still the Deputy Director in the program office. I never really left the Asia program office; it's just that we absorbed new country responsibilities. And the assistant administrators transferred around me as well. Finally, by the time we became Europe and Eurasia a woman named Carol Adelman was the assistant administrator. She was a very dynamic, hard charging woman, the wife of Ken Adelman who was a senior State Department officer for arms control and disarmament. Carol was politically very astute and she was very much committed to democracy programs. That was another emphasis that AID had not had. To my mind the emphasis on democracy first started with the Europe and Eurasia programs and former Soviet Union programs as the U.S. tried to emphasize democracy in those countries. And there was a guy named Jerry Hyman who

headed the democracy programs in the bureau and did a great job and later went on to be leader of the democracy office in AID.

Another interesting thing happened to me while in this office, I was promoted into the Senior Executive Service. This was when AID had a theory about how it would be managed. The heads of bureau program offices would be Senior Foreign Service Officers and their deputies would be Senior Executive Service. This was when the SES was first starting, so I sort of fell into SES by virtue of my job at the time.

Q: Now, when we say democracy and democracy programs what are some examples of what you're talking about here?

ROGERS: Well, we're talking about elections, we're talking about assistance to civil society that promotes democracy, we're talking about training candidates on how to campaign, we're talking about public messaging to the population, administration of justice; all in all quite political programs. And so everything you could think of as democracy in the United States at one time or another was thought to be appropriate for AID working in these countries. We had the International Democratic Institute, IDI, and International Republican Institute, IRI, working closely with us and we gave them money for their programs. It was a big shift in what AID did. You could probably find AID people who would go back to programs that we did in Latin America and maybe Asia and maybe even Africa where we did democracy assistance in some form or another. But in my mind this is where we really started to do democracy programs. And when the Clinton Administration came in they actually set up an office of democracy and this was a big emphasis of the Clinton Administration. But I think it really began in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

Q: Now the other side of sort of the democracy development thing is also free market development. And did USAID also begin work there or what sorts of projects did they do?

ROGERS: AID provided lots of economic advice, technical assistance, on what it means to support private market development and how best to transition to economic systems based on private enterprise. One of the big things that we did in these countries was privatization of state-owned enterprises. Again, I think you could probably find examples of that elsewhere in the agency, but I don't think we ever did it on the scale that we did here. We had the sense this was going to provide the engine for development. The enterprises that were viable would prosper and those that were inefficient would fade away. At the same time, government was going to get resources to invest in public needs like education and health. It turned out to be a mixed bag. You should talk to people who were actually in the field because it was a fascinating time for us. I don't know in the end how successful it was. And I couldn't tell you whether Putin and his billionaire cronies were a byproduct of that period of privatization or not. I couldn't make a judgment on it.

Q: That's fine.

ROGERS: In any case, if somebody were doing the history here one might wonder about that.

Q: Now, these are of course the heady early days of the collapse of communism, collapse of the Soviet Union; as it began going from say '89 into the early '90s did USAID from a planning point of view begin diversifying how it was approaching these democracy and free market development when it looked at Eastern Europe, when it looked at Russia and when it looked at the Central Asians? Or was it really pretty much always the same thing?

ROGERS: I would say that we were inventing how to proceed as we went along. I don't have a sense that in terms of thinking about what we needed to do there was much reliance on past AID experience working with developing countries. I don't think that people said how did we do it in Chile, how did we do it in Indonesia, how did we do it in India, what should we do here? It was more this is a totally new situation and what are we going to do? And part of the answer for that was Carol Adelman's disposition to see the old AID as not particularly useful in thinking about what we ought to be doing in these new country programs. And she was able to get people who had worked in AID programs before, and outsiders as well, but who she saw as forward thinkers, people not burdened too much by their past experience but smart and creative people, and she was able to attract them to the bureau.

I don't know if you have interviewed Barbara Turner or not, but she'd be a good person to talk to on this time. And Don Presley would be another one. Both of them would have much better insights as to what was going on than I do, because about this time I was on my way out of the bureau.

The AID administrator at about this time, late eighties and early nineties, was a man named Ron Roskens. He didn't like the deputy administrator particularly well so he tried to set up a new superstructure over the traditional AID operating bureaus, a new layer of bureaucracy which allowed him to bypass his deputy. Scott Spangler, who had been the assistant administrator in Africa, took over this new structure. Scott asked me to oversee program issues because I had been around the agency and because I had a lot of budget experience. We took on oversight of all the geographic bureaus in the agency. Understandably, they weren't too thrilled by this new layer of oversight. But this was the end of the George H.W. Bush Administration, and the idea was once Bush was re-elected then Spangler would move up to be the deputy administrator and the new structure would no longer be necessary. But reality intervened, the Democrats came in, and they saw the new structure as superfluous. While it lasted, it gave me an interesting perspective from the top levels of AID on how the Agency as a whole worked. But when it ended, it meant I needed a new job.

Q: Wow.

ROGERS: So I didn't follow Europe and the former Soviet Union all the way through to the end of the administration, at least not in the level of detail that I had before.

Q: Okay.

Okay. It is April 23 and we are resuming with Len Rogers as the Clinton Administration takes over and sets USAID policy.

ROGERS: At the end of the Bush Administration I had been in this unusual structure overseeing programs for the entire agency. That structure went away with the Clinton Administration.

Q: With the Bush 41 administration or are you now talking about the end of the Clinton Administration?

ROGERS: No, I'm talking about the beginning of the Clinton Administration.

Q: Oh, okay, sorry.

ROGERS: So, this rather silly structure went away, and I took over during the transition as the acting Executive Secretary for the agency. I served as the Exec Sec for about four months. Jim Michel was the Acting Administrator. Our job was to make the incoming Clinton Administration comfortable and welcome and to make sure that the trains ran on time while they transitioned in. And we did that, did a pretty good job. At the end of that period, after they'd gotten their own permanent Executive Secretary -- Aaron Williams who later went on to be Director of the Peace Corps -- I took over as the program officer in what was called the Bureau for Humanitarian Response. BHR had responsibility for international disaster relief, food aid, American Schools and Hospitals Abroad, and support for US private voluntary organizations. It was a very big, worldwide operation. In some ways it was a hodge-podge of unrelated offices strung together to streamline direct reports to the AID Administrator. But it was a fascinating place to work and a great opportunity for me.

Q: Now, is it the same thing as the Office for Foreign Disaster Assistance of is it different?

ROGERS: No, OFDA (Office for Foreign Disaster Assistance) was one part of the Bureau.

Q: Okay.

ROGERS: So, OFDA was within the bureau, the Office of Food for Peace was within the bureau, and others as well. And at the same time the Clinton Administration created a new office within the bureau called the Office of Transition Initiatives which was designed to do fast, high impact political work. OTI turned out to be very successful, very popular with the State Department, and very high profile for us too.

Q: And transitions were designed- was this Eastern Europe transitioning to democracy or-?

ROGERS: This was countries -- potentially anywhere in the world -- that were coming out of conflict of one sort or another where we hoped we would be able to help a transition to democracy and to a more typical USAID relationship. An early focus was in Eastern Europe. Some of the first programs we did were in Bosnia and Kosovo. The first head of OTI was a guy named Rick Barton who went on to be an Ambassador at USUN (United States United Nations) and then became the Assistant Secretary for S/CRS (State/Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization). So Rick was a very successful leader and a very smart, creative guy who got this office up and running.

Q: And S/CRS was the crisis response-

ROGERS: In the State Department.

Q: -in the State Department. Okay, that reported to the secretary. Now, when you talk about the transitions things, basically what were the objectives that USAID had for these countries transitioning? What were the sort of programs that you would typically have in your toolbox?

ROGERS: Well, there was pretty much an open book. We could potentially do anything which would have a significant impact on the people and encourage their support for a government moving toward democracy and stability. In Bosnia, one of the first and most successful programs was for housing development, since so much of the housing stock had been destroyed in the war. Support for civil society, media campaigns to help inform and involve the people, public works to employ large numbers of people and provide income for the poor and displaced -- all these and more were possible with OTI. And it was important to lay the groundwork for democracy and economic stabilization programs that State and USAID would promote with more traditional programs. Often OTI would work in parallel with humanitarian programs of the BHR Bureau and the UN. Once the transition was fully underway, you could bring in a much more robust AID bilateral program, and the Agency's appropriate geographic bureau would take over the program and run it.

Q: Sort of a bureaucratic question about this; in terms of the way that you ran transitions, did you have one individual who was sort of the USAID transitional person on the ground or did you work through traditional USAID missions but the mission was more focused on transition initially? In other words, the modality-

ROGERS: It would depend. In some places there was no AID mission. But in almost all cases we would have an officer who would be assigned in-country responsibilities, they'd be in-country leader for the program.

Q: I see.

ROGERS: And sometimes that would be a direct hire person but more typically it would be a personal services contractor.

Q: Now, that's interesting. So, it would not be a USAID direct hire typically?

ROGERS: Typically not.

Q: Okay. And this would be, again, at the beginning of the relationship when you needed to do a lot of things very quickly to stabilize a situation where a lot of some basics in the countries, movement out of a conflict or out of maybe a dictatorship were still uncertain?

ROGERS: Correct, yes.

Q: Okay. Typically how long would that be?

ROGERS: It would vary of course, but typically maybe six months before we could hand off to a regular AID mission. Sometimes it went on much longer because there was never a successful transition. We had a program in Zimbabwe which went on, and on, and on in expectation that Mugabe was going to collapse, but he never did. And finally, we declared he wins, we've got to pull out. But that went on for probably three or four years before we finally gave up. And that was very disappointing for everyone because we were doing a lot of important work with civil society in that country. The ambassador fought hard to keep us there, but we didn't see in the end any prospect for success as a transition program and so we decided to use our resources elsewhere.

Q: And you were right, as it turns out. 93 years old, he's still there.

ROGERS: Yes. It's amazing.

So, as head of the program office for the humanitarian response bureau, I helped develop long range plans for the bureau, we did the budget work, we did program evaluations. But I was lucky because I was also given the opportunity to respond to a major GAO (U.S. Government Accountability Office) report on the World Food Program, which managed a large share, over a billion dollars, of US food aid. One of the interesting dimensions of the Bureau for Humanitarian Response, in addition to working much more closely than I ever had with the State Department, was we also worked closely with UN organizations, and the World Food Program came to be our responsibility. GAO was after them; they reported that WFP didn't have adequate financial systems to assure U.S. resources could be utilized effectively. So that was a big problem for us. And ultimately, we came to accept GAO's recommendations and undertook to restructure the World Food Program's financial systems. This was easier than it sounds because AID was the biggest donor to the World Food Program, through our Office of Food for Peace. The US Department of Agriculture also contributed a lot, but we were the lead agency. And WFP was headed by an American, and they had a controller who was an American who had been an AID officer. So, we had a lot of access and influence. In the end our response to GAO was accepted and the financial reforms at WFP were successful.

This was important enough to our bureau as a whole, that when the deputy in the bureau retired -- a woman named Lois Richards, a very sharp, hard driving, committed Foreign Service officer -- when Lois retired the assistant administrator selected me to be his new deputy. So, as a result of the work I did on this WFP audit, and my other experience, I was able to move up to senior management. Since then, I've always thought you could do a great job in a routine bureaucratic setting, but in order to advance you've got to be lucky and you've got to have an opportunity to do something special. And this audit was my opportunity.

Q: Now, let me just be sure; when you're talking about moving up here this is still in the same Bureau of Disaster Relief and Response?

ROGERS: It was called the Bureau for Humanitarian Response at that time. And once I moved up into the deputy position -- the equivalent of a Deputy Assistant Secretary at State -- I was given the task of preparing an analytical paper on --

Q: Let me pause you here just one second. It was a little surprising to me when you mentioned that the GAO actually did an audit of a foreign organization, a non-U.S. organization. Did that happen in other instances in your recollection?

ROGERS: I'm not aware that it did. I think it was very unusual, and the initial reaction of our Assistant Administrator, Doug Stafford, was it's none of their business; we're not going to respond to these guys, we're not going to accept their recommendations and change WFP's financial system. Doug had been the Deputy High Commissioner at the UN refugee department and wanted to maintain a fence to keep GAO out. But ultimately I was able to convince him that was not a winning position. If they've declared that U.S. resources are potentially being wasted, you can't say we don't care, we're going to continue to provide them. So, you've got a choice; either you go in and do what GAO recommends or you stop providing resources.

Q: And just to go back a step, how was it that GAO was told you're going to go and do this audit or evaluation of the World Food Program because even though the U.S. was _____ and the director of the program it was still a non-U.S. entity?

ROGERS: WFP is an international organization, yes. And I'm not entirely sure how GAO got agreement to go in in the first place. They may have called it a study rather than an audit. I think they didn't have the authority to audit WFP. They were simply observing; they talked to people who were responsible, they talked to the embassy in Rome, they talked to WFP employees, they had access to publicly available reports.

Q: I see.

ROGERS: In any case, they came to the conclusions they came to, and ultimately we conceded that WFP's systems were not adequate to assure U.S. resources would be used effectively and efficiently. What really surprised me is that GAO never picked up on their

successful recommendation. As far as I know, they never took this precedent and went to look at UNICEF (United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund) or to UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) or to any other organization. In effect, we had reached agreement that the lead US Government agency overseeing each UN organization -- USAID in the case of WFP -- had responsibility for understanding the financial management systems of their UN organization and determining that these systems were adequate to ensure U.S. resources were effectively and efficiently used. GAO never tried to apply that conclusion elsewhere as far as I know.

Q: Interesting. I'll give you one very quick example of that. I was a refugee officer in Costa Rica in the late '80s when the Nicaraguan migration out of its civil war went into Costa Rica and they estimated some 150,000 Nicaraguans were in Costa Rica, a country then of perhaps five million people so it was a huge strain on a small country. And we were the largest donor for UNHCR, the International Organization on Migration, all of the key non- all of the key refugee service organizations. And as the refugee officer at the embassy I went and looked over their shoulder and asked them to show me the books basically and reported back to Washington. So, that may be why UNHCR and perhaps some others were not chosen because Washington is satisfied enough with what the embassy is doing in order to review those organizations. But with World Food maybe that kind of field check was not available or not done.

ROGERS: Maybe. But here we were talking about the central financial systems.

Q: Oh, I see.

ROGERS: UNHCR and WFP and all other UN organizations have their own auditors. So WFP was being audited, but GAO was finding what they felt were significant problems. In the end, we agreed. I'm not sure why they didn't apply the lesson more broadly. Maybe they just liked going to Rome.

Q: Okay. Anyway, sorry to interrupt.

ROGERS: So, anyhow I move up to be the deputy in the bureau. Doug Stafford was looking out at the world and seeing a tremendous increase in refugees -- WFP provides food assistance to UNHCR for refugees -- and we saw growing famine in Africa. So Doug asked me to prepare an analytical piece that came to be called "Food Aid: Rising Needs, Declining Availability." I was trying to contrast what looked like an emerging need for food in the world with declining availability caused by a static budget coupled with rising food prices. In short, the amount of food we could buy with the budget we had was declining but needs everywhere were growing. It turned out to be a really interesting piece of work; I was really proud of it. And it was highly regarded by the State Department; Tim Wirth who was the Undersecretary for Global Affairs at that time picked up on the theme and invited me to join the US delegation to the World Food Summit. The CIA liked it as well and did a lot of supporting work which basically confirmed our conclusions. The World Food Summit was in 1994 and was my first large,

international conference, a surreal experience. I was walking down a hallway and Fidel Castro passed by. So it was a really interesting time in my career and I was getting a lot more familiar with agriculture and food issues.

And then Doug Stafford decided that he was going to retire and I served as the Acting Assistant Administrator for a couple of years. This was a political job that the AID Administrator was trying to convince Congressman Tony Hall to take, but he resisted. So I had the job for longer than expected. But it was manageable because we had good office directors in the bureau. In effect necessity forced me to develop my management credo: have good managers reporting to you, get them the resources they need and keep the political problems off their backs. It worked out pretty well.

It turned out we had to deal with a major political problem during this period which became one of the most interesting issues in my career. As Doug was leaving, we were getting word of famine in North Korea. Of Course, this was a country AID had nothing to do with, nobody had anything to do with it really. And I can recall going to the first meeting -- this must have been in late 1995 -- with the North Asia division of State's East Asia Bureau, and they didn't know anybody from AID. They were responsible for the two Koreas and Japan and I guess they had a couple of other countries as well. But they didn't know AID and we didn't know them. But we hit it off well and we were able to collaborate.

We began assessing, through the World Food Program, USDA and independent sources, the need for food aid and whether it was desirable to provide aid to North Korea. We had some people who said this was one of the worst famines for a long time and others who were saying it was not so bad; in fact, some thought it was stage managed by the North Koreans to get resources. So, we had a tough call as to whether we were going to provide aid. Ultimately we concluded that we would, so we made the first of a series of pledges through WFP. Initially we provided modest amounts, and as we came to understand the severity of the situation we pledged hundreds of thousands of tons and involved US private organizations in its delivery.

At the same time Chuck Kartman was the State Department's special representative -- maybe ambassador -- for North Korea and was negotiating on their nuclear program. He was interested in the fact we had decided to provide food aid and asked me to come up to the UN in New York to explain to the North Koreans what we were planning as humanitarian assistance for their people. And so I did. It was kind of a fine line that we were walking here because we didn't want to appear to be providing humanitarian assistance as a political gesture; at the same time there was this political negotiation going on. So, we had to collaborate. If Kartman had not been as successful as he was, I'm convinced we would have gone ahead with the food aid in any case. But he led a successful negotiation, and we had a successful food aid program that checked a major famine.

I had a chance to go on a WFP-led delegation to North Korea in the Fall of 1997. And then later on in November of 1997 I led a U.S. delegation to North Korea which included

representatives from State Department, USDA (United States Department of Agriculture), the Hill and AID to do further assessment. We got an opportunity to travel around the country, meet senior officials and see how isolated, impoverished and militarized the country was.
Throughout this period, I spent considerable time briefing the Hill. And this is kind of interesting because it turned out there were several Republicans on the Hill who were instrumental in agreeing that we should go forward with a food aid program for North Korea. There was a staffer named Mark Kirk who ultimately became a senator from Illinois; he just got defeated. There was a staffer for Mitch McConnell named Robin Cleveland whose dad had actually been ambassador to South Korea, so she had a Korea connection. She went on to work at OMB (Office of Management and Budget) and then she worked for Paul Wolfowitz as his assistant at the World Bank. In any case, it was interesting to me that the Republicans were supportive of providing food aid to North Korea. Maybe they remembered Ronald Reagan's old dictum that a hungry child knows no politics.

Toward the end of the Clinton Administration, I think there was still some hope that negotiations were going to lead to a nuclear breakthrough. Madeleine Albright went there on a very positive visit – she was maybe a little overly enthusiastic. I got a personal note of thanks for my work from Wendy Sherman who took over as the Secretary's designated representative for North Korea. I figured once Hilary Clinton got elected, Wendy was going to be her secretary of state. I could sell this little note on eBay if I wanted to, but no such luck.

Q: Now, do you want to take a minute and talk about what your impressions were of North Korea to the extent that you saw things?

ROGERS: Most important, I was convinced the famine was real. But it's a striking place where in Pyongyang the regime's leadership lives quite well. The North is often characterized as a one-man dictatorship and I think for public and international consumption it is; but it's governance has a lot of the characteristics of an oligarchy. You have a leadership group that we estimated at the time was maybe as many as a million people who actually ran the country, including military leadership, and who lived quite a good life. Those who live in Pyongyang are well fed and normal height, and the peasants who live out in the countryside who have been hungry for a long time and were being devastated by the famine were obviously stunted. When the Soviet Union collapsed and ultimately withdrew its assistance, the North lost a lot of the resources that they needed to sustain their economy. So they went into a protracted and draconian adjustment. They probably never had enough food to feed their people but they managed with aid from the Soviets. When that ended they had no money to import food and they were hit by a series of natural disasters -- floods and droughts – and famine was the result. It was a devastating experience you could see in the grim cities, the bent people and the emaciated children.

It is very obviously tightly controlled, the most militaristic place I've ever seen. In the countryside you see not only formal army units but local popular forces walking around

with weapons. They had communist party cadre everywhere. I remember talking to one woman and she'd obviously been selected to talk to me; her son was in the military. So, I asked her how often this political cadre came to visit her, to check up on her in effect. And she said every day. So, it is a completely screwed down society, completely isolated, no contact with the outside world. I think that may be breaking down somewhat now with the advent of cellphones, but at that time there was no contact with the outside world. Everybody is told what to believe, what was going on in the world. There was a real hatred for the Americans from Korean War days, and even more hatred for the Japanese. This has persisted from the occupation and forced dislocation of workers. You see signs all over the place, pictures of the Japanese as demons. They suffered terribly at Japanese hands, they suffered terribly in the Korean War as well, and they are regularly reminded they have enemies.

I think there was opportunity for negotiations to be more successful than they were, and I regret people have turned to a much more militaristic policy. I blame that on the Bush Administration, which in my mind was more interested in talking to its political base than it was in really trying to get a solution to the North Korea problem. But the Obama Administration essentially adopted the Bush Administration foreign policy. So, I think we're now at a very dangerous and tragic point and if things were to go wrong a lot of people would get killed..

Q: Yes. Now there's no question about that. Now, as this engagement with North Korea ends were there other examples of the use of either emergency humanitarian relief or food relief that also played, as you were the acting assistant administrator or-

ROGERS: There was a major famine in Ethiopia at the time, and famine in Africa was an ongoing problem.. There had been persistent drought in Ethiopia, and parts of the country are densely populated, and it's also the poorest country I've ever seen. People in densely populated areas with very small plots of farm land and per capita income of a hundred bucks a year or so -- something like that. So, you had people living right on the margin of starvation under the best of circumstances; then you have a drought, so famine comes quickly. We were providing all forms of humanitarian assistance to Ethiopia, but especially food aid.

Q: A drought that affects Ethiopia, will it also move over into Somalia as well?

ROGERS: Frequently all of East Africa was affected -- Sudan, Somalia, Kenya and Uganda could all be affected. So, it's common that more parts of Africa than just Ethiopia are facing drought and famine. There's need to commit huge levels of resources to help meet the need. Fortunately, the media kept the public well aware of the crisis, so the Administration and Congress were pretty responsive. Of course, there were also huge logistical problems that needed to be met, largely around the procurement, transport and delivery of hundreds of thousands of tons of food

One of the innovations which was introduced while I was there and I thought was a real contribution was prepositioning of food. It was developed in the office of Food for Peace

and led by a guy named Jon Brause who later went to work at the NSC (National Security Council). He's now the WFP representative in Washington. Jon came up with the idea that we would position food in East Africa during good times so we could move it where needed in famine. Mombasa was chosen as the hub where we positioned and stored the food, and we also positioned some in the Middle East, I think in Bahrain. So, we were able in effect to forward deploy resources for later use in East Africa and developed a much more effective response.

We were also able to upgrade the World Food Program's capacity, and they became a much more effective organization. So all in all we did a better job on food aid, and it's been a long time since we've had a major famine. But it looks like we're on the verge in South Sudan and also Somalia. As is often the case, conflict is a major part of the equation that leads to famine, and that's the case today too.

Q: Now the other kind of situation that can create food need is natural disaster. Were there some, again during your period, during your tenure where you needed to do food relief as the result of a-

ROGERS: We did a lot of food relief, but we do many forms of response in natural disasters -- floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, etc. Famine to me was the most difficult to deal with. Even though you provide relief in an earthquake, there's not a lot that you can do to save lives. You've got a situation that happens virtually instantaneously. Even though you'll send teams to try and save victims from rubble, very few people are actually rescued. We have a disaster response team from Fairfax County Fire and Rescue that is on standby to deploy, and when I was there we had a team in Los Angeles. So we'd send these teams out and try and provide relief, try and help people who were buried under rubble, but you've only got 72 hours or so before anybody who is trapped in an earthquake is going to perish from dehydration. So, I always thought that earthquakes are tough to deal with. You are basically limited to providing temporary shelter, water and sanitation and medical care for the injured. Floods and hurricanes are similar. In a famine, how you respond can make a huge difference in terms of lives saved. We had a major earthquake in India, in Bhuj at the end of the Clinton Administration I guess it was. And-

Q: I remember one in Pakistan as well.

ROGERS: There were several earthquakes in Pakistan. I'm not entirely sure when they were. It wasn't a period when I was the assistant administrator. You know, earthquakes are a fact of life in parts of the world, and they're going to happen. The way to deal with earthquakes is the way we deal with them. You have strict building codes, you adhere to those building codes. The Japanese are even better than we are by quite a bit. And so, preparedness is the answer to saving lives in earthquakes. And we provide some assistance for disaster preparedness, but it's a complicated process because you've got to have a country that's willing and able to enforce its building codes. That takes governmental commitment and scarce resources. And those are tough to find in large parts of the Third World.

And the other area where effective disaster response is critical is during and after conflict. The war in the Balkans provides a good example. This conflict, spread over several countries, went on for an extended period, from late in the Bush Administration through much of the Clinton Administration. We provided humanitarian assistance, food aid and disaster relief both, throughout this period. We were in position eventually to involve the Office of Transition Initiatives as well. OTI initiated a major housing program in Bosnia, which met a real need of the people and complemented the humanitarian programs of the rest of our bureau. In time, we were able to help transition these programs over to a more typical USAID assistance program, with a full aid mission.

We also had a new Assistant Administrator at about this time, and I reverted back to Deputy. Hugh Parmer was his name. He had been the Mayor of Fort Worth and in the Texas legislature. He was inexperienced but very smart and energetic and eager to get involved. He took on leadership of the preparation and execution of assistance in Kosovo after the Serb invasion all the way through to that transition.

Q: Interesting. And the transition did-

ROGERS: This was actually a series of transitions spread over an extended period as Yugoslavia fragmented, fell into ethnic and political conflict, stabilized with outside help, including ours, and eventually began to progress toward development and integration into Europe.

Q: And the transition did take place eventually. I mean, however AID evaluated the situation eventually it did move from strictly transition to a more regular program approach in the former Yugoslavia.

ROGERS: It did, it did. Yes. We were pleased with that. I think it's a good example of how these transitions can work. It was horrific in the immediate conflict, with many brutal atrocities and great human suffering. But seen from a longer term perspective it's a good example of what can be accomplished when all elements of the US Government and the international community are working effectively together.

Q: So, in the post-transition moment were you looking at creating more of a regional USAID management of the former Yugoslavia or did you actually want missions in each of the states that emerged?

ROGERS: I think it was kind of a hybrid. It might have been a regional program initially and then AID transitioned over to more typical bilateral missions. Overall, it was a pretty big program. And of course, the Europeans were in there with big resources. I guess OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) got most of its resources from Europe, huh?

Q: It varied. We would provide some and obviously the OSCEs, most of what they gave were personnel who went into the countries to do observation, recommendation,

technical assistance. It didn't have a very big budget for actual assistance. But what it could do was assess and report out and so each of those 50-some odd countries that belonged to the OSCE, including the U.S. and Canada could get information from those OSCE missions that were located in the country and then use other assets that they might have, either bilaterally or through the EU (European Union) or through international organizations to address needs. The OSCE doesn't have a lot of budget due to its own relief operations.

But how would you describe now, having seen the whole transition going from immediate and urgent needs there to more traditional USAID project-based management in the former Yugoslavia? What's the feeling now in USAID about the outcomes?

ROGERS: I'm not sure what the feeling is now, to be frank. I wouldn't be a good authority on what AID thinks now about whether it succeeded. My impression though is that people should be pretty pleased with the way the former Yugoslavia's gone, even places like Serbia. I think it's obviously been a complex political problem and AID has contributed its part to solving that problem. But I would bet that the State Department's political officers would say that a lot of the work is theirs. So, to me it's an interesting example of where AID and State can work together.

For me personally, the importance of working with State was a lesson learned the hard way. About the middle of my time as Acting Assistant Administrator, and flying high on North Korea and my food and agriculture successes, I decided to write an article on the changing environment for humanitarian assistance and how AID was responding. The AID Administrator, Brian Atwood, liked it and decided to co-author the piece, and we were able to get it placed in the International Herald Tribune. It was long and ran over two editions. The humanitarian assistance office in State, the refugee people specifically, was furious. They thought the article encroached on their policy turf. It never occurred to me we would need to clear AID policy with State, especially since the article was fairly anodyne. But it caused a kerfuffle and the Administrator and I had to listen to venting in a couple of meetings. And we had to acknowledge that we should consult with State whenever we ventured into a policy question that might interest them.

Q. *Now, the policies that the Clinton Administration adopted for all of these issues that you've mentioned, the food assistance, transition assistance and so on, you're approaching the time now when you are going to retire and it's also approaching the end of the Clinton Administration.*

ROGERS: I've still got about seven years to go.

Q: Okay, so what-

ROGERS: I go into the Bush Administration. But before we leave the Clinton Administration, I'd like to talk a little bit about a more serious turf battle between State and AID. There was a study that I think Julia Taft initiated with the help of Mort Halperin, who was then in State Policy Planning. The idea was to do an assessment of the

humanitarian assistance bureaus in State -- PRM (Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration) -- and AID -- BHR (Bureau for Humanitarian Response) to see whether there were redundancies and see whether there were opportunities for a merger.

Q: Interesting.

ROGERS: I think the sense in some parts of the State Department was that AID's Bureau for Humanitarian Response or a substantial part of it should move over into the State Department. And AID's argument during this process was that PRM should move to AID because the AID bureau had greater and more diverse resources and more extensive field presence. PRM was essentially a policy bureau that worked with UN organizations and other international organizations like the Red Cross. But it didn't have the field contacts and it didn't have the budget that AID had.

So we had this extensive study toward the end of the Clinton Administration but couldn't get to a resolution. I was the AID representative on the working group. Options were taken to Madeleine Albright, but she said she didn't want to mess with the politics of it at the end of the administration. So it kicked over to the beginning of the Bush Administration. Dick Armitage, who I believe was the Deputy Secretary, called a meeting to assess what to do. I was there and the DAS from PRM; we both agreed that we worked well together, didn't have any major overlap, and sorted out any problems amicably. You could tell Armitage didn't think very highly of Mort Halperin, probably going back to Vietnam days, so he decided the new administration was not going to pursue any sort of reorganization either. So, the issue basically faded away. But every now and then that sort of question about overlap between AID and State bubbles up and becomes a little bit of a turf war.

And turf questions became relevant to budget debates that came up later in the Bush Administration and also relevant to the main change that came in the Bureau for Humanitarian Response. The new AID Administrator, Andrew Natsios, decided to move AID's Democracy Center into the bureau and to change the name to the Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance, DCHA. So, we took over responsibility for democracy programs. Roger Winter came in to be the new assistant administrator. And we reshuffled programs among the deputies. Bill Garvelink, who had been deputy in the disaster relief office and would later go on to be Ambassador to Congo, took disaster relief and food aid. I took over responsibility for Democracy and the Office of Transition Initiatives and a couple of the smaller programs, including two new ones.

I helped oversee establishment of a new Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation, headed by Elisabeth Kvitashvili, a very capable, high energy foreign service officer. CMM was our conflict think tank and action guide, gathering theory on conflict and how to deal with it from non-profits, outside think tanks, the military, the intelligence community and our own State and AID field people. They then worked with embassies and field missions to help assess the causes of conflict in individual countries and devise measures which might mitigate the worst of it.

Later, under the guidance of our new Assistant Administrator, Mike Hess, we set up an Office of Military Affairs. Mike had been in the military and brought critical expertise on how the military works, as well as real organizational skills. By now AID was well into the Iraq and Afghanistan campaigns, so effective collaboration with the military was important. The office was headed by Tom Balthazar, a retired Army colonel and Iraq veteran. Frankly, there was a bit of culture shock on AID's part, and when I left the OMA was still a work in progress, though I continue to believe better collaboration with the military is an important part of our Agency's mission.

Q: Let me just ask you; this redistribution of portfolios took place early in the Bush Administration?

ROGERS: Almost immediately.

Q: It's interesting if only because it sort of presages what would be needed in Iraq. Because in other words everything had to be done all at the same time when the Iraq military action was over; some relief, some democracy, some transition issues. And it's just interesting that even before anybody knew Iraq was going to be on the horizon that they combined all of those things.

ROGERS: I guess you could say that, but there were much broader responsibilities than just Iraq. DCHA was a worldwide operation. Iraq was sui generis, and I don't think AID had the stature in US Government leadership in Iraq that AID felt it should. Anyhow, democracy came-

Q: And so now what was behind the Bush Administration's policy into why they combined all those offices?

ROGERS: I think the theory was that our bureau had demonstrated a capacity for quite successful, fast response, political work through OTI; and I believe the new Administrator, Andrew Natsios, wanted democracy programs to work more intensively in countries that were either in conflict or emerging from conflict. He had experience with disaster programs in Bosnia and seemed to feel AID could have the greatest impact and achieve the greatest results in advancing democracy in conflict countries. To the extent you were doing democracy programs in places like Brazil or even India, they could be handled by State Department political officers, by the State Department's programs in their democracy bureau, and through organizations like the International Republican Institute, International Democratic Institute, so on. So, anyhow, the idea was that we would move Democracy into the Bureau for Humanitarian Response.

Now the Democracy office that moved in was essentially an office to provide technical support to AID field programs. And I think they were less convinced that the theory was right. They saw democracy development as inherently long term, and they were skeptical that there really was much opportunity to advance democracy in countries which were

coming out of conflict. Over time, I came to believe they were right. But nevertheless, that was the decision and so everybody manned up and tried to make it happen.

Q: Was there an example of how it was at least attempted while you were there that you could recount?

ROGERS: Well, as I said, the office was there to provide democracy support to field missions. So for example we would have been providing democracy support to countries of the former Yugoslavia. At this point you would have more robust AID field presence, and the mission would be looking for technical expertise in how to do democracy programs. We would provide technical expertise in elections, civil society development, rule of law, whatever. Anywhere one of our missions, worldwide, felt that they needed technical expertise.

It's interesting that very early on I got involved in another conflict with the State Department over democracy programs. Elliott Abrams was at the National Security Council and head of their Democracy office, and Lorne Craner was the Assistant Secretary of State for DRL (Democracy, Human Rights and Labor); neither one of them had a lot of experience with how programs work and money decisions get made in the Federal Government. Both were convinced that AID controlled this huge pot of democracy money, and they wanted to exert more influence over how the money was allocated. But in fact decisions about whether or not to do democracy programs in a country were made in the field by AID mission directors and by the ambassadors. So every time Lorne and Elliott would come to AID and say we need to do X, Y or Z we'd say you've got to talk to the assistant secretary of State for Africa or the assistant secretary of State for the Near East. But they never seemed willing to take on the State geographic bureaus.

Nevertheless, there was continued low level tension between AID and the democracy folks at NSC and State over control of money and programs It made the AID Administrator nervous, so he called for a new democracy policy and strategy for AID. Our office Director, Jerry Hyman, took on the job and produced a very professional document. Unfortunately, Andrew didn't think it gave AID enough credit and asked the Agency's policy office to take it on. They turned out a very lame effort in the opinion of many – not really a strategy in that it didn't include anything about objectives, how to identify critical problems or program priorities. Essentially it was a puff piece for AID. If anything it had the opposite effect intended and raised tensions by calling into question AID's professional capacity in the field. Eventually the Administrator brought in a political ally of Elliott Abrams as a new deputy in our bureau, Paul Bonicelli, and that seemed to settle things down a bit.

In the back of my mind, if I were reorganizing AID and State at this point I would give State AID's Democracy Center and OTI and I would take PRM for AID. I would do a swap, but. I don't think that will happen. Maybe under the pressure of governmental downsizing in the Trump Administration you might get something like that.

Q: There was just an announcement in the news that there is now serious consideration about integrating USAID with State Department which has been always talked about in every administration but given that President Trump has a Republican majority in Congress now it's entirely possible that it will take place.

ROGERS: From my perspective, the heart of it has already taken place because State has taken over AID's budget function. State has ultimate authority over AID's budget in a way that it never did until the Bush Administration. They've added a layer of bureaucracy to manage the budget. So I think full merger might be a direction things will go.

When I was doing budgets, and even during the Clinton Administration, we would make our own decisions. We would make our recommendation directly to OMB and the Congress. We'd tell State Department what we were doing, but they were AID's recommendations about its resources and its priorities. Budgets would be built up from the field and at every level there would be concurrence from State. The AID mission director would seek the concurrence of the ambassador, but he would send his budget in to the geographic bureau at AID and the assistant administrator would seek the concurrence of the assistant secretary. Then Agency management would make its decisions and the budget would go on to OMB. All that changed with the Bush Administration, and now the AID budget goes to the State Department and the State Department makes decisions about priorities all across the international affairs agencies.

But if you look back far enough in the history of AID, we had the Alliance for Progress, which was set up by the Kennedy Administration, I think just as AID itself was being created. Back then parts of the two organizations really were integrated. It was only in that one bureau, the Latin America Bureau, but AID desk officers sat with State Department desk officers in the same place and decisions were made jointly. I'm sure the State Department assistant secretary was the leader but AID had a lot of influence. I forget when the Alliance for Progress faded away, the Carter Administration maybe.

Q: Okay. So, again, we're sort of at the beginning of the Bush Administration in terms of this unification of the democracy function with the humanitarian and transition assistance. How does that then play as you continue through the Bush Administration? Because this is where you're located now.

ROGERS: Right. Well, the structure was an awkward one in my opinion. The people who did democracy saw themselves as a long-term development program, and they thought there were opportunities to make progress on democracy but maybe not in the places where the rest of the bureau focused. So, I think the perception of many of the professionals in the Democracy office was you can do democracy development in a place like Costa Rica where there's a certain level of political stability and you can have a successful democracy program there, but when you try to go into Afghanistan it's not going to work as well and you can't expect to have the same kind of success. It's sort of like in the agriculture field or economic growth field; the country has to have the policies

and the will to implement those policies in order to promote economic growth. And the same goes for democracy programs.

One of the problems at the macro level in Washington was there never was a fully agreed strategy for what we were going to do in democracy. The classic model was the AIDS program, the president's program on AIDS-

Q: PEPFAR (President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief).

ROGERS: PEPFAR, yes, which was run by a guy named Randy Tobias. He ran that program and then came over to be the AID administrator for a while. But in any case, PEPFAR had a strategy where they had objectives for what they expected to achieve, broadly to reduce HIV in the world. They selected the countries which were going to be their priority in terms of achieving their objectives.. They decided what sorts of projects they would run in each priority country. They insisted that resources were going to go to those countries and they were not going to go somewhere else. And they pursued that strategy relentlessly.

Well, Democracy never had a set of approved priorities. You know, as far as the democracy community in Washington was concerned it was "let a thousand flowers bloom." Democracy in Pakistan and democracy in Botswana were equally plausible and equally good as far as the United States was concerned. We were putting resources in a lot of countries where you really weren't going to have a chance of making much progress. We were pushing democracy programs into countries where we weren't going to succeed and where democracy as far as the interests of the United States were concerned wasn't really all that important. But whether Mozambique is a democratic country or not is not as critical to U.S. interests as whether Nigeria is a democratic country or not. I take it back, Nigeria is not a good example because I don't think there's much chance there either.

Q: Was there perhaps by just a concatenation of fortunate events any place while you were there that profited from the democracy programs?

ROGERS: Don't get me wrong, I think lots of places benefitted. I'm just not sure the most important places benefitted or that I can point to many places I think are making self-sustaining democratic progress. The Eastern Europe countries probably did profit from democracy support. I think some of the countries in Latin America profited from democracy support, even some improbable ones. Colombia was a conflict country but it was also a democracy country. I think in the end, after a lot of hard work and under Colombia's own leadership, it's made a lot of progress. Although we've provided lots of assistance, it's hard to see much progress in Africa or the Middle East. Aside from India, Asia seems to be questionable as well. I do think many of the countries in Eastern Europe have made progress. The fact that they could join the European Union has been huge for them. And it would be interesting to talk to somebody who knows a lot more about it than I do, about the nitty gritty of those democracy programs in Eastern Europe and whether

they actually helped prepare those countries to join the European Union. That would be a more complex study but-

Q: I can give you one very quick example from my own experience. I was the cultural officer in Bucharest, Romania from 2002 to 2005. One of the programs we ran using the USAID- using USAID money; they gave us the money and said okay, public affairs section, this is a small enough program that you can run it. You have the connections and everything. It was a program to teach local attorneys how to do arbitration and it worked. It worked first on a very small basis; there were perhaps a dozen attorneys from their local bar association that actually wanted to learn it. There were problems as well because a number of the attorneys were distrustful that oh, they're going to learn how to be arbitrators and that's going to reduce the amount of work attorneys can get, you know, suing and ____ actions and all of this because they won't be using the courts as much and then attorneys won't get as much money. But over time that suspicion was alleviated and more and more attorneys began to be trained and eventually the parliament passed the necessary enabling legislation to create the profession of arbitration with the certification process and the training process and the trainers would end up being the people who first learned it from the USAID money and this program that we ran. I told them that our ultimate goal is once you've got it down you're going to be able to be the regional trainer for all the other countries that are going to want arbitration. The value to the democracy was you take small cases off the dockets of the judges so that they can do the big cases, especially the big graft and corruption cases.

So, that was an example when USAID money and cooperation between USAID and State worked very well. It's the only one I know but I'm sure that there were other places where things like that happened.

ROGERS: Yes. There are many programs that are successful and that are well worth doing even though overall progress toward a democratic society may be slow or uneven. I think in East Asia you have a number of success stories like that. There's a lot going on in Indonesia and Thailand even though many people think they are now backsliding a bit.

An interesting question is how do you go from an example like yours, a specific program or series of programs, and ultimately reach a point where democracy progress is self-sustaining? Interestingly enough, just as I was getting ready to retire, maybe a year before I retired, Jerry Hyman, the head of the Democracy Office set out to answer that question. Jerry had started programs in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union and then came over to head the Democracy office when it was moved into our bureau. He was setting up a comprehensive evaluation program to determine what impact AID's democracy programs had -- what programs work well and what don't work and under what conditions. Unfortunately, Jerry left before he could complete the study.

I think our Democracy efforts have contributed to some progress; but it's hard to sort out where it's been most successful and where not so successful. Where did we make the difference and where would there have been progress even without us?

And even back then it was hard to decide how much of the Bush Administration commitment to democracy was rhetoric and how much was substance. Early on they were high on Frances Fukuyama's "The End of History." This was the idea that liberal democracy was the highpoint
--endpoint in fact--in the evolution of human governance. There was talk, with their leadership, that Washington would be the "new Rome." Heady stuff, but they didn't seem to have a very coherent approach to providing senior leadership to get things done in key countries.

Q: Now, to continue through the Bush Administration and the change now in budgeting. What were the advantages and disadvantages you saw in terms of the effectiveness of programming if you can comment on that?

ROGERS: In the short run, I'm not sure the change in the budget system really had much effect on programs in the field. I think it was more a question of who controlled resources in Washington. I would imagine that State Department people would say they had a broader vision than AID, a better understanding of overall US interests. If they took over control of resources, that vision could be translated out to the field. State could better establish broad priorities; and as a result, over time the U.S. would have more effective field programs in the most important countries.

People at AID would say that may be true in terms of broad policy, but we have always coordinated on broad policy. What you have done with this new system, in practice, is add another layer of bureaucracy and detailed reporting which consumes everybody's time. As a result you are reducing the effectiveness of programs in the field because embassies and AID missions must spend all their time and management resources on micro reporting. When I was leaving, everyone seemed to feel reporting had become an overwhelming burden. It would be interesting to know the extent to which State Department field officers welcomed this sort of additional bureaucratic responsibility. I'd be surprised if they did. But maybe things have changed since I left.

Q: I understand. Many other USAID people who have lived through the transition also felt that they saw USAID going into a period where so much attention is now given to evaluation and efforts to create evaluations that can be measured-

ROGERS: Absolutely.

Q: -when sometimes it's difficult to create those sorts of criteria either because it's such a long-term process or because you simply don't know what the beginning, if there was going to be and you have a couple of determinants why you would go in and try but no certainty at the end that it would actually work.

ROGERS: Yes. To me it sort of leads to the larger question about where the State Department is within the overall policy framework of the U.S. Government and whether or not over the years State Department has made the right choices about its own operations. I have friends who used to work in USIA (United States Information Agency)

and their feeling is that it was a big mistake to merge USIA into the State Department. It diminished the information and cultural outreach mission on the one hand and it encumbered State Department with responsibilities it really was not even interested in doing. And I would bet that if you did a survey of what this change in the foreign aid budget process has meant -- from the State Department's perspective – it would be seen as burdensome and diminishing State's diplomatic mission. Does it really enhance our country analysis and oversight capacity or does it diminish it? And I bet you'd find a lot of State people who would say we're diminished by this change. State's comparative advantage is its field people working to understand the country context and the implications of policy, and diplomatic representation of the U.S., not doing AID budgets.

Q: Yes. Were there any studies done that you saw during this time to determine the effectiveness of this- of these changes?

ROGERS: I think it was too early while I was still there. I retired in 2007 and the system was just getting up and running at that point, so it was really too early to tell. But you're right; development is difficult to measure because there are so many variables that can affect it. So when you try and measure all of those variables and assess how they interact and what's happening, it's very complex.

You know, I think part of the problem here was that people became enchanted with the PEPFAR process, which provided something you can measure. If you put in the resources, you can do a pretty good job of measuring what the rate of HIV infection is in a country, and you can track it being reduced in response to your programs, and you can claim success from that. And I think lots of people think we should be doing programs where you can be assured of your results. If you are investing in programs that take a long time and are subject to many complex variables and significant risk, say economic growth or democracy or other program like that, it's very hard to measure success from year to year. Even if you believe you are succeeding, it is difficult to attribute that specifically to your programs. So I think the new system risks being biased in favor of programs that are easy to measure.

In my opinion there's been a huge shift in the way AID does business out of longer term development programs like economic growth and democracy and into health programs, health programs writ large. I don't know what the share of resources is but I'm sure that it's been a huge shift. But if you stand back and look at countries where we have succeeded, it's been because we were there for the long run, and their economies grew and in many cases they made some progress on democracy and governance.

Q: So, now we're now of course in this period from 2000 to 2007 where everything in the U.S. changes in terms of security and security outlook because of 9/11 and then subsequently Afghanistan and Iraq. From where you sat in the Democracy office with all of those other pieces that had been brought in, OTI and humanitarian assistance and so on, what was your view of how things went for those sorts of missions, for the Iraq and Afghanistan missions?

ROGERS: Well security was such a big problem in those two huge programs, my perception is we can't say whether we contributed much if anything to success. Of course my perception is colored by the fact that we are now fifteen years or so from the beginning of both conflicts. And I think lots of people, me included, would say it is hard to characterize either as a success.

I think going in AID had an understanding of how we do development, how we contribute to development built on long-term experience; but when we got into Afghanistan and Iraq AID field officers were sharply constrained by the security environment. We weren't able to apply our traditional ways of doing business. We did the best we could, but we weren't the major decision makers, even for economic assistance. Outside major cities, our people were stationed in organizations with the U.S. military that came to be called Provincial Reconstruction Teams, and security concerns dictated heavily.

I remember a heated discussion on the impact security concerns had on our ability to promote local development. The harsh measure was actually the number of AID people who were killed in Vietnam compared to the number of AID people killed in either Iraq or Afghanistan. A lot of our people were stationed out in the field in Vietnam, and as a result a significant number of them were killed; in Iraq and Afghanistan our people weren't as able to work independently in the field due to security concerns -- usually they travelled with military escorts -- and nobody has been killed in either one of those countries. I recognize that there were Foreign Service nationals in both of those places who were killed, just as there were in Vietnam. It's great that casualties have been so low in Iraq and Afghanistan, but it is telling on how we do business in those countries. Certainly we have done a lot in terms of infrastructure and support for governments, where security is possible. Not so much in rural areas and local development where direct contact with the people is important.

Q: In the period when all the planning was going on for Iraq at least, were you involved in that with ___ and all of those- the planners?

ROGERS: Not so much. I got involved on some issues. In Iraq there was a food distribution and feeding system that was run by the World Food Program and the Iraqi government. I had known the WFP Rep who ran the program. Some Americans, ideologues in my opinion, wanted to abolish the whole system and go to a completely new, free market system. That would have been a fiasco, and I put my two cents in. And we had substantial democracy and OTI programs in both places. But most of the planning was done by the military and by State leading assorted management structures, and much of it was done in the field. Decisions were more field based as the wars evolved and our understanding about what was possible and what was desirable changed accordingly. The long and short of it, I personally didn't have much to do with either one of those country programs, I'm pleased to say.

Q: Okay. Then looking back on how USAID has changed over the years that you were there, what were the positive changes, what were the negative ones? How would you advise now given your experience over that time?

ROGERS: You know, I hate to be an old person who looks back on the past with rosy nostalgia, but I have to say that it was a lot better organization in the ’70s and early ’80s than it was in the ’90s or 2000s. That would be my perception. Of course, it had more resources available to it, it had more field people working directly for the Agency, and it was less political. You know, when I first came into AID the Deputy Administrator and many other senior leaders were career officers. So AID had senior managers experienced in field work and in development making many more decisions than is now the case. Now, political appointments are reaching lower and lower into the bureaucracy. When I left, there was a political appointee who headed the Office of Food for Peace. So you have traded officers with management, development and field experience for those with partisan loyalty. And this has been an inexorable trend no matter the party in power.

I think AID’s contribution to U.S. policy and interests is less significant now than it was. I think we still make a worthwhile contribution, we have adjusted to changing circumstances pretty well, and we have managed to introduce some new concepts to the way we do business. But my net assessment would be it’s not what it was, and I think a merger with State Department would be a big mistake for both organizations.

On the positive side, I think OTI was a good idea. I think our willingness and ability to respond effectively in conflict situations is much improved. Of course conflict in the ‘70s and ‘80s was colored by the Cold War. I think some of the health programs -- child survival and HIV/AIDS -- are great and I think really have made a difference. I just wish they hadn’t displaced economic growth programs which I think are essential to lifting large numbers of people out of poverty. I’m proud of our humanitarian assistance programs, which I think are better managed now and save many hundreds of thousands of lives every year. I think AID is a great place to work and I am very satisfied with my career there. I think the Agency could do much more if given the opportunity and additional resources. .

Q: Alright. Are there any other points that I haven’t raised at this point that you’d like to reflect on?

ROGERS: I did have the privilege of working with Roger Winter, an outside-the-box manager. He believed in trying to help solve the most difficult humanitarian problems, even those that were political or controversial, and to take a direct, hands on approach. Before he came to the Bush Administration, Roger had helped advance the peace process in Sudan. He knew all the players and ultimately helped devise a path to independence for South Sudan. When he took over our bureau, he wanted to try and bring the Lord’s Resistance Army into peace negotiations with the Ugandan government, and he asked me to help.

The LRA was a truly vicious organization, recruiting child soldiers and mutilating victims. So it was an interesting and worthwhile effort. While on vacation in London, I brought two representatives of the LRA to an informal meeting to try and make contact and establish a dialogue. I traveled to Uganda a couple of times and met with senior government officials and with people who claimed to have access to the LRA in-country. We were never able to establish a process that directly involved AID and the LRA, but I like to think we helped the Ugandan Government get to a good place in deciding how to deal with what was a real terrorist organization, for the Ugandans to be open to a peaceful settlement with the LRA. Ultimately the Bush Administration instructed us to abandon the effort, I think because they were afraid of the possibility they might be embarrassed if the U.S. engaged in meetings with such a volatile and brutal group. The Ugandans, with some US help, were eventually able to push the LRA out of the country. Over time and under pressure, the LRA has withered, and Uganda has been freed of a real scourge.

I guess we've covered a lot of territory. Now, in retirement I try to find ways to apply the values and skills I developed at USAID and the Peace Corps to problems closer to home. My daughter lives in Richmond and is helping children and young men from the inner city, including some returning from prison. I channel my best ideas and modest resources through her. I also read a lot, travel and play a little golf.

End of interview