

The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training
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CHARLES UPHAUS

*Interviewed by: John Pielemeier
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INTERVIEW

Q: Good morning. This is John Pielemeier, one of the interviewers for the USAID oral history program. We're beginning an oral history with Charles Uphaus, an experienced and well-regarded USAID agriculture officer through his nearly 30-year career.

Charles, I believe you are up in Winchester, Virginia, or close to that, right?

UPHAUS: Right. Not long after retiring we moved out of Northern Virginia and bought this place about ten miles outside of Winchester, in the country, very nice. It keeps me busy.

Q: All right. So, let's start—I'm going to call you Charlie because that's what I've used when I knew you in my work life.

UPHAUS: That's fine.

Q: Let's start where you grew up and we're going to gradually move towards what moved you towards international development work.

UPHAUS: Okay. My father was a farmer in Missouri, west central Missouri. And I was the only one of my siblings to be born in a hospital, in Independence, Missouri, 1947. The others were born at home. We were farming at that time near Lexington, Missouri, the county seat, but the original family farm that had been cleared and settled by my great-grandfather was near what is now the town of Concordia, about 20 miles SE of Lexington. So, when I was very young we moved to the Concordia farm, which is where I spent the first ten years of my life, on what was at that time a very typical Missouri farm. We grew a little of everything, had some livestock -- some beef cattle, some sheep, some hogs, chickens. We grew soybeans and corn, wheat and oats and all manner of things. To go back to that part of Missouri now it's all corn and soybeans. It's a totally different kind of agriculture, which is kind of sad to see.

So, anyway, that was my first ten years, living out in the country, going to school in town.

Q: Did you take a bus or did you walk or how did you get to school?

UPHAUS: Rode—we were three miles out of town, so I rode the bus. My brother and sister both went to one-room country schools for their elementary education, so that was their experience, but I was in a consolidated school in town for my whole elementary education.

Q: You had to do chores on the farm before you went to school?

UPHAUS: Yeah. Not a lot. But you know, some, looking after some of the livestock. I learned to drive on a tractor. But I was still pretty young at that point and didn't have the heavy duty farm work that my older brother and sister got stuck with. So, it was an idyllic existence in a lot of ways.

Q: So, ten years there and then what happened next?

UPHAUS: Then we sold the farm. My brother was away at college, my dad was getting older, couldn't really manage the farm on his own — I was too young to be of much help. And there were some health issues as well. So, we sold the farm, moved to Arizona, to Phoenix, the outskirts of Phoenix, Arizona, which is where I was through junior high

through, well, actually through university. There we were sort of on the then outskirts of the city. We had some citrus acreage, so it was a little like being out in the country as well, growing citrus -- lemons, oranges, grapefruit.

Q: Did you do Future Farmers of America and all that?

UPHAUS: I was in 4-H when we lived in—on the farm in Missouri.

Q: And probably went to the county fair?

UPHAUS: I did. I raised a heifer that I showed at the county fair one year.

Q: And you got first prize? Second prize?

UPHAUS: I don't think so. (Both laugh)

Q: All right, all right.

UPHAUS: That was, interestingly enough, my first experience with the business of farming. My dad said—gave me this heifer, said, “You raise it.” And so I did and then we sold it at the livestock market in Kansas City, and I got a check for, you know, what seemed like a big amount of money at that time. But then my father sat down with me and said, “Okay, now. We deduct the cost of the heifer and we deduct the cost of the feed, and the cost of this and the cost of that,” and showed me a little of what it's like, you know, to actually run a farm. There wasn't much left at the end. That was a real eye opener.

Q: When you moved to Arizona you did much of high school there?

UPHAUS: Yes, high school and then through university at Arizona State in Tempe, which was very near Phoenix.

Q: And what if anything lead you towards international work?

UPHAUS: Well, let me backup a minute. I had an uncle who gave us subscriptions to *National Geographic*, which I read cover to cover every time it came, which got me interested in international things. And then, there were some missionaries in my family as well on, well, actually on both sides of the family, in China, the Philippines and Brazil, and I think my mother's secret ambition for me was to be a missionary, so we heard a lot about that. And it was through *National Geographic* and the Bible and the maps in the Bible and learning about all the ancient civilizations that really piqued my interest in things international. So, that goes way back to my, you know, kind of very early childhood, and that continued through junior high and high school.

Q: Did you visit any of those missionaries?

UPHAUS: No. No. I mean, I've since gotten to know a few of them. One of them is still living—a cousin, who was a missionary in the Philippines for many years. I'm in touch with him now.

Q: And moving through high school, what did you decide to study in college and why did you pick Arizona? University of Arizona?

UPHAUS: Arizona State. Oh, I started out as an engineering student and decided after a year or so it wasn't for me. And again, I was much more interested in the social science side of things and history and political science and ended up getting a degree in political science. And I was also very interested in music as well, but I realized I couldn't really hack it as a professional musician, but I was involved in musical activities all through high school and university band and orchestra and ensembles and that sort of thing.

Q: What did you play?

UPHAUS: I was a percussionist. So, all kinds of drums.

Q: All right. Sounds like it could be a thing to do in college especially. (Laughs)

UPHAUS: A lot of my best friends were in the music department, rather than in the social sciences.

Q: Any particular professors who influenced you in terms of moving towards international work?

UPHAUS: I had a professor, one who had spent time in Latin America and he taught this course in international political development. He was one who really got me thinking seriously about economic and political development in places like Latin America and the Third World. So, I would have to cite him. I think his name was Tullis, who'd done his fieldwork in Latin America. He was quite good. There were a few other good professors in world history and that sort of thing, but this one professor of international development definitely had an influence.

Q: Did you have a chance to do any study abroad?

UPHAUS: No. But between my junior and senior year I spent a summer in Vienna, Austria, working in a brewery and learning German.

Q: Wow.

UPHAUS: So, that was my first overseas experience. And you know, I studied German, it was my foreign language through my undergraduate study. I was interested in learning German because my father's family originally came from Germany in the 1840s and so on and so forth. So, that was my first international experience.

And then, towards the end of senior year and thinking what am I going to do and wanting somehow to get engaged in international work of some sort, Peace Corps presented itself as an opportunity. And so, I looked into that and applied and got accepted.

Q: All right. What program were you accepted in and where did you go?

UPHAUS: Fortunately, I was accepted—I remember well coming home after having a few beers with apartment mates and finding a telegram under the door of our apartment, and it was from the Peace Corps saying you’ve been selected to begin a training program for Nepal.

I knew my world geography pretty well, but I really wasn’t sure about Nepal. I was focused more on the Middle East and Europe. And I remember my roommate going to—we had a set of encyclopedias and going to an encyclopedia and looking up Nepal. But that was—so that was, anyway, the spring of my senior year, and I was selected for a program in Nepal. An agricultural program. So, my agricultural background caught up with me after I thought I’d sort of put it behind me.

Q: Right. And so, you were happy with that?

UPHAUS: I was okay with it, yeah.

Q: So, you went off to Peace Corps training and so on?

UPHAUS: We did our—Peace Corps in Nepal at that point did half their training in the U.S. and then half in Nepal. And so, for our first six or seven weeks we were in Davis, California, which of course, was and still is a big agricultural school. They threw us all into intensive language study and intensive technical study in agriculture. And of course, this was the early days of the green revolution and so the big emphasis was on the new varieties of wheat and rice and the package that went along with that. I was one of the few trainees who had some background in agriculture. And so, they had to keep everything quite simple in order to, you know, bring everybody along. It was the basic green revolution production package of improved seeds, fertilizer, you know, chemicals, that sort of thing that they trained us in.

Q: Oh. Remind me, what year was this?

UPHAUS: This was 1969.

Q: How many people were in your group?

UPHAUS: Oh, boy. We started training with about seventy people, as I recall.

Q: Oh, that’s a lot.

UPHAUS: About half of them washed out in Davis. We went overseas with something like thirty-five. Another eight or ten left right away, as soon as they saw—as soon as they saw Nepal, that it wasn't all beautiful mountain peaks and you know, Buddhists meditating and that sort of thing. When they saw the pretty grubby reality of Nepal a lot of them left right away. We ended up with about twenty of us being there for the full two years.

Q: Tell us more about where you were posted and what you did.

UPHAUS: Okay. We were, as agricultural volunteers, we were all spread out along the—in the Terai, which is the plain at the base of the mountains, along the Indian border. So, geographically and demographically it was really more a part of India than Nepal. I was posted in the far west of the country in a heavily forested area, just a couple of villages in the jungle. The predominant ethnic group was Tharu, an indigenous tribal group that has been inhabiting the forest strip at the foot of the mountains for generations – maybe millennia. No one knows for sure. There were some caste Hindu interspersed in there and some big landowners, high-caste, largely absentee, landowners. But most of the people were Tharu. It was quite remote. Four hours' walk to the district center where you could send a telegram to the Peace Corps office in Kathmandu and maybe get an answer the next day. We were way out there.

Q: Were you by yourself?

UPHAUS: Oh yes. And these were the days before cell phones. There were three other volunteers in the district. We were about two hours' walk distance from each other.

We would get together occasionally in the district center. We had a room there where we would store books and crash when we were in the district center for meetings.

Q: And what kind of agricultural work were you doing?

UPHAUS: Well, again, it was the basic green revolution, new wheat varieties primarily. I can't recall the specific varieties. The rice variety they were pushing then IR-8, developed at the International Rice Research Institute. But various varieties of wheat had been developed initially in Mexico and then refined in India. You know, now it's easy to criticize that whole technology that was being pushed by the Ford and Rockefeller foundations and the international agriculture research centers because of the, you know, the heavy reliance on pesticides and chemical fertilizers and monocrop agriculture and this sort of thing. But it's my conviction to this day that Norman Borlaug deserved his Nobel Prize, that without the work that he and his colleagues did, mass starvation was a very real threat. And it was worth it.

The problem in my area, and this was kind of development lesson number one, was that there was no market. So, you grew more wheat and what do you do with it? You had to figure out a way to get it down into India into one of the big market centers. The only people who could really do this were the big landowners, and most of the Tharus were

just tenant farmers for the big landowners anyway. So, that was the, you know, the first lesson, that production by itself is not going to do it if you can't get your produce to the market, and that was the case. So, there were no markets and then those who wanted to try the new varieties and production package couldn't get credit, so it was kind of a frustrating experience from that perspective.

Q: Were you the equivalent of an extension agent or what role were you playing?

UPHAUS: That's exactly what we were, yeah, extension.

Q: But you didn't have seeds and you didn't have fertilizer and you didn't have pesticides?

UPHAUS: We could get it. We could get demonstration packages through the agricultural department in the district center. We would try to identify some cooperative farmers and do demonstrations, that sort of thing. And they, and some of them did pretty well. But like I said, there were these big landowners who were growing the stuff anyway so the local farmers could see what the potential was with these new varieties and new production technologies. But expansion beyond the demonstration stage was very difficult, beyond the capacity of most of the farmers. So, for the—shall I say, the impact was pretty minimal in terms of my work as an extension worker.

UPHAUS: But it was a good learning experience.

Q: Did you have a bike or a motorbike or anything to get you around?

UPHAUS: No motorbikes. I did have a bicycle and during the dry season you could get around by bicycle.

During the wet season, no.

Q: The wet season you were stuck, huh? You walked?

UPHAUS: The wet season you slopped through the mud because there were no paved roads. So, even on the so-called improved roads, it was mud.

Q: So, this area of Nepal is—have you been back there in recent years? Has it changed much?

UPHAUS: I have not been back to where I was posted in Nepal. I understand, well, a couple things. One, like I said, most of the farmers were tenant farmers and I did not begin to appreciate at the time how one-sided that relationship was. It was a pretty grim existence for the Tharu farmers, and as a result, when the Maoist insurgency got started, you know, thirty years later, they got a lot of support in that part of Nepal from the farmers who were pretty disgruntled—if not angry with what they had to deal with.

A large part of the district was being cleared of forest for resettling farmers from the hills, but the government was also setting aside a significant part of it for national parks and so, my understanding is that, in fact, in that district, they've now set up some parks that are pretty well maintained and they're doing reasonably well, providing some employment opportunities, things like that. They are trying, with the help of some international NGOs, to link those, the different forested areas, so they've got some wildlife corridors. When I lived there there were tigers and leopards in the jungle, and I once caught a fleeting glimpse of a leopard. But they were nearly hunted to extinction. The numbers are now apparently back up. So, my understanding is that part of the country is doing better now, at least in terms of the wildlife and the natural environment. But, as I said, I haven't been back, so I can't be sure.

Q: And you were speaking Nepali the whole time?

UPHAUS: Yeah. I found that the people in the village did not speak Nepali. Some of them could understand Nepali. They spoke various dialects, including a kind of village level Hindi, which I learned some. The people that were interested at all in agriculture, improved agriculture, spoke some Nepali, and so I found myself speaking Nepali and working with them most of the time.

Q: Any good memories you want to pass on from that period?

UPHAUS: Oh, yeah, some of the people in the village were great. The Tharus were, unlike a lot of Hindu villages, they were not so stratified socially. And they were very outgoing. They liked to laugh and drink this awful local rotgut and eat pork and do all of these unclean things, which were fine with me. And I was, I'm sure I was a very weird sort of thing in their existence. But some of them I grew quite fond of and I think they were fond of me. When I left after nearly two years, some seemed genuinely sad to see me go. I was a source of entertainment if nothing else.

Q: Did you play your drums or whatever?

UPHAUS: No. No. (Laughs) Yeah, I occasionally got up in the mountains and did some trekking, so that was for relief. To get from east Nepal to west Nepal and vice versa, the easiest way was to cross into India and get on a train and ride and then get off and cross back into Nepal. So, a lot of time was spent riding on trains in north India, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, that part of India. We'd occasionally make an unofficial— known as French Leave— trip to Lucknow to enjoy the air-conditioned restaurants, cinema, ice cream and cold drinks. It was really hot where we were posted, and there was no electricity, no fans. A little air conditioning was heaven.

Q: And it was all peaceful at that time?

UPHAUS: At that time, it was. It was a good time to be there.

Q: Okay. All right. After Peace Corps, you had another big decision to make, two of them. One is how do you get—where are you going to go before you go home. And secondly, what are you going to do when you get home? (Laughs)

UPHAUS: There was a USAID program in Nepal and there were USAID people working with the Nepalis on agricultural research, posted at different Nepali research stations around the country, including one that was, oh, maybe thirty miles from my post. And so, I got to know some of the USAID people. One of them, Chuck Antholt, did you ever know him?

Q: Yes.

UPHAUS: I first met him in Nepal. He was stationed at one of the research stations in the central part of the country, central Terai. He had a lot to do with my eventually getting employed with USAID. But I thought, wow, these people are doing some good work. They're able to live overseas and travel, experience all these different cultures, and they have commissary access and they live in nice houses. You can get beer and various goodies through the commissary. So, you can feel like you're doing some worthwhile work while enjoying a much higher standard of living. So, I thought this kind of life sounded appealing and I'd better check into it, which I started doing while I was still living there.

After I left Nepal I traveled some in India and in Europe. Back in the U.S. I worked for a few months and bummed around for a while but was applying for graduate programs and ended up getting a grant to go—an East West Center grant to study at the University of Hawaii, where I studied agricultural economics and international development.

Q: Any particular professor there that influenced you?

UPHAUS: Hawaii was nice. But no. I would have to say not. I will say that there are definitely better places to study international agriculture, you know, Cornell comes immediately to mind or Davis or Michigan State. The University of Hawaii was not great in comparison. But it did expose you, in the East West Center, to students from all over. And you got a chance to go overseas for research. At that time, degree students at the East West Center could be funded to do field research. So, I got a research grant to go back to Nepal and do some further research on the economics of irrigation projects. So, I got to spend seven months back in Nepal doing that in the process of doing my master's degree.

Q: So, that was your master's thesis?

UPHAUS: Yes, a comparative study of the economics of irrigation projects in the hills. I didn't want to go back to the Terai. Meanwhile, along the way, I had, after coming back to the U.S. at a sort of a conference of former volunteers, met a woman who had been a volunteer. The same time I was in Nepal she had been in the Pacific. We hit it off and she mentioned how she was interested in living overseas and was game to accompany me.

So, we got together and got married a year or so later, and we're about to celebrate our fiftieth anniversary.

Q: And her name is?

UPHAUS: Kathryn. Kathy. Her name then was Winter.

Q: What kind of a volunteer was she? What was she doing?

UPHAUS: She had been a volunteer in Micronesia. They were doing teaching, mostly English teaching in the public schools there. Her first year there, she was on an island with eighty other people. (Laughs) It was a different sort of hardship, yeah.

So, anyway, that—she was up for doing the international life, which was great.

Q: What was she studying at this—?

UPHAUS: You know, she had been a journalism major and had some experience teaching English so, when we were overseas, she ended up doing different things---some English teaching, she did some writing and editing for different things, yeah.

Q: All right.

UPHAUS: And here she is. (Laughs)

Q: Hi. We're talking about you.

UPHAUS: This is John Pielemeier.

Q: So, we're at the University of Hawaii.

UPHAUS: Yeah, we've been—sorry?

Q: I just wanted to bring her up to date where we were in the interview. We're at the University—

UPHAUS: We were talking about graduate school.

Q: So, was that a two-year program or a one-year program?

UPHAUS: Well, it was Hawaii after all, so I stretched it out as long as I possibly could. (Both laugh) But it ended up being about two and a half years.

Q: Okay. And you got your thesis approved and then you can move on, right?

UPHAUS: Right. And so, it was back to the mainland and I applied and got accepted by USAID in the winter of '75-'76.

Q: So It happened pretty quickly, huh?

UPHAUS: Well, there was a while until that came through. I was sort of at loose ends. Did a little more traveling and such. But yeah, fortunately that came through. And my letter of invitation to join USAID said, you're going—we're going to send you to Yemen. That was already—that was part of the offer.

Q: Did you have to go back to your atlas for that also?

UPHAUS: Yeah. Didn't know anything at all about Yemen. Tried to get up to speed. Yeah, if you want to move onto that—

Q: Well, let's just take a moment. Did you have a training program?

Were you an IDI (International Development Intern)? What were you?

UPHAUS: So, yes, an IDI. So, I'm sure you know a lot of the people who were in my training class. Jeff Malick was one of them, and Chris Crowley and David Delgado and Lars Klassen, Lucretia Taylor, Keith Brown, Bill Goldman. Anyway, we were all in the same intern group.

UPHAUS: A very illustrious group. (Both laugh)

Q: And so, you spent—were you in Washington for your training?

UPHAUS: In Washington for the training. We did an off-site, I remember, off in West Virginia for a week. And then, it was back working on the, you know, the Yemen desk for a while and learning some of the AID bureaucracy. And then, we shipped out to Yemen, like, November, I think, of '76.

Q: Interesting. Who was your mission director?

UPHAUS: Okay. The mission director when we got there was a guy named Aldelmo Ruiz, who was a Puerto Rican water engineer. And some background on him. There had been a USAID program in Yemen ten years previously. And Al Ruiz was the guy who had built a water system in Taiz, which was the second city in Yemen at that time. So, he had some experience in country. Then came the '67 Israel-Arab war and USAID pulled out of Yemen. So, it was like eight years later, '75, early '76 that USAID went back into Yemen, and so they tapped him to come back to head up the mission because, you know, people in Yemen still remembered him and the Taiz water system was still working and everything. So, he was the Mission Director when we first got there.

Another thing about Yemen, though, that you need to remember is that this was right after the communists took over Vietnam. There had been a huge USAID presence in Vietnam and there was a need to reduce numbers, a reduction of force, or whatever you want to call it. So, a lot of the people who had been in Vietnam were told either you go where we send you next or you find another job. And, understandably, it was hard to get people to volunteer to go to Yemen, so a lot of these ex-Vietnam people ended up, unhappily, in Yemen, a place they didn't want to be, but they also didn't want to be out on the street. And then there were a few young people like me, IDIs like LeAnn Ross, Herb Blank, a few others that you might know, but it was a mixture of new IDIs and then these old kind of disgruntled, unhappy people doing a lot of drinking and complaining. And Al Ruiz trying to kind of hold things together.

Something else interesting about Yemen that most people don't realize. The French, like the British colonialists, moved populations around. The British, of course, took people from, you know, from India and from Sri Lanka to work in Malaysia and other British colonies around the world. The French recruited Yemenis through Djibouti, their enclave there on the African coast, to work in Indochina. So, there were a number, I don't know how many, of Yemeni who were living in Indochina, had been there for several generations, married Vietnamese women, had children. When the communists took over, they didn't want these people and nobody else did either, but a lot of them eventually wound up back in Yemen. I'm not sure how it happened, but the Yemen government apparently agreed to take in the Yemeni-Vietnamese refugees. I think that's what played out through the UN. So there were a number of these Yemeni Vietnamese back in Yemen, you know, who did not speak Arabic, who were at best kind of—if they were Muslim at all, they were non-observant Muslims. So, they were not terribly welcome in Yemen, but some of these USAID guys from—who had been in Vietnam saw them, and these people look kind of Vietnamese, and they speak a little English and they speak a little French and we'll hire them because they look familiar. So, we had a number of people working for USAID who were from this Yemeni Vietnamese community. I remember a driver named Francoise Ali, and there were others, different positions in the USAID office there, which was one of the stranger aspects of life in Yemen at that time. And I don't know what—

Q: Were you in Sana'a or—

UPHAUS: We were in Sana'a, yes.

Sana'a is up in the mountains, spectacular scenery, desert. It looks a lot like Afghanistan—very austere, harsh mountains. Sana'a is at 7,000 feet elevation, cool nights, intense, fierce sun during the day. And the old city had these six and seven story stone and mud brick houses, very impressive. And parts of Yemen were relatively well-watered. You could grow things there. Coffee, you know, was probably first domesticated in Yemen, either there or across the Red Sea in Ethiopia, arabica coffee. Coffee production in Yemen was declining in favor of qat, the mildly narcotic leaf that everyone chewed. But they also grew a lot of sorghum, which was the staple grain, and there were parts of the country you could drive, I remember driving through it in the

summer and the sorghum was six feet, eight feet high on either side of the road and it smelled like Iowa in summertime. It was just amazing. That's not the sort of thing you would expect in Yemen.

So, we were in there with a USAID program, working on—in agriculture. They were doing water exploring, well drilling, that sort of thing was one program. But in agriculture we were—we had a sorghum research project, a horticulture research project. They also grew some very nice grapes and also stone fruits, apricots and peaches that would grow very well in Yemen if you could get water to them. So, we had a horticulture project, a sorghum project and a poultry project. They were all being implemented by U.S. universities. I don't know who had the sorghum project. Tuskegee was implementing the horticulture project. That was problematic in different ways. And Cal Poly did the poultry project.

So, I mentioned development lesson number one from Nepal has to do with markets, and development lesson number two is from Yemen. And that is that the way USAID works you need institutions to work with. We're not out in the villages, you know, carrying the message. We need universities, we need ministries of agriculture that have some capabilities to do planning and research and extension, and in Yemen they just did not exist. They had their, you know, their first high school graduates not that many years before we resumed the USAID program there, and so some of the key positions in the Yemeni ministry of agriculture were filled by Egyptians or other expatriates, Sudanese. And so, you're trying to do our approach—the sort of thing we'd done in India and other countries and in Latin America, working with agricultural universities and ministries of agriculture, just was not working at that point in Yemen. The poultry project, on the other hand, did quite well because we were eventually able to spin it off to the private sector and the private sector picked up on that and it went quite well.

But that was one lesson of the Yemeni experience -- you need somebody to work with, you need some institutions, and so that was kind of frustrating from that perspective. Otherwise, Yemen was great, a fascinating history to the place. We made some good friends. We could travel all over the place at that time, there were no, you know, no restrictions, no need to worry about, we weren't targets for any kind of violence. We rode bicycles around Sana'a. It was very nice from that perspective.

Q: How big a mission was it at that point?

UPHAUS: There were maybe thirty direct hire slots. So, it was fairly good sized. There was the water program, we were doing some education, agriculture. And of course, you've got your admin and comptroller and program staff, so there were maybe thirty full-time slots.

Q: This was your first position with AID. What was your initial reaction to what you found in AID, the people there and the programs?

UPHAUS: One of the old guys who had been in—who had been reposted to Yemen took me aside and said, “Something you’ve got to know right away, it’s always easier to get forgiveness than permission.”

Q: (Laughs) And you used that, huh?

UPHAUS: I took that to heart. This introduction to the bureaucracy, and at that time we were working with the old, you know, project mode of developing a PID (project identification document) and a project paper and all the various analyses and things that went with it. And you know, just all the project rigamarole that—the hoops that you had to jump through. It took some getting used to that sort of thing. That was my first experience with it. And you know, on the (crosstalk/indiscernible).

Q: Who was your boss?

UPHAUS: My boss at that time was—the head of the agriculture office was a guy named John Young, who had not been in Vietnam, but he had done hardship post on top of hardship post in, first in Iran and then in Afghanistan, where we had programs, you know, back in the seventies. Her and his wife and kids were out in the boonies on research farms, very isolated. It must have been tough. He was an Iowa farm boy, a nice man, not the best administrator, but a good person. And I learned quite a bit from him.

The other thing I would say about Yemen is that we were implementing, as I said, using universities. And, you know, I think one of the big USAID success projects was developing the Indian agricultural universities. And that came about through a long-term relationship of a U.S. university and an Indian university, and exchange of faculty and students going back and forth, and it was a model that worked, I think very well, at least in that context and in other countries as well in, probably in Latin America and some of the schools in Africa. And so there was also, as you probably know, the Title XII program, part of the Foreign Assistance Act, which emphasized collaborating with universities in overseas development. Well, unfortunately, by trying to expand that to the more general kinds of USAID programs, it just did not work because the universities came to basically act like body shops, you know, private consulting firms, and they had no real commitments, the universities themselves had no real commitment to the work. They became just a mechanism for getting people hired and getting their overhead as part of the deal. So, that was another lesson from Yemen. The mission director who came in after Al Ruiz, was Bob Huesman, a much better manager, who knew a lot more about development. But he, again, was enamored of the Title XII approach and he put in place this big Title XII program for Yemen, which just did not work out all that well.

One final comment, although, is that they were starting to make some progress. I went back to Yemen on TDY (Temporary Duty) about ten years later and found that some things were starting to move, and that we were just about to the point where we could really start thinking about working collaboratively with the ministry of agriculture, that there was somebody there to work with. There was an agriculture university that had been underway for a while now, so there were some institutions in place that we could

start to work with. But this was, you know, ten years after my time. And, unfortunately, what's happened since then is another whole sad story that I don't want to go into. I don't know what, if anything, is left of our institutional development work. It took a lot of time and resources to get these institutions developed to where they could really start implementing the USAID model of development.

Q: Mm-hm. Bob Huesman, probably before going to Yemen, I knew him as the program officer in the Africa bureau.

UPHAUS: Mm-hm.

Q: And he was a pretty strict guy. I learned to be very careful with him because he made you do your work. I learned a lot from him. (Laughs)

UPHAUS: Yes, he was good, although, like I said, I think he was trying to push this Title XII model further than it really—than was good, so.

Q: What was your wife doing in Yemen at that point?

UPHAUS: She was teaching English at the Yemen American Language Institute, and she had a great experience. (Laughs) Her work experience was probably better than mine. These were all Yemeni, almost all men, a few women, who had been through Yemeni schools and had been selected to go off to universities in the UK or the U.S. And so, they were very motivated to learn English. She said they were delightful students; they were fun to work with. She had a great teaching experience with them.

Q: Great. Good.

UPHAUS: Unlike what she had experienced in Peace Corps.

Q: And you knew you had to move on. How did you work towards your next post? Did it find you or did you find it?

UPHAUS: Well, what I remember is that I came into—this was early 1979. Yemen was a two-year post, and I'd been there a little over two years, so I knew I was going to be leaving fairly soon. And what I remember is coming into the office one day and finding out that I'd been assigned to Sierra Leone. I don't recall bidding on anything. I don't think there was anything comparable to the bidding process at that point that we—that USAID adopted later. And I had sort of been angling for an assignment in Nepal and I'd been in contact with people there, obviously I knew the language, I knew the country, they had a position for me. But somehow or other I got tapped to go to Sierra Leone. We tried to have that countermanded, you know, the Nepal mission wrote in, cabled in, said we want Uphaus to go to Nepal, but it didn't happen. So, off to Sierra Leone we went. Not very happily.

Let me say one other thing about Yemen. You talked about—you asked about, before we really started, about relations with the embassy. And I would say that in Yemen they were excellent. We had some terrific career Arabists there who really knew what they were doing, in the political office, as ambassadors. They were accessible and very supportive. I was really impressed with the quality of the State Department people there. The first ambassador I served under was Tom Scotese, and after him George Lane, both of them excellent ambassadors. And David Ransom was the DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission), also an excellent Arabist.

Q: Did you speak any Arabic?

UPHAUS: So. I learned some. USAID did not, you know, provide language training, it was not a language-designated post. On my own I learned some Arabic before I went to post, and then they had a kind of a post language program and I picked up some more. And I could sort of get around the country okay and order meals in a restaurant and that sort of thing in Arabic, which is a fun language. I enjoyed studying it, but I think I took the test and got a one-plus or something at one point. Not very good.

Q: Were you responsible for a particular—you mentioned three programs, agriculture programs. Which one were you—?

UPHAUS: The horticulture one more than anything else. And that was, I would say, that had its problems getting staffed, getting people to come out there to work. Tuskegee Institute got the contract, or grant. And they finally ended up hiring a couple of U.S. resident Egyptians who were unhappy in Yemen and caused a lot of problems. It was overall not a very good experience.

Q: So, you decided you wanted to stay with AID at that point? You said, “That wasn’t great, but I want to stick with it?”

UPHAUS: Actually, yeah. I figured what the hell. And you know, Sierra Leone was not my—was not our choice of the next place to go, but that’s where we wound up. And talk about, you know, a night and day difference from Yemen, from Sana’a to Freetown. Sana’a was at that time a very closed up society, figuratively and literally, you know, the town was—there was nobody on the street after 9:00 at night. The women wore a full burqa, head to toe black, you know. And then you go to Sierra Leone and things were just getting going at 9:00 or 10:00 at night, and the bars are going all night long and the beer is flowing, and it was just, it was quite an adjustment. (Laughs)

Q: Who was your mission director there?

UPHAUS: It was a very small AID section of an embassy. The USAID affairs officer was a guy named Bob Huddleston. You might know Vicky better than Bob.

Q: Yep. And both of them were in Brazil with me before that.

UPHAUS: Okay. Yeah, Bob was the AID affairs officer. Vicky had something to do with the embassy, consulate, economic; I'm not sure what.

Q: Later ambassador to Cuba.

UPHAUS: Yeah.

Q: And Madagascar.

UPHAUS: Yeah, she went on to have a pretty good career. But it was a small USAID program. My predecessor had designed this hugely ambitious adaptive crop research and extension project, which was way beyond local capabilities. Again, we had a Title XII consortium working on it, but it was just, again, their ministry of agriculture there, the agricultural school was not capable of really supporting and working with a project of this sort. So, again, another source of some frustration. And they also had a road, a feeder road project funded out of PL-480 local currency, and a few other small activities. But not a great—not a great USAID project design or implementation experience, I would have to say.

Freetown itself is a very interesting place and you know, that was my one Africa post. I'm glad I had the experience of serving in an Africa post. But, it was not a favorite.

Q: Let me ask you one name from that era. Reggie Hodges. Does that name ring a bell? Reggie and Celeste Hodges.

UPHAUS: The name is familiar. I'm trying to think of the context. At that time, we got a lot of support out of REDSO (Regional Economic Development Service Office) West in Abidjan, so we had people from there circulating through the mission from time to time and got to know some of them.

Q: Reggie was running something called OICI, Opportunities Industrialization Centers International.

UPHAUS: Yes, yes. Okay. Yeah. And they had some activities in Sierra Leone. Yep.

Q: We know them well. We met them in Liberia a bit later, his next tour.

UPHAUS: Mm-hm.

Q: All right, so—

UPHAUS: So, again, another one of these countries that fell upon very hard times, which is sad to see, Sierra Leone and Liberia, you know, with the Ebola and then the war and everything else. It's sad.

One thing that did help our experience in Sierra Leone was that there was a big Peace Corps program there, so we got to know a lot of the Peace Corps staff, a lot of the Peace Corps volunteers. Got together with them frequently. That was a lot of fun. And Sierra Leone, you probably know, is where Graham Greene's *Heart of the Matter* was set.

Q: Yes. (Laughs)

UPHAUS: And yeah, I think that's one of his very best books and he really nails it. (Laughs)

Q: So, did you travel around West Africa while you were there?

UPHAUS: We went to Senegal once to play softball, the West Africa Invitational Softball Tournament (WAIST). We went to Abidjan a couple of times. We did go visit friends in East Africa on one trip and did a mini-safari. So, we got to see a little bit of Africa while we were there.

Q: Right. And so, as you were ending—that was a three-year tour also, it looks like.

UPHAUS: That was, yeah, close to three years. And at that point, we went through what I recall as the first real USAID assignment bidding process. And I remember that there were positions that were of interest in Pakistan and Sri Lanka. I'm sure there were others, but those were the two that I was most interested in because they would bring me back to South Asia, which I wanted to do. And ended up going to—applying for Sri Lanka as my first choice and getting assigned there.

Q: At that point, how big was the program there? Was that the Mahaweli, I think, program, the irrigation program?

UPHAUS: Yeah, that was the, yes, the—so that was the summer of '82. And there was a big program in Sri Lanka at that time. We were trying to show support for the then-government of, what was it called? I'm forgetting the party, but it was the more pro-Western, free market party as opposed to the SLFP of the Bandaranaike family, which had been very socialist. So, we were trying to show support for the government. We went in with the big USAID program. There was the big Mahaweli Ganga project. There was another irrigation management project, working with some other irrigated perimeters. We had a big, I'm not sure what we did in education and public health, but in agriculture it was a big program---adaptive research, irrigation management, forestry, higher agriculture education at the Post-Graduate Institute of Agriculture, an agriculture sector policy analysis and planning project. And a good sized office. There were three or four direct hire USAID ag officers. The head of the office at that time—when I got there was Mike Korin, you might know.

Q: Mike—

UPHAUS: The mission director was Sarah Jane Littlefield.

Q: Okay.

UPHAUS: Mike Korin.

Q: Oh, Mike Korin, yeah.

UPHAUS: K-o-r-i-n.

Q: Mm-hm.

UPHAUS: Mission director was Sarah Jane Littlefield, the Dragon Lady.

Q: I never met her. Was she really?

UPHAUS: She was. She was a piece of work. Came across as very tough. I mean, she was—when you think back, she was one of the very first female mission directors in USAID, and especially director of a big program. And I don't think you get that kind of position without showing you can be as tough as the guys, if not tougher. So, she was a chain smoking, pretty foul-mouthed, I think she was ex-military of some sort. She ran a pretty tight ship. But, she was fair. And, you know, I don't want to speak ill of the dead. She was not a great mission director, but fair, and didn't second-guess her technical experts.

Q: Were you designing any new programs or just carrying out existing programs?

UPHAUS: We did. We did and that was where I really got the opportunity to start doing some of my own thinking about what makes sense agriculturally and doing some program and project design shaping. So, here we wanted to do a new support activity for the ministry of agriculture and we wanted to think about getting away just focusing on rice production. I pushed the idea of, well, let's look at what are the market possibilities here. I convinced the USAID mission and ministry to do a marketing study and see what are some alternative crops that we should really start paying some attention to. And then, based on that market study, designed some research interventions and extension programs and that sort of thing to support that effort. Well, this was the first time in my experience that we really started, instead of pushing stuff out, started working from the other end and said, "Okay, what's the market? What's the demand? And let's work back to that and base our production decisions more on that." So, that was satisfying.

Of course, in Sri Lanka, though, they had good universities, they had some pretty capable agriculturalists and scientists in place. We were working with the agriculture university up near Kandy. We also started an agricultural policy analysis project, working with the government on improving their analytic capabilities, which again, you want to do, I think, if you're going to make the best use of your resources. So, from that perspective it was more satisfying, certainly, than the two previous posts we'd been at.

Unfortunately, after we had been there a year the Tamil-Sinhala civil war re-erupted and that was '83, summer of '83 that this all blew up. You know, this is a civil war that's been going on for millennia, but this was the latest round. And riots, mayhem, hundreds of people, maybe thousands of people killed that August, I think it was. And one of the many disturbing things was that it was clearly with the tacet endorsement of the government in Colombo that this went on. And no one has ever been held to account for what went on that summer of 1983, but it was pretty brutal. I, it so happened, had been out of Colombo when everything erupted, out on the east side of the island with a Tamil colleague and a Sinhala driver. We had one child at that time and my wife was pregnant with our second, and she had gone back to the U.S. for the final two months of pregnancy and the delivery. So, she and our daughter were out of the country, fortunately. We were in phone contact with the mission, and got word that all hell had broken loose in Colombo and to sit tight where we were for a couple days. And so, we did. A couple days later in a phone call Mike Korin said, "Well, I think things have calmed down enough. Why don't you plan to drive back to Colombo?" And so, we did. And somewhere along the way, I don't know how this was, we picked up a Sri Lankan army officer who was trying to join his regiment, which was out on the west coast of the island or something. But anyway, there were the four of us, and we had to go through Kandy, and I remember going over—coming out of Kandy, you go up a valley and then over a mountain, through a pass, and then down to the plains. And I remember seeing ahead of us, nearing the top of the pass, a roadblock and a car was stopped and a mob was pulling somebody out of the car. I couldn't see what was happening, but it was clear that if they stopped us and found a Tamil in the car, it's curtains for the Tamil colleague and the hell with diplomatic immunity. But fortunately, our driver was able to gun it and negotiate around the roadblock. They were distracted with this other guy. We got through them and safely over the mountain and down to Colombo. But coming into Colombo, again, all the burnt-out houses and the tension was just palpable in the area. You could feel the fear. That was a powerful experience.

We got to my house. My Tamil colleague stayed there and his whole family then came to join us and stayed in our house for a week or ten days or so until they felt like they could—it was safe to leave again.

But, strangely enough, that outbreak of violence did not really affect our work so much because the violence, after that initial outburst, was confined mostly to the north and the east, and there weren't any further incidents in and around Colombo or Kandy or the kind of the central part of the country and so, we could just go about our business and do our work without fear because the Americans at that point were not a target. They—the Tamil Tigers—were not after us at all. Unless you happened to be in the wrong place when a bomb went off there was no danger. And that, you know, that didn't happen very often. (Laughs) There were a few. An airplane was bombed—it was still on the ground—and some Americans were on it from the embassy, but they were not hurt.

Q: No—

UPHAUS: So, we were able to go ahead with our work but sort of against the backdrop of this ongoing civil war off in the far north and east of the country.

Q: So, the Mahaweli program wasn't affected? That's on the east side?

UPHAUS: It was not affected. That went ahead. We, USAID, were doing, again, not the—funding the big construction, but rather the water management downstream, trying to achieve more efficient distribution of the water in farmers' fields, that sort of thing. That was our contribution to the Mahaweli project.

Q: What other programs were you involved with?

UPHAUS: There was a forestry project that I was not so much involved with. There was, like I said, this university, agricultural university, the ag policy analysis. I was more directly involved in those. And by and large, again, it was a great learning experience. I feel like it was there that I really started to have some, like I said, some influence over program design and such.

The one other anecdote about Sri Lanka that I want people to know about before we end, was there were a bunch of us, mostly Americans and contractors, who would get together on Sundays and play softball at one of the sports grounds there. Separately, a minister in the Sri Lankan government named Festus Perera went on a trip to the U.S. in the course of which he went to an American baseball game. And he was struck by how much American baseball was like a Sri Lankan game that they played called *elle*, which is where—based sort of on English rounders where you, instead of like cricket, where you run back and forth between the stumps, you hit a ball with a bat and run around the bases. And he apparently thought, well baseball is pretty close to *elle*, and baseball is an international sport where Sri Lanka might be able to join international competition. So, he came back to the country, went to see our ambassador, at that time, who was John Reed, who had been a former governor of Maine, a nice man, and he asked him, "How can we get baseball started in Sri Lanka?" Ambassador Reed knew those of us who were playing softball regularly, including LeAnn Ross and her husband Herb Blank, who I'd known from Yemen, and Don Clark, you may know.

Q: Yes

UPHAUS: The ambassador came to us and said, "Let's do what we can to support this minister." And so, I recall drafting, with LeeAnn, a letter to the then-commissioner of baseball, Bowie Kuhn, for the ambassador's signature, and Bowie Kuhn got this letter and passed it on to the head of the International Amateur Baseball Association, and as a result we got a baseball coach from some Minnesota college on a sabbatical, we got a huge equipment dump from Spaulding and Mizuno, the Japanese athletic company, and the minister assigned his First Secretary, Aloy Fernando, to gin up interest on the local side. And we collectively got baseball organized and going in Sri Lanka. Aloy Fernando and some of the Sri Lankans started coming out and playing softball with us. And some of us Americans served as kind of assistant coaches for a while. And then, I left Sri

Lanka and I didn't think anymore about it until I looked, you know, ten years ago and by God, they're still playing baseball in Sri Lanka, were competing internationally against teams from Pakistan, India, Philippines. And there was a league there now, there's an army team and a navy team and some of the schools. And so, this is, you know, I see this as a great (laugh) one of the things I'm proudest of in my whole development experience was getting baseball going in Sri Lanka. You can go on the web and look up Sri Lanka baseball. They have a presence on Facebook and all that. Like them on Facebook. It's really neat and I'm very pleased with how that worked out.

Is this development? I don't know. (Laughs) But it was—but it's one thing I really liked.

Q: So, meanwhile, your wife comes back with a second baby or you go pick her up or how—you went back—she had her second?

UPHAUS: Oh, yeah, I went back to the states for the delivery and then we came back with the second child, the son. She did not do—she did not work there except for a short stint as one of two Community Liaison Officers. She was looking after the kids and such. But you know, it was a very—it was a very comfortable life. Like I said, the civil war was out there. It didn't affect us. Sri Lanka is, when they're not killing each other, it's a beautiful place, great history, culture, you know, wonderful archeological sites and this sort of thing. So, we really enjoyed our time there.

Q: As I recall, they had high levels of education and good health services.

UPHAUS: Yes, yes. They were way ahead of, certainly, of the other South Asian countries in terms of education levels and healthcare.

Q: Right.

UPHAUS: But I found them also hard to read, and there were these undercurrents in Sri Lanka that I had the feeling that we did not have much of a handle on, which flared up in these ethnic riots. I felt like we had a better handle on what was going on politically in other posts that I'd been at than in Sri Lanka.

Q: So, when you left, the programs were not affected by the violence?

UPHAUS: I went back at some point, maybe four or five years later for an evaluation, and the things we had initiated were moving, you know, moving along as well as one could really hope under the circumstances. The agricultural policy analysis thing was doing some good work. So, yeah, it was, I think, a fairly effective USAID program as such things go.

Q: Whatever happened in Mahaweli?

UPHAUS: That I don't know. The major construction— the Victoria Dam up in the mountains— was being funded by the Brits and other donors. And the dam got built. I

knew some guys who were working on that. But then, what subsequently happened downstream with the water management and distribution I just don't know.

Q: And the big export, were we involved with tea at all?

UPHAUS: No, other than drinking a lot of tea and (laughs) we'd spend vacation time up in the tea country, up in the hills. There were some very pleasant spots to go, you know, spend a few days to get away from the heat in these delightful tea estate bungalows.

Q: Did they have you playing squash too?

UPHAUS: I started playing squash, but not until later. I got into that when I was in Bangladesh.

Q: When you left, who was the mission director?

UPHAUS: Frank Corel.

Q: Yes, I like him. Another tough cookie.

UPHAUS: You know Frank?

Q: Yeah. Not well, but I worked with him at one point.

UPHAUS: And one who I'd have to say was not very supportive, I didn't think of his technical people. I mean, it was kind of frustrating that he had to bring in his own experts to second guess what we were doing or planning. And to my way of thinking, they didn't add anything and probably just muddied the water.

Q: How did you manage that, how did you handle that?

UPHAUS: Smile and—because they generally did not come up with anything operable—like I said, they generally muddied the water more than anything else. And you could sort of ignore it because it didn't result in any precise directives, you know, do this, don't do that kind of guidance. So, we pretty much continued on the course we had mapped out in the absence of specific instructions to the contrary.

Q: Do you have much contact with the embassy?

UPHAUS: Not as much as some other posts I'd been at. At that time we were still in separate places. And so, no, there was not so much interaction. One incident I do recall, there was a young political officer who I got to know and who I thought was very sharp, very perceptive, and was developing some good contacts in Sri Lankan society. And one day he was gone, he was PNG'd (Persona Non Grata). And I think maybe he was getting too close to some things the Sri Lankan government didn't want known, and he was gone.

Q: I was going to ask you, in hindsight, it wasn't any program that you were working with, was there anything that the embassy or AID could have done to forestall what eventually happened with the continuing and growing civil war?

UPHAUS: I don't think so. As I said, this is a conflict that has been going on basically for millennia. I think we could have—I think we should have probably been better informed, and maybe tried to lean on the government a little harder. But as I said, there were these undercurrents. The Buddhists, you know, the Buddhist monks in particular were a very strong anti-Tamil voice and they had a lot of influence. I think even the government was reluctant to do anything that would get them crosswise with the Buddhist *Sangha* and their supporters. So, we could have maybe leaned on the government a little bit more, been better prepared when it all blew up, but I don't think we could have headed off what happened.

Q: All right.

UPHAUS: Now, it's sadly the case that the—it's a case that, like in so many countries, the different governments will play the ethnic card when it suits them. The SLFP (Sri Lanka Freedom Party) government did and then, whatever it was, the UNP did the same. They stoke these ethnic differences to advance their short-term political interests. But there was something there anyway that only needed a little spark. And ultimately, I think the thing would have blown up regardless.

Q: Let me just ask one more last question. Have you been promoted during this time? This is your third tour.

UPHAUS: I guess so, but I don't recall. (Both laugh) I didn't keep track of all that. I've thrown away almost all my old USAID pay stubs and that sort of thing, so I really don't know. I assume I was. We started as, I think, the old grade seven and then up to, I think I got— by the time you finished your IDI period you were at a five if you didn't screw up terribly.

Q: Yep.

UPHAUS: And I might have been promoted to, by the time I was in Sri Lanka, to FO four or something.

Q: All right. Well, shall we cut off now?

UPHAUS: I think so.

Q: Okay.

Q: This is March 29. This is John Pielemeier. This is the second interview with Charles Uphaus. And we will continue from the last one.

So, Charlie, we covered your first three tours in AID in our first conversation. I wanted to ask you, in those days what was the AID strategy for improving agriculture in developing countries? What was their strategy that all missions were supposed to follow?

UPHAUS: Okay, let me—first, let me—I’m going to go back, if I may, to Yemen and talk about something there and then I can get into the question of strategy.

Q: All right.

UPHAUS: Because this was something that had a profound impact on me, not at the time but 2 later. After I’d been in Yemen a couple of years a Yemeni who had been—who had just completed a PhD in agricultural economics at New Mexico State came back to Yemen and took up a position in the ministry of agriculture. This is the first Yemeni who had ever gotten an advanced degree in any agriculture field from a U.S. university. And we started working together on a couple of studies about, I don’t remember the details, but I think it had to do with the economics of sorghum production, doing some sample surveys around the country.

He had been in New Mexico with his wife. He had several children who were born there and were thereby U.S. citizens. And we got to know each other pretty well. He had me over for dinner and I got to meet the family, we socialized together, so it was a nice relationship. I left Yemen and had no further contact for some time until I went back, maybe nine or ten years later to do an evaluation or something. And at this point this guy had been elevated to a high position in the ministry, if not minister himself, so we got back together and met and talked about what we’d been up to. And then again, we didn’t follow up on our relationship until—and then I found out after 2001 that his son was Anwar al-Awlaki, who was one of the leaders in AQAP, al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula. And my friend’s name, his father, was Nasser al-Awlaki. So, several years into the post-2001 war on terrorism effort the U.S. government killed Anwar al-Awlaki in a drone strike. You recall that he was a, you know, a U.S. citizen, but he was killed. By our government. And I immediately made his connection to Anwar and Nasser, who I had known, and I was just so saddened by this tragic turn of events, and it just struck home for me how depersonalized things can be until we realize that even terrorists have parents, mothers and fathers that grieve for them, regardless of what the children may have been up to and it’s just—it haunts me to this day. And I thought at one point about trying to get in touch with Nasser and explain just how—express just how sorry I was with what had happened. But not too long ago I spoke to some people with some ties in the embassy community there and they said best not to try and get in touch, which is even worse since I, you know, can’t tell him how sad I am about how things worked out. But it’s just—that was one of my overseas experiences that will stick with me for as long as I live, not a positive one, but one that I really learned from – not in terms of work, but in terms of life. Anyway, I wanted to get that out there. I don’t know if anybody else had any kind of comparable experience, probably yes, but this was a profound one for me.

Q: How long did the son live in the States?

UPHAUS: Well, he came back to the U.S. and did some kind of university education, I think, and then he was the imam at one of the big mosques in Falls Church and then he went back to Yemen. I believe he was radicalized even before he left the U.S., I think, to go back to Yemen. So, that was just one that I wanted to tell you about.

Coming back to the issue about agricultural strategy, in the early days we were still going very much on the green revolution strategy of building up research and extension institutions and concentrating on cereal production. So, wheat, rice, maize, concentrating on the basic staples and the research and extension infrastructure in place to support that effort. And that meant working largely with ministries of agriculture and, to some extent, agriculture universities. And this model was the one that we continued to follow through my initial postings, though it started to change by the time I got to Sri Lanka. The only thing that was unusual, that didn't fit that mold, was Yemen, where we also started a poultry demonstration poultry product which went pretty well eventually, and we succeeded in spinning that off to the private sector. And by the time I went back there, again ten years later, late 1980s, it was going great guns. So, this was one which was a little bit outside the norm of what we were doing with most of our projects. So, like I said, it was just when I was in Sri Lanka, we started thinking more about getting away from emphasis on the staples, diversifying agriculture and looking at where the commercial possibilities are and where the markets are.

Q: Most of the early strategy was working through government institutions?

UPHAUS: Very much so, yes.

Q: Private sector was not really—(indiscernible) much.

UPHAUS: Not part of the picture at that point. And it was only during and after my Sri Lanka posting that we started grappling with that issue of how do we engage more with the private sector.

I would also say that we were following the so-called Mellor Model, named after Cornell professor of agricultural economics and international development guru John Mellor. He literally wrote the book on agriculture-based development. Mellor also served briefly as Chief Economist at USAID, in the 80s I believe. The Mellor Model posited that you needed to get productivity up in the agriculture sector before a country could begin to experience broad-based, sustainable development. Increased production would get more money circulating, and increased productivity would free up labor to move into manufacturing and services. Experience certainly supported this model, at least in Asia and Latin America. Since leaving USAID, while at Bread for the World, I was fortunate to get to know John Mellor and work with him on a paper. He's a remarkable guy.

Q: I also wanted to ask you, after those first three tours, you were probably in a supervisory role for some people at least.

UPHAUS: By the time I got to Sri Lanka, yes. There was a pretty good-sized agricultural office. There were three or four U.S. direct hires and six or seven FSNs (Foreign Service Nationals) for most of the time. I don't think I directly supervised any of the U.S. direct hires at that point, but there were contractors, obviously, that I was responsible for, and supervising the Foreign Service National staff. So that was my first supervisory experience. And you know, there were some, I'm trying to think, there were some supervisory skills courses that I recall that the agency offered and the combination of that and just kind of learning by experience. I always tried to be supportive and make sure assignments were clear and responsibilities were clear and this sort of thing. It didn't always work out because there was a—there were different ways of doing things, let's put it that way, in some cultures compared to the way that we like to see things done in our bureaucratic system. But I think by and large my supervisory skills were adequate.

Q: Any example of that cultural difference that you referred to?

UPHAUS: One thing that comes to mind is filing, how to categorize things for filing, seeing connections. The Sri Lankan approach was basically making a separate file for everything. And I would say, "Well, wait a minute. This makes no sense. How do we categorize, what are the commonalities here that we can start consolidating some of these files so that they don't overflow everything?" So, just that kind of thinking about how do you—what goes with what and how do you consolidate and relate things to each other. That was something that was not, somehow was not intuitively obvious to the Sri Lankan staff the way it was to us. And we like direct answers to questions, which weren't always forthcoming. But overall the local staff were personable, capable, a delight to work with.

Q: Were they trained by the British or were they—that was just from their own—

UPHAUS: Either that or they were influenced by the Indians and the red tape, I don't know. (Laughs)

Q: Well, let's move on then. After Sri Lanka you were posted back to the States. Did you want that assignment?

UPHAUS: Yes. After ten years I was ready for an assignment to the U.S. Everyone said that it was good career-wise to spend some time in AID-Washington and our family was also ready for some time in the U.S. We had two children at that point and wanted them to experience some of the American educational system, that sort of thing. So, we moved back in the summer of '86 and I went to work in the Asia Near East bureau as basically the technical backstop officer for countries in the Middle East, South Asia. Not the most exciting or rewarding kind of assignment, but it gave me the opportunity to do some TDYs (Temporary Duty) and also, I got involved a while back in the U.S. in AFSA (American Foreign Service Association) activities.

Q: Explain AFSA please. AFSA is?

UPHAUS: AFSA, American Foreign Service Association. That's the professional and association bargaining unit for Foreign Service officers, State Department and USAID and Foreign Ag Service and others. So, you know, I remember, like many people, on joining USAID thinking, well, what use is AFSA? Aren't we all managers? You know, how could we—what could possibly go wrong here? But I soon came to learn that in fact there are some differences between Agency management and the rank and file foreign service, and that it's good to have someone in your corner when you're having issues about assignments or promotion or other conditions of work. And so, I got involved in AFSA activities and got elected AFSA vice president for one term. And this was back in the days when AFSA vice president was not a separate job. In other words, this was in addition to your regular assignment you also did AFSA work. Fortunately, I had a supervisor in the bureau who was very supportive. This was Jim Lowenthal, and he was very supportive of my work on AFSA, so that was good, that was one good thing about my Washington assignment. I got a good—a much better appreciation for how the agency works from that perspective, the management perspective.

And the other good aspect about the Washington assignment was that largely with the leadership of Jim Lowenthal, he set a couple of us, Marty Hanratty and myself, Marty was really the lead guy on this, to come up with a strategy for how we would work more effectively with the private sector. And so, we started grappling with that, and the approach we ended up with is -- you know, we can't really work directly with the private sector, but what we can do is work with professional and trade associations. And then, the issue of how can we link this with—continue to work with the government, since our bilateral relationships are with government, not with private associations, or at least at that point they weren't. So, this was, I thought, a worthwhile exercise that had some important implications down the road. And we had a conference where we rolled this out in the bureau. So, this was, you know, about getting away from the focus on the staple cereals into a more diversified agriculture, looking at markets and how we work with—how we can start to work with the private sector. And the way that we came up with was doing that through the professional associations. So those were a couple of the good aspects of my Washington, that four-year Washington assignment.

Q: What approach—was there a difference in whether you were trying to work with poor farmers or you were working more with farmers that were dealing with exports?

UPHAUS: This was an issue that repeatedly came up. There were always some who wanted to focus on the poorest, on the smaller farmers. For better or worse, the consensus among people like me, agricultural professionals working in the field, was that we need to move up the scale a little bit, that focusing on the poorest farmers is not going to get you the kind of production impact that we want. You need to start working with farmers who have some resources and some skills or have access to resources and skills. So, this meant going with some of the better farmers and working with them on how they can, like I said, take advantage of market opportunities and other options for increasing their

skills and understanding without going through the traditional ministry, public extension service.

By that time, it was also becoming clear that the big public extension model that had been built up both with USAID and especially with World Bank support, was simply not supportable. They were very expensive, and the economic impact was just not there. So, both from that perspective as well as from the commercial perspective it was coming to be understood that we needed to start working more with the farmers who had some more resources.

Peter Timmer, an academic, one who studied and wrote a lot about agricultural transformation, agricultural development, saying that one of the best things you can do for the poorest farmers is get them a bus ticket to the city where they could try to find some other source of employment because there was no way to effectively work with them in the rural sector. So, that—this was part of the transformation that was going on in the late eighties and into the early nineties about working with more commercial agriculture, larger scale farmers, getting away from the public sector extension service, that sort of thing.

Q: You were doing this for the Asia Near East bureau. Did that approach move on through the agency as a whole? Were there any other champions of that approach?

UPHAUS: I don't know. Asia Near East was, of course, a huge bureau in those days and what was going on in LAC and in Africa bureau, I assume that some similar things were going on, but I have no firsthand knowledge of that.

Another thing I got to do while in Washington, another positive thing, was to take part in the Development Studies Program, the DSP. The Agency had, at that time, this mid-career course on development theory and practice. I think it was three weeks, a great opportunity to get up to date on the latest thinking and review what we were learning. It was off-site, out of the office, so no distractions. And it was also good for networking. I always felt that USAID was not a very good learning organization. We did all these project evaluations – mid-project, end-of-project – but I don't think anyone ever paid much attention to the findings. The DSP was one opportunity to look analytically at experience across the Agency and think about what was working and what wasn't. Also, it was a nice non-monetary incentive for mid-career officers to get selected for the DSP. Unfortunately the Agency eliminated the DSP shortly after that, claiming that it was too costly, both financially and in terms of personnel. There was always the rush to get people assigned and overseas, and blocking out time for personal development was thought to be a waste. Sad.

Along with thinking about different ways of doing development – working more with the private sector and the DSP – I and I think others were coming around to the conclusion that the whole project approach to development was seriously flawed. The idea originally was adopted from civil engineering, when we were doing physical infrastructure, with clearly defined goals and objectives, inputs and outputs. Those projects were amenable to

benefit-cost analysis and other analytic tools. Applying these to social and institutional infrastructure was conceptually dubious and, I believe, not very effective. We got some institutional development done, but that was in spite of rather than because of all the project development rigamarole we went through. The Agency later came around to the idea of letting the host countries take more of a lead, and trying to support what they were doing. A much sounder approach, in my opinion.

Q: Anything about your TDYs that you recall being of interest?

UPHAUS: Well, I got to go back, like I said to Yemen, which was interesting, and going back and seeing that what we had started was just beginning to bear some fruit, literally, with horticulture, and figuratively. We now had some educated Yemenis that were back working with the government or who were starting businesses, that sort of thing. And there was the sense that we could really start to do some more effective work there. I also returned to Sri Lanka at one point to do an evaluation of a big project that we'd started. And I did some TDYs in the Middle East, Egypt and Jordan. One of the things that I was responsible for there was some money that was made available for joint agricultural research initiatives involving Israeli scientists and Egyptian and Jordanian scientists. That fell in my portfolio, and I got to do some TDYs to meet some of these researchers and follow up on some of the work they were doing, very small scale kinds of things, but interesting as well, about soil solarization, for example, how do you kill soil microbes by heating the soil, and irrigation—trickle irrigation technologies, which the Israelis were, of course, very good at. So, there were a few kinds of worthwhile little research things going on and that was fun.

Q: So, you watched Israel as part of that?

UPHAUS: I did. I'd been there before on TDY when I was—not on a TDY, just on vacation when we were stationed in Yemen, but it was fun to go back to Israel and get to know some of the Israeli scientists.

Q: And your kids enjoyed being back in the States and at some point you said, "We're going to go back overseas," and they said, "No," right?

UPHAUS: I frankly do not recall what they said. But after three years there was, you know, the understanding that we needed to go back overseas. I had deliberately not studied French up until that point because I didn't risk getting assigned to Chad or, you know, Central Africa or Mauritania or one of these posts, but there were some positions coming open in Tunisia and Morocco, which I found appealing. And so, I started studying French and applied for a couple of positions, one of them was in Tunisia, which had a program that was just—I guess it had been there for a while, but it was set to expand and they wanted somebody out there to take that on, an agribusiness program. So, I applied for the Tunisia position and got it and then went into full-time French language study in early 1990. And so we went out to Tunisia in September of 1990.

Q: Good.

UPHAUS: Now, that, you may recall, is the same time that Saddam Hussein marched into Kuwait. And we, my wife and I, both recall thinking it's very likely this is not going to end well and we're going to end up getting evacuated, which ultimately is what happened. Tunis at that time was where the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization) was headquartered, and so the Tunisian government was officially, you know, pro-PLO, and when the war started, I believe in early January, we were evacuated. Because we suspected we were only going to be there a short time we took maximum advantage of our time in Tunisia, which is a fascinating place. The history is just wonderful, from ancient Carthage and Rome and the Byzantine Empire to the, you know, World War II battlefields and this sort of thing, great, wonderful ruins and mosaics. So, we took maximum advantage of that. We had some good Tunisian staff and we got this agribusiness activity started, which followed this model of, you know, trying to work with professional associations in collaboration with the ministry of agriculture. We were just getting that program underway when the war happened and we had to leave it, just too bad.

George Carner was the mission director there. He was a good guy, very supportive. I don't know if you know him.

Q: Yes, I do.

UPHAUS: And Lou Lucke was my immediate supervisor, who also went on to big things in the agency later on. So, you know, and like I said, some good local staff and we enjoyed our time there, but unfortunately, it was too short.

Q: How many months were you there?

UPHAUS: We were there only about four months when we got evacuated.

Q: Oh.

UPHAUS: And back to the U.S. When the war ended, a few of us, without dependents, went back to Tunis to sort of close things down because it was clear we were not going to continue with the kind of program there that we had initially envisaged. And I found—and I was thinking, oh great, now that I've got French and I'm not in Tunisia, now I'm going to get shipped out to Mali or Central Africa. But in fact, in Morocco, Jim Lowenthal had gone to Morocco at the same time I went to Tunis, as head of the agriculture program there. He got promoted to deputy mission director. There was a position vacant there and so, through Jim's good offices and other contacts, I was able to get slotted into that position in Morocco, an out-of-cycle assignment. So, that worked out well, in the end, and we ended up going, that summer of '91, to Rabat, the whole family.

Q: Great. And who else were you working with in Rabat? Were you the head of the ag office? (crosstalk/indiscernible)?

UPHAUS: So, then I was the head of a pretty good-sized agricultural office with a range of programs. We had some legacy activities, continuing to do some work with the ministry's agricultural research system. There was an activity working in—with one of the big irrigation perimeters on water management, but also—and a quite successful, I would say, agriculture university development activity with the University of Minnesota and the Hassan II Agro-Veterinary Institute in Rabat —this was one of these that harkens back to the sixties in India with the long-term university twinning arrangements. That was, I think, a quite successful project as well, and we started seeing the Hassan II Institute serving as a training site for much of Francophone Africa. And then we also got a big new agribusiness activity underway, so like I said, some legacy programs and some new projects as well, and a good-sized program.

The mission director when I got there was Dennis Chandler, and he was replaced at some point by Marty Dagatta. Dennis, I liked. Marty, not so much. Marty seemed kind of awkward in the role, like it didn't suit him.

Q: He liked his cigars, huh?

UPHAUS: Yes. And you know, the staff in the agriculture office were very capable people, both Moroccan and expat. A lot of the expats were old-time West Africa hands, good French capability, so, it was a good office, good program, good local staff, and I think we got some good work done.

Q: How'd you do with your French?

UPHAUS: It was serviceable. And it's fun, I still read and try to speak it when I can. There's not, unfortunately, much occasion to use French here in Winchester. I do some volunteering with one of the food pantries here and there was a Haitian woman who came in the other day who speaks sort of French, but not the French I learned, but it was fun interacting with her. But yeah, so my French was good enough. And we took, obviously, some vacations in France, Paris, Normandy, and that kind of thing. So, that was nice.

Q: The program in Morocco, how big was it? Do you have any idea how big the mission program was?

UPHAUS: Oh, boy. There was a good-sized private sector program. There was this irrigation program. There was a big health, population program. I mean, it was in the early nineties, late eighties, early nineties, Morocco was a big program. Dollar-wise, I don't know, but it was a multisectoral, big USAID mission.

Q: When I think of Morocco, I think of cloud seeding. Were you involved with cloud seeding at all?

UPHAUS: That project was just ending when I got there. We did do some cloud seeding with, I don't know, I mean, it is—the idea was to increase snowpack in the Atlas Mountains and then the snow, you know, melts and discharges gradually into the

irrigation system instead of running off all at once. The problem with cloud seeding is that it works up to a point, but it's unpredictable and if it rains here, then it means it's not going to rain there. And trying to manage that kind of thing is just not feasible. We're better off staying away from any kind of weather modification.

We also were involved in battling locusts in Morocco. There were several major locust infestations and the big issue is, what's the best approach? Do you wait for the winds to eventually blow them out into the Atlantic – after causing maybe serious damage -- or do you actively intervene with big spraying programs and that sort of thing. Well, we did the intervention and tried to monitor what was going on, but I hate to see that kind of massive chemical intervention. But sometimes there's no—it's the least bad of several alternatives, you need to go into the chemicals and knock down these big swarms of locusts.

Q: Somebody told me about a project in Senegal where they were—brought in some Texans with small planes that were spraying, and then I thought they moved onto Morocco. Was that during your time?

UPHAUS: Yes. Yes, and there was some incident also where one of these planes crashed. And there was some big legal issue that went on and on and on involving the Agency and USAID-Morocco and so on and so forth. And I don't know how all that worked out, but it was, you know, it was one of those kind of tragic events where one of these locust-fighting planes crashed and there were some lives lost.

Q: Right. Well, speaking of the cloud seeding, somebody told me it was one of the king's priorities. Is that right?

UPHAUS: Apparently, it was. But I don't really know. I did hear that he wanted the cloud seeding, like I said, for the snowpack. And skiing.

Q: Did you get involved at all in the Western Sahara?

UPHAUS: No. It was kind of funny. We had an ambassador who was—in 1992 when Clinton was elected. Right? Clinton beat Bush. So, we had a new ambassador come in, who was some—had some close ties to the Clintons, reportedly. And he was all sure that he was going to negotiate a settlement in the Western Sahara. He was sure he could figure it out. Well, it didn't work out. (Laughs) Mark Ginsberg was his name, not a real impressive ambassador. His predecessors had been pretty good, but he didn't accomplish very much.

Q: Did he have anything to do with the AID program or did he just let it run?

UPHAUS: No, he didn't pay much attention to the AID program. But like I said, he had these great ambitions of making his name by settling the Western Sahara, and it didn't happen.

Q: And you were working with a fairly large FSN staff, I imagine, in both countries, right? Tunisia and Morocco.

UPHAUS: Yeah. Well, compared to Morocco, Tunisia was a significantly smaller program. But yeah, there were some, again, some very capable FSNs in both places.

Q: Anything else you want to say about the Morocco program or your time there?

UPHAUS: No. You know, I liked my job. Family was happy. My wife had gotten her teaching credentials. She was teaching at the school. Kids were very happy. It was just a great post in all kinds of ways. But professionally for me it was, you know, the first opportunity to head up a big ag program doing some new and kind of interesting things. And it was somewhere along in there that I got promoted probably to FS-1, I think, while I was in Morocco.

Q: Well, it sounds like the kind of place you'd want to stay.

UPHAUS: Well, we were there three years. We didn't try to stay on. We thought really that for the kids' education it would be good to come back to the U.S. So, we came back to the U.S. then in '94, after four years total, Tunisia and Morocco.

Q: What job did you come back to?

UPHAUS: Then I came back into the bureau for Europe and the—Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

Q: Ah-ha.

UPHAUS: Dick Johnson was the head of that office. And it was not an agricultural office. It was—now, this was—this was a major transition point in the agency in that, you know, with the end of the Cold War and the fact that agriculture was not a screaming, urgent issue like it had been, this renewed push—that started with Reagan and continuing through the Clinton and Bush terms as the private sector being the answer to everything. Agriculture funding, agriculture programs were phased way back. And so, in Eastern Europe then we didn't really have any of the traditional kinds of agricultural programs. It was all working with private sector organizations, agribusiness, a big focus on agribusiness. And in these countries we negotiated agreements, I guess, working through NGOs, U.S. NGOs, working directly with counterpart NGOs in Eastern Europe and the countries of the former Soviet Union. So, it sort of bypassed the host governments entirely. And that was, you know, there was such an infatuation for want of a better word, with working with the private sector all of a sudden, that I think we went overboard and neglected a lot of the institutions and institutional and analytical work that was really warranted. And we didn't, you know, we didn't focus on building up institutions, educational institutions, research institutions in these countries. In Eastern Europe it was not such a big deal, but it might have made a difference in countries of the former Soviet Union had we focused more on some of the institutional strengthening. But that was the

decision that was made. I got very frustrated with the downplaying of agriculture in this region. I remember at one point the government of Armenia had asked the U.S. government for some assistance in getting its agriculture sector going again after, you know, the collapse of the old Soviet system, and our AID people told the government of Armenia, “Well, we don’t do agriculture anymore.” And so, the USDA (United States Department of Agriculture) stuck up its hand and said, “Oh, we do. We’ll do a program for you.” You know, the last thing you want is USDA designing agricultural development programs, but they went out there and designed a, you know, an extension program, which didn’t amount to much of anything. This was sort of the low point for agriculture in the agency, I would have to say, you know, our leadership telling the governments of client countries, “No, we don’t do agriculture.” That was very frustrating.

Q: I recall another factor was the Bumpers Amendment. Do you remember the Bumpers Amendment?

UPHAUS: Well, that affected our work on certain crops. It dated back to the 1970s, I believe.

Q: Right.

UPHAUS: Specifically soybeans, but there were some other crops that USAID had historically been prohibited from working on, cotton, sugar were two of them, soybean was another. I can’t remember, there were a couple more that we were not supposed to have anything to do with.

Q: The Bumpers Amendment, as I recall it, was basically saying that we wouldn’t provide foreign aid to a program that increased production of a crop that would compete against American exports.

UPHAUS: Right, that’s exactly right. That was Bumpers and that was mostly focused on soybeans. But like I said, there were these other restrictions as well. We would sometimes, in different posts, run up against people who would point out the inconsistencies, if not hypocrisy, in our position of promoting market-based solutions and elimination of subsidies in agriculture while protecting our own agriculture big-time. We were in the position of advising them to do as we say, not as we do. There are some obvious problems with that.

Q: Right. Interesting. You traveled in Eastern Europe and—

UPHAUS: So, I did get some TDYs to Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, including Ukraine on several occasions. And to the Caucasus -- Georgia, Armenia. Very interesting from a, you know, historical/cultural perspective. I’m glad I got the opportunity to do that. Programmatically, we did not have, I don’t think, much of an impact on what was going on. Maybe countries like Romania, Bulgaria benefitted some from what we had to offer. Albania definitely did. The other countries probably not much.

Q: What happened in Albania?

UPHAUS: Well, it's a small country. We went in with a pretty good-sized effort that involved, among other things, breaking up the old state farms and parceling that out to private farmers, doing a land redistribution, and that's one of the, I think, my understanding is that that's one of the more effective kind of land distribution schemes that USAID has ever supported. It was done by the University of Wisconsin Land Tenure Center, which was involved there for quite a long time. My understanding is that went quite well. And then, again, some of the agribusiness work there had a better reception. The Albanians were so sick of the Soviet system they were happy to try new things. And that wasn't always the case in some of the other countries where there was still a lot of nostalgia for, you know, the way things used to be. In Albania, they were keen to try something new.

Q: In the other countries they were happy with what was happening in the area of agriculture in other areas, or they just—that's the way they always worked?

UPHAUS: Well, they were—you know, it's what they were used to. They had a lot of security, you know, job security. They had medical care taken care of. The old system was inefficient in a lot of ways, but it did provide a lot of services to people. Everybody had a job. It could be a pretty meaningless job, but still, they had something. And so, all of a sudden you knock out the props under the system and there was a lot of anxiety and a lot of unhappiness as part of this transition process.

Q: I gather from what you said that we probably weren't—we weren't trying to reeducate people by sending them to the States?

UPHAUS: No. No. We were trying to re-educate them by bringing financial advisors and venture capitalists to their countries.

Q: Were you involved with any of those programs?

UPHAUS: Very peripherally.

Q: Okay. Aside from Albania, any other success stories you can think of?

UPHAUS: Nothing significant. I mean, no. Ukraine was an interesting case, but at that point anyway, it was still in the throes of transition and massively corrupt. And, you know, in spite of a pretty heavy effort there, I don't think we had that much impact back in the nineties.

Q: How long were you in that position?

UPHAUS: Well, I was there up until about 2000. So, six years working in Washington working on Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, at which point it was, you know, I was eligible to retire, so it becomes a question of do I retire or do we do another

overseas assignment. And we were up for another overseas assignment, and there were a couple of positions available. And at this point, our daughter had completed high school and our son was in sophomore year of high school, and it meant we would be taking him out of high school to go overseas again. So, my wife loves to tell this story, and it is kind of funny. And revealing. There were three positions available for someone of my, you know, my grade and programmatic interest. One of them was Egypt, one of them was Moscow, one of them was Dhaka. And so, we, because we were taking Max out of high school, we asked him where he wanted to go, and he said Dhaka. And that's where we went.

Q: Do you have any idea why he would have chosen Dhaka?

UPHAUS: Well, he had heard all of these stories about Nepal and India and we lived in Sri Lanka and he, I think, he had this interest in experiencing more of South Asia for himself. And so, that's kind of what led to our going to Dhaka. And it was great, it worked out very well for everybody.

Q: What was your position?

UPHAUS: Okay, so I was head then of the combined, let's see, it was the agricultural but also some private sector activities, agribusiness, environment. There was a big—the—I guess the big project that we got developed and its implementation was again, an agribusiness project, working with professional associations in collaboration with the ministry of agriculture. We were doing some work with PL-480 generated local currency on rural works. There was a significant activity on wetlands and conservation of wetlands, which I found really interesting. There were the—

Q: Was it called the Sundarbans or something like that?

UPHAUS: This was not in the Sundarbans, the coastal mangrove forests. These were the inland wetlands that are significant in terms of fisheries and water retention. You know, in Bangladesh there's always this pressure to drain and farm these areas, but the environmental benefits from having these big seasonally flooded haors and beels they're called, tends to get underplayed. But we, working with, again, the NGO community which is—and as you know, Bangladesh has this great history now of effective non-governmental organizations, Grameen and BRAC and these other outfits, which are world leaders in all kinds of ways, so there were some institutions that we could really work with, with government approval, U.S. NGOs going ahead and working with these local NGOs. We didn't work directly with BRAC or with Grameen, but with some others that were very capable. And so, the idea was to provide people with alternative livelihoods so that you could keep them from fishing certain times of the year so that the fish stocks could rebuild. And at the same time you're working with the farmers in the uplands so that you can cut down on the erosion into the wetlands. And it was working really quite well and it was gratifying to see these things.

I remember at one point going out with the grantees and local fishermen and sinking some big snags into the wetlands so that people couldn't fish these areas anymore, which provided a sanctuary so the fish could reproduce and grow and then spread back out into the broader area. The impact was dramatic. And these snags were there to stay. So, it's the idea of keeping people from fishing certain times of the year so that you've got more fish, you know, the rest of the year and setting up these sanctuaries. So, that kind of thing was all very interesting and I'm glad we were able to support it.

We also got funding—how did this come about? Now I'm trying to remember. For some forest preservation activities, and that did get us down some into the Sundarbans and some of the remaining forest stands in the country, on the northern border and the far southeast. And I'm trying to think if this was PL-480 money that came to us. I think it was, which we were able to put into forest preservation activity. There still are, believe it or not, some forest areas in Bangladesh apart from the Sunderbans. So, there was a pretty active environmental program there when you take in the forest preservation and the wetlands and this sort of thing. So, that was fun. And this agribusiness program, working with, again, the commercial agribusiness, a lot of work with the shrimp industry, some of the other locally produced spices, you know, trying to develop and expand international markets for these kinds of things. And this was all at a period when there wasn't that much money for agriculture, agriculture-related programs, so we had to kind of scramble and piece things together. This was before the big Feed the Future initiative came along, which you're familiar with, which all of a sudden started pumping all kinds of money into the agriculture sector again. So, we were scrambling to try and piece together programs out of, you know, rags and patches. But it worked reasonably well.

And, you know, the Bengalis are great people to work with. I loved working there. The mission director when I got there was Gordon West, a very good mission director. Then, he was succeeded by Gene George, who I first met as a Peace Corps volunteer in Nepal, all those years ago. And there was a good crew and good support from the embassy side. All in all, a very positive experience. And our son, who decided we were going to Bangladesh, had a great experience at the school there, so he was very happy. That all worked out very well.

Q: I think I went out there as a consultant about that time because Gene George was still the mission director. And I remember working with Phil DeCosse.. You know that name?

UPHAUS: Mm-hm. Yeah.

Q: And this environment program that (indiscernible) also setting up actually protected areas, I believe in some of these areas.

UPHAUS: Mm-hm.

Q: And I was told, you know, the Bangladeshis would go on the weekends, they go to these areas, these green areas because there was—that's the only place they could find them.

UPHAUS: Right. And they, you know, given the hand that they were dealt, the Bangladeshis have done amazingly well. Unfortunately the politics are unhappy right now and have been for a while. But the Bangladeshis themselves are very capable and you know, have accomplished great strides when you think about where they started out back in 1970. That's another interesting thing. I was just finishing my Peace Corps service in Nepal when Bangladesh independence war took place, so I was very aware of what was going on at that time in Bangladesh, and it was interesting for me to go back after—to that part of the world and specifically to Bangladesh after all that time, to see what they'd been able to make of it. And the results were really striking in terms of economic growth, the significant drop in the fertility rate, the educational achievements, women's education, all this sort of thing, they really made amazing strides in that thirty-year period. And I think a lot of that was the—and I think USAID can take credit for a lot of that, the education programs, the progress in public health and agriculture.

Q: You weren't involved with PL-480 at that point?

UPHAUS: I was. But then, I'd been involved off and on in PL-480 over the years, Title I, Title III and the Title II programs. Do I need to go into what—the distinction between Title I and Title II? Title I is concessional in-kind loans where the commodities are sold and generate this local currency, the use of which is jointly decided by the USG (Dept. of Agriculture) and host country. Title II are grants that can be used for direct feeding or, again, can be monetized and then used to support local development activities. So, in Bangladesh, I think there were both, but there was a lot of Title I money sloshing around that we used for, as I said, for rural works programs.

Q: It's the local currency, what we call local currency, right?

UPHAUS: Local currency, yeah. So, this is, you know, we bring in wheat, sell it for Bangladeshi rupees. Those rupees then get applied to—for local expenses of different kinds of development activities. People have gone back and forth about PL-480 for, you know, as long as it's been in existence as to whether it's—really constitutes that good a deal or not. I'm agnostic on the question except for the fact that Title II in particular is much better if you can, instead of buying commodities in the U.S. and shipping them overseas, if you can buy commodities locally or in neighboring countries and thereby support farmers in the region. So, that's one observation on PL-480.

Q: I think some of the development purists like yourself believe that. The U.S. farmers don't necessarily agree. (Laughs)

UPHAUS: Yeah, U.S. farmers, I mean, the amount of PL-480 that's purchased doesn't move the market one bit, so there's no economic benefit to American agriculture from a PL-480 program. It's just too insignificant. American farmers, I'm sure, like to feel that they're helping to feed the world and you know, to a significant extent they are. But they're doing it more through commercial sales than through PL-480. So, that's my observation on that particular point.

Q: Let's see. Anything else on Bangladesh? The schools are very good there. They have a great reputation, so your son picked well for that.

UPHAUS: The American School had an excellent reputation. Our son, like I said, got a very good education. And the expat community there was very active, very supportive of the school. So, it was traditionally one of the, you know, very high morale posts. And it was certainly that way when we were there. People liked working there, liked being there in spite of the heat and the congestion and the, you know, the poverty – all that immediately flashes into your mind when you think of Bangladesh. Your first reaction is, “oh my God.” But it really was a positive experience.

Q: Was your wife teaching in the school?

UPHAUS: She was not teaching then. She had a job—I don't know if I mentioned, her academic background is in journalism, and when we got to Dhaka, she got a job editing the embassy newsletter and also doing some writing and editing for some other U.S. NGOs, their publications and stuff. So, she had a—she enjoyed that as well, had a lot of fun.

Q: Bangladesh is also known for its floods. Did you have any major floods while you were there?

UPHAUS: Not anything that would—nothing extraordinary. You know, every monsoon much of the country goes under water, but that's normal. What's concerning is climate change and sea level rise and saltwater intrusion combined with melting glaciers in the Himalayas, which means you've got more runoff during the rainy season and not as much runoff during the dry season, so Bangladesh is getting—is in a very precarious situation and we recognized at that time and it's more so now, a very precarious situation with respect to climate change and what's going to happen there.

Q: How many years were you in Bangladesh?

UPHAUS: So, three years in Bangladesh.

Q: You're back in that three-year cycle.

UPHAUS: Yep.

Q: And then, you decided it's time to go?

UPHAUS: Then at that point, we decided to retire. Came back to the U.S. and did a year and a half or so and retired in 2005.

Q: Where were you working during that year and a half?

UPHAUS: I was then the deputy in charge of the South Asia desk in Asia and Near East bureau. So, again, backstopping country programs, Pakistan, India, Nepal, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. And that was—how to describe that? We were throwing all kinds of money in there and nobody really seemed to have much of a handle on what was going on.

Q: This was the cross-border program?

UPHAUS: No, this was in 2005. This is after we'd gone in and thrown out the Taliban and we had the huge U.S. military and AID presence in Afghanistan. So, that continued up until, you know, last year or whatever it was. But it was frustrating in that there was, you know, the embassy was all over it with their own ideas as to what was to be done and the military and it was just, you know, pumping money out the door. There was no accountability and it was just a frustrating kind of situation to be in. I remember frequently being in meetings with Andrew Natsios, who was the AID director then, and trying to—he was focused on trying to get this big road project completed from Kabul to Kandahar to Mazar-i-Sharif or whatever it was, the Ring, it was called, Ring Road. And eventually, it got built, but it immediately got blown up again and it wasn't maintained. So, it was just an exercise in frustration. And I, you know, didn't—I deliberately kind of dissociated myself. I don't know if that was a very professional thing to do or not, but I dissociated myself from what was going on in Afghanistan, focused my attention on what was going on in the other countries in the bureau.

Q: Did you do any trips to Afghanistan during that period?

UPHAUS: No. No. I remember going once to Pakistan, but I think that's the only TDY I did during that period. No, wait, I did go back to Nepal once for—to serve as acting mission director for a week. That was fun. But that was, you know, that was very near the end of my AID career. So, to go back to Nepal where I'd started in Peace Corps as an acting mission director for a while was a treat. I remember going to a—speaking to the Nepal American Chamber of Commerce while I was there, and they met in the Hotel Shanker, which was where we first stayed when we arrived as Peace Corps volunteers in 1969. And I, you know, enjoyed talking to the Nepalis—many of them had not been born in 1969—about our experiences back then. That was fun.

Q: Were you speaking Nepali?

UPHAUS: No, but my Nepali is still serviceable. I learned—the Peace Corps language program drilled those Nepali patterns into me and I can still get around pretty well in Nepali.

Q: So, anything else about that last year and a half?

UPHAUS: No, not really.

Q: Was Feed the Future started by then?

UPHAUS: No. I think Feed the Future did not come along until a little bit later.

And so, I, you know, retired. I think it was September of '05. My big retirement party consisted of Jim Kunder and Mark Ward taking me across the street and buying me a drink. (Laughs) That was—

Q: Oh, come on.

UPHAUS: And that was the extent of it. That was fine. (Laughs) And so, then for—I didn't do anything for a little while. But shortly thereafter I got a part-time job as a policy analyst, working for Bread for the World, which is a, you know, hunger advocacy group, working on both domestic and U.S. issues. And I was working on the, obviously, the international side of things. Bread for the World was very supportive of agricultural development in general and the Feed the Future program when that came along. Also we were arguing for reforms to the PL-480 program and the—trying to get in place measures to address climate change for what that means in terms of nutrition and agricultural production, this sort of thing. And it's a, you know, it was started by a Lutheran minister, Art Simon, whose brother was Paul Simon, Senator Paul Simon. And so, it's still a very—it's not exclusively Christian or faith-based, but most of their people who work there are out of one or another of the Christian traditions, Catholic or Protestant. But some Muslims and Jews as well worked for Bread for the World. It's a, I think, a first-rate organization. Like I said, they only do advocacy. They don't—they're not involved in feeding programs, that sort of thing. But I really enjoyed my time working with them. So, that was about three years on a part-time, like thirty hours a week basis.

And it was at that point that some of my former colleagues in USAID approached me and since Feed the Future was underway and also the agency was starting to step up recruitment in a big way, rebuilding the Foreign Service ranks that had been depleted over the years, the, what was it called, the—what was the program?

Q: The DLI program?

UPHAUS: DLI.

Q: Development, Leadership Initiative, yes.

UPHAUS: Yeah, yeah. So, they asked me to come back and rejoin the regiment as it were and work with the DLI program. And so, I came back, as you know, and worked with the DLIs, again part-time for a period of, I don't know, two, three years, something like that. And my role there was one of mentoring, coaching the new people that were coming into the agency in the agricultural backstops and then helping them get assignments overseas where they could be effective. And that was the more difficult part because they'd—when agriculture was cut back so drastically they eliminated a lot of positions and so, getting permission from the embassy and the funding from USAID to establish new positions for all these agricultural officers that we were hiring to implement Feed the

Future was taxing. That was a heavy lift in some cases to get these positions created for the new people that we were hiring. Sort of a case of the right hand and left hand not knowing what the other is doing. But in most cases I think we were able to get the people where they would be—get them into good positions.

Q: Were you involved with the interview panels, the selection panels?

UPHAUS: Yes.

Q: For new ag officers?

UPHAUS: Yes. Which—yeah. That’s right. I also read the CVs and read, you know, graded them, rated them, decided who we would interview and sat in on the interview panels as well, which was a—that was illuminating. For the kind of people that were—that are interested in coming into USAID these days, first of all, it’s a lot of former volunteers again, as has always been the case. Also, a lot more women coming into the agricultural field, which was good to see. So, that was, you know, that was good. And then, like I said, the mentoring and the posting were what I was involved with in that job.

And then, after three or four years of that, I decided enough. And we had bought this property out in the country near Winchester and I wanted to move out there full-time and devote myself to looking after that. So, Kathy, my wife, says that I came home one day and threw my briefcase in the pile to take to Goodwill and that was the end of it. (Both laugh)

Q: She really did it? She took it to Goodwill?

UPHAUS: Yep.

Q: Oh, my. So, well, that’s quite an interesting conclusion to your career, using a lot of the skills you developed as a direct hire in so many parts of the world. I’m sure you were a great coach or mentor. Were you happy with the quality of the people you were mentoring?

UPHAUS: Oh, yeah. Yeah. We were getting, I thought, some excellent young people coming in. And I hope they’re finding their careers as rewarding as I did. I like to say that I’m very glad I had the career that I did. I got so much out of it and I think my family did as well. I’m glad I’m not doing it now, but I’m very glad I did it.

Q: So, if you were running into someone finishing a graduate program somewhere or working for an organization in their first job and they said, “What do you think about if I want to go into international work, where should I go work,” what would you tell them these days?

UPHAUS: I’d tell them first look at the Peace Corps.

Q: Yep.

UPHAUS: And—or try to get on with an international NGO doing some work overseas, get some experience and decide in that way if it's something that's really for you. And if it is, then, you know, get some further study and consider applying for USAID.

Q: Are you still in touch with people who are running ag programs for AID?

UPHAUS: No. Since sending my briefcase to Goodwill, I've had very little contact. I'm a member of the alumni association. I occasionally will sit in on some of their webinars or that sort of thing or Zoom presentations. But I don't read professional journals anymore. I've got other interests, other things that I'm doing.

Q: Any other sort of summary comments you'd like to make about your career and what you think you accomplished?

UPHAUS: Hmm. What did I accomplish? I mentioned getting baseball started in Sri Lanka. (Laughs) That was significant. You know, I think we got some good work done certainly in Morocco and in Bangladesh. One of my other success stories, if you will, in kind of an amusing way is in Bangladesh there are still some Hindu craftsmen, you know, especially in a village not far outside of Dhaka, who make the bronze murtis, the figures of the gods and such, and they sell quite a few to members of the expat community who come through. Generally people working there. There are not many tourists in Bangladesh. Anyway, we had been to the village – Dhamrai – and saw what they had done and bought a few things. And then we took a trip at one point to Darjeeling, and in a curio shop there we saw a figure of a Ganesh, you know, Ganesh the elephant-headed god, but unlike the usual poses you see he was lying back in a chair and reading a book. And we'd never seen that particular pose for Ganesh before. And we wanted one, but this thing was heavy and I didn't want to haul it all the way back to Dhaka. So, we took some photos of it and then went to these craftsmen in Dhamrai, and showed them the photos and said, "Can you make this?" And they said, "Sure." And so, they did a wax model of this Ganesh figure and we said, "Yeah, that looks good. Go ahead and do a casting of it." And they did and we bought it from them. This bronze Ganesh turned out to be a big seller for them (laughs) and so, this is another kind of accidental success story of my international career, was setting these guys up with a winning Ganesh murti to sell to the expats.

Q: Do you have one in your house?

UPHAUS: We do.

Q: Anything about working with State Department or working with the embassy that you want to pass on before we move off?

UPHAUS: Embassy relations in Bangladesh were, I would say very good. First of all, we were co-housed, so we saw a lot of each other. Met some good ambassadors. The economic officers again were very interested in what we were doing. And that was the case also in Morocco. The economic officers were quite aware of what we were doing, supportive of what we were doing. The econ officer in Morocco, in fact, had been a Peace Corps volunteer someplace in West Africa, Senegal, I think. So, by and large the embassy relations in my experience were quite good, apart from, I mentioned the ambassador in Morocco who was not one of my favorites. But the others were mostly capable career people, and definitely knew what they were doing and generally supported what we were doing USAID.

Q: That's great. All right.

Well, unless you can think of anything else you'd like to put into this oral history, we can probably conclude it here. Is that all right? Or do you have any last thoughts?

UPHAUS: As I look back at it, I see that my career was bookended by two of the great foreign policy disasters, Vietnam and Afghanistan. But in between we had some adventures, some good times and, I think, managed to accomplish some good, useful things. I'm more than satisfied with that.

And now, this is another hour and a half we've been at it. That seems like probably enough.

Q: All right.

End of interview