

COLOMBIA

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ALDENE ALICE BARRINGTON
Assistant Trade Commissioner
Bogota (1927-1931)

Aldene Alice Barrington was born in 1902 in North Dakota to homesteaders from Canada. She earned a teacher's certificate in 1921 from the University of North Dakota and a B.A. in Sociology and Economic from Barnard College, NY. In 1927 she entered the Foreign Service and served in Colombia, Argentina and Brazil as an Assistant Trade Commissioner and later as an Economic Officer.

Q: When you graduated, then what were you pointed towards?

BARRINGTON: The Foreign Service, because I'd gotten this little glimpse of it and I had become acquainted with people connected with foreign endeavors. At that time, the Department of Commerce and the State Department were more or less separated in our Foreign Service. They later combined and correlated their services. But Commerce then appointed its people directly. I knew that they were opening an office in Bogota, Colombia, a Commercial Attaché office, for the first time. I learned of this through someone I had met in Puerto Rico and who had come from a South American assignment. So I applied. I got a reply suggesting that I please come for an interview. I don't remember the officer's name, but I well remember that, ending the interview, he looked at me and he said, "You know, we have this opening, and your qualifications are all right, but we couldn't think of appointing a young woman to such a primitive country." That was that!

Q: This was, what, about 19...

BARRINGTON: Nineteen twenty-seven.

Q: And so then what happened?

BARRINGTON: Well, I got a job in New York with a lawyer's office. But I still wanted to get in the Foreign Service.

The Department of Commerce took a young man for the Bogota office instead of me. At that time, one went by ship to Barranquilla, Colombia, and then up the Magdalena River. I took it later, a long trip. And when I took the trip, it was considered a rapid one -- it was only eleven and a half days, because we didn't get stuck on a sandbar! But this young man, who got the job, I can imagine, was bored on the trip. There were other passengers, of course, some of them working for the Colombian government. To pass the time they started playing cards. Unfortunately, our young man mostly lost, and lacking cash, he continued to give his opponents I.O.U.s. When he got to Bogota his office work, which was clerical, included being a disbursing officer, one who could write government checks to pay local employees, etc. With such a source of money, he paid off his gambling debts!

That's when I got a telegram from the Commercial Attaché to me directly, asking, "Are you still interested?" And so that was my first Foreign Service job.

Q: You say it was eleven and a half days getting there?

BARRINGTON: That was the time it took to reach the town of Girardot where one went by rail up the mountains to Bogota, with an altitude of 9,000 feet.

I remember I had to pay my own fare. I knew enough about ships at that time, and since I wanted to visit friends in Puerto Rico, I went first to Puerto Rico and got a Spanish ship that docked there before proceeding to Colombia. This was a Spanish ship, I'll never forget. About half the

passengers were priests. They were on their way to Bogota, Colombia. Many had formerly been stationed in Mexico. It was at that revolutionary time that Mexico for political reasons, had expelled them.

Q: For a long time, the Catholic religion was forbidden in Mexico because of the PRI, the revolutionary party.

BARRINGTON: That's it. We stopped in a Venezuelan port, La Guaira, I think it was, before reaching Barranquilla where many of the priests got on the same boat as myself to go up the Magdalena River. The river trip was very interesting to me, its jungles, alligators, monkeys, and torrential rains.

Q: There's no railroad going up there?

BARRINGTON: No. Today, one goes part way. There's a railway that comes in from the west coast port of Buenaventura, but it didn't go over the mountain hump to Bogota, either. Well, for the river trip you had to bring a mosquito net and your own sheets. I can remember it had only one shower at the rear of the boat. Because of the muddy river water, it was primarily used to cool off from the tropical heat. It was an old Mark Twain type sternwheeler, which would stop every so often and get wood for its fuel. After several days we reached La Dorada, an active town. Standard Oil was already producing petroleum near there. From there we went overland to skirt some river falls. We had to change to a smaller boat to go up as far as Girardot. And from Girardot there was a short, four- or five-hour train ride up the Andes to Bogota.

I can remember what happened when all luggage and freight for Bogota was unloaded on the banks of the river at La Dorada for transshipment on the upper river boat. A sudden downpour slowed the process and a trunk of mine was not rescued soon enough to avoid the storm and my newly-acquired wardrobe, carefully selected for the post, arrived in wrinkled, messy condition.

Q: What was Bogota like when you arrived in 1927?

BARRINGTON: It was very colonial. At almost 9,000 feet altitude, the climate was mainly overcast and dreary, except around the turn of the year. In December and January and February, the sun would pierce the foggy clouds and it was delightful, not too cool. Nights were always cold, there was no central heating in the building. Of course, Colombia was very Catholic, very religious. As a matter of fact, I believe it was one of the last South American countries to officially pay an annual tithe to Rome. The city was about, oh, I'd say 250,000 in population. Its center was a typical Spanish plaza with an architecturally impressive church. The Indian and mixed-Indian population was dominant. An elite segment of the population lived very well. They were mainly Spanish and European oriented and seemed to have plenty of resources. The ladies dressed in the latest fashion. Their clothes frequently came from Paris, and after they came up the Magdalena River, of course, they were wrinkled. And, as I said, my clothes were that way.

There was only one creditable hotel in the city. At this one hotel, every Sunday afternoon, they would stage a popular "The Danzante". Well, I brought out a dress to wear for this first occasion for me. It was terribly wrinkled, and I said to a friendly Colombian lady with me, "I've got to

have this pressed. I can do it."

And the Colombian lady said, "No, you're not going to press that dress are you?"

I said, "Why, of course. I can't wear it this way. I must press it."

And she said, "No, don't, we never do." Because a wrinkled garment proclaimed it as having come from Europe, you see. So they would wear them with all the wrinkles. They wouldn't think of ironing them! I later surmised that there may have been some cheating on this custom -- and that the wrinkles were not always the result of a river trip!

Q: Before we move to the actual work, what was the social life like then, particularly for a young American woman?

BARRINGTON: Well, as in many of the South American countries, I would say Colombia, Brazil and certainly the Argentine, the British were there long before we were, and they established various commercial and other enterprises. And there were always long-established British families living there and some in connection with an active British Embassy. Also, various German interests had been established. Because of the petroleum resources of the country, American companies were involved in the competition for drilling contracts in Colombia. So they all had to be in the Bogota capital to talk with the government officials. Many young Americans, too, and some Canadians were there. You mixed with the foreigners and a selected group of the European-oriented Colombians in the social activities. But you rarely mixed socially with the pure Indian. The Indians were very prevalent and mostly uneducated in those days. You'd see them on the streets all the time, with their ponchos, and babies on the backs of the women. And I never, never heard a baby cry that was on the mother's back. It was told to me that one reason was that they were given "chicha".

Q: It's basically cocaine?

BARRINGTON: It is a corn beer. I've seen it in vats behind a "chicha" counter. It just bubbles up all the time. And I always thought, "Maybe that affected the mentality of a baby."

The young women of upper-class families were chaperoned when in public places. There was a slight mixture of the Spanish with the Indian. One of their first Presidents that had any Indian blood, Olaya Herrera, became President at that time.

Young women walking alone on city streets were subject to being quickly pinched by male passers-by, a custom not absent years ago in Southern Europe and some Latin American countries. Foreign women learned to cope with this ludicrous custom. Their usual, innocent-looking handbag had a strong steel frame which was felt by a surprised offender when the handbag was unobtrusively swung in his direction as she proceeded onward!

Recalling daily life then, I remember it was impossible to find sweet cream for purchase in Bogota, although a sugared sour cream was available. Long ago English colonists solved the problem by inventing what they called an "aluminum cow," a small pressurized apparatus with

an aluminum bowl into which you placed milk and unsalted melted butter. Upon turning a handle a defused thick liquid spurted out -- a perfect sweet cream! I was glad to have this apparatus in Colombia and also in Brazil.

Q: Where did you fit in, in the social life?

BARRINGTON: Well, of course, I was working. And so in the daytime, I didn't go to the prevalent lunches and teas sponsored by the foreign colony. In the evening, there was the Union Club which initiated various social activities. It was established by the British, who permitted elected Americans and Colombians to belong. It was quite an enjoyable center. I remember the British had a serious and amusing discussion about their national anthem. To us, it's "My country tis of Thee." The men that were there with different American companies all came in the office, and one became acquainted with them. So the group that you were thrown with was interesting, because it was Spanish-colonial mixed with European, English, and American culture at the same time. Because of the dearth of single American women, I was invited to various formal dinners at which Colombian officials and their wives were honored. The formal dress of the ladies frequently included a Spanish shawl, popular for the cold nights of Bogota which lacked any indoor heating.

Q: Well, now, to your work. What was your title and responsibility, and what were you involved with?

BARRINGTON: Well, in the beginning, I was somewhat unusual. American companies locating there would have loved to have found available English-speaking people to employ for clerical jobs in their offices. I was, more or less, office manager. We had a kind of a flunky, an office boy, Rodriguez, who was of an upper-class Colombian family, working there. And we had to do an awful lot of reporting. I started, on my own (I was really pushed into it, because everyone was so very busy), reporting on different commodities and opportunities for trade and investments because that was primarily what the Department of Commerce wanted. I can remember getting that Department pouch off, which was quite a task, every week, and miscellaneous obligations that I was in charge of.

Q: What was your impression of American commerce? I have written a book on the American consul. I cut it off at about 1914. But one of the hardest things was to get American trade to be responsive to the requirements of other countries, the measures and the weights, all the things each country...

BARRINGTON: And their laws.

Q: Their laws and to make them fit. How did you find this at that time?

BARRINGTON: Well, I remember one of the reports that I was pushed into writing was about doing business in...not Latin America, but the specific country. And you had to answer a lot of questions about their legal requirements and points of view and what the American company had to do in order to establish itself, pointing out the difficulties and the differences which most Spanish-speaking countries probably inherited from Spain. The government had control of

industry, and certainly of natural resources, and their many minerals, which included petroleum. Such widespread government ownership was foreign to the American point of view, because we didn't have similar strict controls here. We had more freedom, from a business point of view. And one had to explain the differences and difficulties and what the company had to overcome.

Q: Was there a feeling that American companies were responding to this? Or was it a problem of coaxing? What was your office's feeling about it?

BARRINGTON: Americans, by and large, just took for granted those obstacles they had to overcome or comply with, and decide whether it was worthwhile for them to be located there. No, there weren't any adverse feelings. It was just a matter of taking into account and knowing what you had to do in order to become entrenched in the country.

Q: Who was your boss?

BARRINGTON: Walter Donnelly. And the minister was Jefferson Caffery.

Q: Both of them are well known. But Jefferson Caffery is one of our most famous and well-known ambassadors. He was still going, as ambassador to Cuba, Brazil, France, and Egypt, until 1955. What was your impression of Jefferson Caffery?

BARRINGTON: Well, he was a man that, when he gave a talk, you thought, "Oh, my God, if he'd only read it!" because he wasn't outgoing, verbally, himself. Everybody had great respect for him. I had a couple of amusing encounters. I liked him very much. He was very religious. He stopped by the cathedral almost every morning before he got to the office. I understood later that he was a convert; his family had been Episcopalian. And, of course, young Donnelly was just like a son. They were a good combination, because Jefferson Caffery was retiring and very proper, whereas Donnelly was outgoing and a salesman, and the two worked very well together. So much so (the report was) that Jefferson Caffery selected Maria Elena Samper, to be Donnelly's wife. She was a charming, wonderful person, just marvelous, and they made a very nice couple in every way. And Donnelly was grateful and devoted. He made sure that when the businessmen played cards with Jefferson, they always saw that he won.

Q: When somebody recently asked former President George Bush what difference he found in not being president anymore, he said, "Well, when I play golf, I don't always win."

BARRINGTON: There was the Barco concession for oil. Gulf Oil and Standard Oil were already there, and Phillips, with others, all were negotiating to get a slice of the concession. And Caffery was of great help to them.

Q: Was oil your main business in the Commercial Section?

BARRINGTON: No, no, no. Coffee was the big export, and some fruit, bananas and miscellaneous items, as well as some petroleum. But there were many prominent oil people there that took care of most everything related to petroleum.

Q: What about coffee? Were there any American firms that dominated?

BARRINGTON: No, not outstandingly so. I don't recall any.

Q: Any great problems with trade? Were the Colombians difficult to deal with?

BARRINGTON: No. There were so many products not locally produced and as tariffs were not too high, a lot of consumer goods could be imported without difficulty. And, of course, we were trying to increase exports from the U.S. There were no big trade difficulties. The Germans were there, and the British were there, as well as ourselves. We were all competing. Our office would put an American exporter in touch with a prospective local representative for their products.

Q: Did you feel a sense of competition with the British and Germans?

BARRINGTON: Yes, in certain lines of business. The Germans seemed to be very steady and didn't put on a show at all, but had longstanding contacts there. They were founded in machinery and various staples. And the British just more or less felt that it was their country and that they were long experienced in supplying a wide range of needed imports.

Q: What about the problem of...I don't know what they would call it in Colombia, but a payoff for things. Was this a way of life in the commercial world?

BARRINGTON: You mean graft?

Q: Graft by the government?

BARRINGTON: There's always that in a Latin country. And they may not consider it objectionable either, but just part of the deal. A cultural difference, perhaps?

Q: Did our office have to teach American businessmen how things were done there? Was this part of your job?

BARRINGTON: Well, I don't think we advised them to do it, no. But they themselves would possibly have been fully informed otherwise.

Q: Well, you left there in, what, 1932?

BARRINGTON: It was before that. My category was changed to Assistant Trade Commissioner, which is officer status. I think it was in 1931 that I left.

Q: You must have been a very rare bird -- a young woman officer in the early '30s, particularly in Latin America.

BARRINGTON: It was unusual, but I never felt it, really. It was just a job to be done, and I never thought of that aspect of it. I realized that, sometimes, with my credentials, I could get into places that women had not been in. I was never refused at all, although maybe some eyebrows

were raised. But anyplace I've been I have always made friends with the local people and devoted a lot of time to that.

Later on, in Brazil, for instance, the things I handled required doing things, and some things I probably didn't have to do, but I wanted to do, such as going down in the Sao Juao del Rei mine. I think it's one of the deepest gold mines in the world, in Minas Gerais, Brazil. Well, of course I didn't realize it at the time, but there is a feeling that it's bad luck if a woman goes down. I didn't realize the superstition and was informed I could go down. Later I realized they were a little bit hesitant about it. But they let me go down that elevator shaft, and it was quite an experience. And there were other rather unusual experiences for a woman at that time.

Our work was divided up, a lot of it by commodity or topic. Among other things, I usually handled minerals.

Q: *We're still talking about Bogota?*

BARRINGTON: Well, we got switched there.

Q: *You left Bogota about 1931.*

BARRINGTON: I think it was before that. I think it was about 1930, but I'd have to check.

ROBERT F. WOODWARD
Vice Consul
Bogota (1936-1937)

Robert F. Woodward was born and raised in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He entered the Foreign Service in 1932. His career included several Deputy Chief of Mission posts: Bolivia, Guatemala, Cuba, and Sweden. He was ambassador to Costa Rica, Uruguay, Chile, and Spain. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on two different occasions, once in 1987, and again in 1990.

WOODWARD: I went to the Chief of Foreign Service Personnel. In those days, even the lowliest vice consul discussed these things with the Chief of Foreign Service Personnel. He said, "Well, your successor in Buenos Aires is coming from Budapest, from Hungary, so the logical thing is for you to go there." I had been discussing very seriously with this teacher in Buenos Aires the possibility of matrimony. I said to him, "I'm making a little progress in my Spanish. I'd like to consolidate it if I can. I think I could be more useful in the Foreign Service if I knew the language much better. Perhaps it would be better for me to go to a Spanish-speaking post."

Well, he said, "By coincidence, the minister to Colombia was just in here yesterday, and we were talking about some new officer for his staff. I'd like to have you talk to him." And I did. I not only talked with him, but he and his wife invited me to a Sunday lunch in her father's apartment here in Washington.

I liked them and was very much attracted to them, Mr. and Mrs. William Dawson. William Dawson apparently approved of me sufficiently, so I was assigned to Bogota.

Interestingly enough, Dawson was a great linguist. He was one of the finest linguists the Foreign Service has ever produced, and spoke impeccable Spanish, impeccable French, and German. When I arrived in Bogota, he said, "Now I know you're interested in improving your Spanish, so if you wish to discuss matters in the office with me in Spanish, we can do that. Of course, if we get stuck, we can revert to English. But we can always talk to each other in Spanish."

I said, "That will be splendid." So we did that for all the time, the next 15 months that I was in Bogota. We had all our conversations in Spanish. Of course, there were exceptions on social occasions and things like that. Anyhow, he was a wonderful man and a lifelong friend. After he retired and after I retired, we had lunch here in Washington frequently and talked nothing but Spanish. He was a great fellow.

There was one secretary of the legation, just one, a second secretary, a very nice guy, who was not very much interested in the reporting work, and allowed me to do all the drafting. But he had very interesting hobbies. He read symphonies for a hobby. This man, Winthrop Greene, once led the symphony orchestra in Bogota, and I had the very interesting experience of witnessing and listening to his directing the orchestra. Well, one day we were walking down the street at lunchtime, and Winthrop said to me, "You know, Mr. Dawson's French really isn't as excellent as people say it is. He sounds just like a Paris radio announcer." [Laughter] Who could wish to speak French better than that? [Laughter] Anyhow, I thought that was very funny.

HENRY DEARBORN
Vice Consul
Barranquilla (1941-1942)

Mr. Dearborn was born and raised in Massachusetts and educated at Dartmouth College and Yale Law School. A Latin American specialist, he served in Barranquilla and Bogotá, Columbia; Manta and Guayaquil, Ecuador; Lima, Peru; Santa Domingo, Dominican Republic; and Mexico City, Mexico. In Santa Domingo, Bogotá and Mexico City, he served as Deputy Chief of Mission. In his Washington assignments, Mr. Dearborn dealt with matters concerning countries in Latin America. Mr. Dearborn was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1991.

Q: Well your first, you were assigned in 1941 to Barranquilla, is that right?

DEARBORN: Uhm-hmm.

Q: Did you get any training before you went, or was it sort of here's a manual –

DEARBORN: I didn't have the slightest idea, I didn't even know what a country desk officer was. I didn't know anything about anything, except my education, that's all I had.

Q: You had studied Spanish?

DEARBORN: Yes. But I have to say, my Spanish was... my Spanish was college Spanish, which at least in those days, you didn't learn to speak. You could read anything but you weren't talking, so it took me a little bit, took me a while in Barranquilla to get my ear tuned in –

Q: Well when you went to Barranquilla, that's in Venezuela –

DEARBORN: No, northern coast of Columbia.

Q: I mean the northern coast of Columbia, what was the situation there when you arrived?

DEARBORN: Well, the situation there was interesting because normally that wouldn't be a very big office, but it had a consul and it had, they were building it up, and they had three or four, three I guess, vice consuls and one was one of those non-career vice consuls that they used to have. And then they had others attached to it, they had a naval observer and they had an army intelligence, which was really a forerunner of CIA, you're doing the same type of thing. And I got there in August. I went down on the ship, and then in December of course we went into the war, and then while we were in the war there were different things happening like shipwrecked sailors and wartime reporting on various things. Of course, we were doing the normal things. Consulates those days, we used to have, which we don't have anymore, the Bills of Health for ships, and my job was mainly working with visas and passports and registering citizens. I remember spending a Christmas Eve trying to settle a mutiny on, what was the name of the shipping line... well, I can't remember.

Q: Well, how does one settle a mutiny?

DEARBORN: Well you know, you just, well, what happened was - it sounds more dramatic than it is - there was a big disagreement between the captain and the crew and you just talk to the captain and you talk to the representatives of the crew, its smoothed out nobody got killed [laughter]. I just remembered it was Christmas Eve and it wasn't my idea of anything wonderful. But the coast of Columbia was very quiet in those days, it isn't like now where every part of Columbia is dangerous. But we always thought in those days of the interior of Columbia as being the violent part; there was very little violence on the coast.

Q: Well what about, were you at all involved in our concern about German influence in Latin America?

DEARBORN: Yes because, not myself but our embassy in Bogota certainly was because the Germans had had an airline, one of the oldest, I guess the oldest commercial airline in the Western Hemisphere, which was called Scadeta.

Q: How do you spell that?

DEARBORN: S-c-a-d-e-t-a, I think. I don't know in German what it stood for, but that was expropriated by the Columbians and became whatever since has been the Columbian airline, which is Avianca. Avianca has been a very good airline, and that was the biggest expropriation, but a lot of other South American countries that were on our side in the war, they expropriated German properties _____. I didn't actually work with the black list until my next post.

Q: Then you were transferred to Manta?

DEARBORN: Yes, Manta.

TERRENCE GEORGE LEONHARDY
Consular Officer
Barranquilla (1942-1945)

Terrence George Leonhardy was born in North Dakota in 1914. After receiving his bachelor's degree from the University of North Dakota he received his master's degree from Louisiana State University. His career includes positions in Colombia, Denmark, Spain, Mexico, and El Salvador. Mr. Leonhardy was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in February 1996.

Q: Oh, yes, sort of wide-eyed. Same way I felt when I came in. Well now, in Barranquilla, before we get to the consular, could you describe sort of the city and the life and what was the situation there?

LEONHARDY: Well, the situation was pretty... First of all, you're in the tropics. You're working six days a week, eight hours a day and we were in the same office building with CitiBank, the United Fruit Company and with the Singer Sewing Machine Company. These guys all got off at two in the afternoon; they didn't work on Saturdays, and so forth. When I first got there, you know, I thought they'd put me working on the blacklist but they had two Foreign Service officers there; they had two auxiliary officers and two Foreign Service officers. The two Foreign Service officers were working on the blacklist. That was something that was really sacred that they wanted to do that. So the Consul we had there said, "Well, we're going to put you in charge of passport operations and the visa." In other words, pure old, simple, consular work, plus I had all of the consular invoices which you know you had to have when you exported stuff and all that, and seamen, if you ever... We didn't have any American seamen at the time; only non-American registry boats came in.

And then we had a non-career vice consul. Have you ever heard of that category? Well, we had one. He was a guy that had been there for about eight or ten years and he got what they call statutory home leave and he did all the accounts. The accounts were done on a typewriter about three feet wide and all kinds of little divisions and columns. But anyway, he left, he went off on home leave and the idea was that he was going to come back but he never came back. And the Consul turned the accounts over to one of my friends who now lives here in Bethesda, named

Henry Dearborn, and Henry didn't know anything about accounts; numbers really bothered him. So his accounts were in a kind of a mess when he was transferred to Manta, Ecuador, which was a stroke of luck for me because you couldn't get an apartment in Barranquilla unless you got on a waiting list. But he had a furnished apartment so he offered the apartment to me and let me buy the furniture and gave me one year to pay for it.

Q: You weren't married at this time?

LEONHARDY: No. I got his maid and there was a guy upstairs that worked in the consulate from the Navy Department. He was my roommate and I had another one upstairs who was in the consulate so we'd pool our food and eat together, and so forth, so I just fell into that very luckily. But anyway, getting back to the accounts, finally he was assigned to Manta, Ecuador so the Consul took it over and he wasn't any better than Henry, and then finally he came into me one day and he says, "I noticed from your curriculum that you taught accounting." And I said, "Yes." He says, "I'd like you to take over the accounts." This was in addition to what I was already doing. And so it was a pretty heavy workload. And then, I was there about a year when I picked up an amoebae and in those days, local medics were really not worthwhile but there were a couple of German refugees, man and wife, that examined me, took no tests at all, they just looked in my eyes and interviewed me separately and they said, "Well, you've got an amoebae." So they put me on umpteen injections. Some years later I was treated for the same thing up in Bethesda Naval Hospital and took umpteen and they wouldn't even let me out of bed, it's so hard on your heart and everything. But I went to work every day. But there wasn't much to do in Barranquilla. First of all, you didn't have much time to do anything anyway. You'd get home exhausted from work.

Q: I wonder if you could tell me a bit about Barranquilla. What it was doing and what it was like at the time - and also a bit about Colombia at this time. We're talking about... You were in Barranquilla from when to when?

LEONHARDY: From '42 to '45. Two major ports on the Caribbean, one was Cartagena and the other was Barranquilla - the major port being Barranquilla. Everything that went into Barranquilla by boat went up the Magdalena River. Anything that went into the interior went up the Magdalena River, and most of it went up by these paddle-wheelers although some of it was carried up by air. It was, you know, a busy port and that's where, of course, the Clipper started.

Q: We're talking about the Pan American Clipper ship. It was a flying boat by Sikorsky.

LEONHARDY: Exactly. Four props on it, I believe. Anyway, we had a lot of visa work there because people would come in to Barranquilla to go to the States. That was the place they took off. There was no direct flight from Bogota or any other city at that time to the States.

Q: Bogota was really kind of out of it, wasn't it?

LEONHARDY: Yes, well, anyway, we had a small sub-post over in the guajerra as they called it; it was a lookout post for German subs and all that stuff. And we had a vice consul who used to hang out over there. In the dry season, he'd come back to Barranquilla once or twice during the

year. And a fellow named Chad Barjeotty, whom you may have heard of, he was over there for a while. But anyway, there was a succession of vice consuls over there because they couldn't stand it. It was just rough going. They finally closed the post. We had these American groups down there, that I mentioned, and then we had a lot of petroleum people down there looking for oil, exploration types, and this apartment building I lived in, it was mostly all those kind of people, they lived there. They were out in the boonies all the time with their gadgets looking for oil. Then upriver, Exxon had a big refinery at a place called Barrancabermeja and they also had an oil field and their people were mostly Canadians - it was a Canadian subsidiary of Exxon. And they would come through the office to get their transit visas to get to Canada so we had a lot of... Politically, there was nothing much going on in Colombia in those days except that we were chasing the Nazi sympathizers and a lot of Germans had become Colombian citizens, you see, so they were... Our people were working on the proclaimed list, the bloc nationals list...

Q: I wonder if you could explain a bit because this is one of those stories that gets lost. The Foreign Service is very much involved in Latin America with this blacklist or looking... We had a lot of concern about, particularly German but some Italian interests in Latin America. And could you explain what kind of work we were doing, I mean, we were trying to do this and all that?

LEONHARDY: Well, as I say, I was not involved with the issue directly, but the idea was to try to trace exports, money, and everything else, that was going to the "other side" from these people and I never got directly involved in it. I was supposed to be involved but I never got involved. And then once they were found to be trading with the enemy, of course, then you'd put them on a list and then anybody that traded with these people, and so forth, would be added to the list. We had a lot of submarine activity in the area and we had a naval patrol; a U.S. naval air patrol that would patrol the coast. They even used a blimp down there for observation. Then we used to have a re-fueling unit there for the ships that needed to get from New York or the East Coast of the U.S. over to the Canal. Frequently it was these PT (Patrol- Torpedo) boats that they'd send out to the Pacific. Eleanor Roosevelt came down there when I was there. The wives of these petroleum people didn't have anything else to do so they rented a house, it was like a little place where these people could gather.

Q: A USO, almost?

LEONHARDY: Just like a USO. It wasn't really, but Eleanor came down and went out to that place. We took her and she looked at one room and said, "Oh, I see a poker table." And then Henry Wallace came in there one time on one of his trips but, otherwise, we didn't have too much in the way of dignitaries visiting the place. After I was there for about a two years, we had Merle Cochran, who would later go on to become Ambassador to Indonesia and then head of the World Bank but was then our Inspector, come out there and he was a nut on the account side of things. I had been on the accounts for about six months or something and he looked at what I had done and he commended me and then said, "But, you know, before that, I can't figure out anything that happened." So he asked me to go back and do an audit of the previous people who'd done the accounts in this period.

But anyway, we didn't have too much to deal with in the way of visitors. But the last year we were there... Well, I'll go back, these people, the doctors, told me the only way I was going to get

any relief from my amoebae problem was to go up to the States. And, of course, since that was before the '46 Act, we had no such thing as being evacuated for illness or anything, and so I tried to figure out how to get back to the States. I was issuing priorities, among other things, on the Clipper, but I couldn't issue one for myself. So somebody put the idea in my head that I could sign on as a "work away" on an American ship, but there weren't any American ships. Finally, the ships started coming in. And the Consul - we had about three different Consuls while I was there, - he was very friendly disposed, said that if I could get a Captain to take me aboard, I could take off some leave so I signed on as a "work away." The Captain of the boat had never been off the Great Lakes before and he was worried about submarines. So we didn't go over and catch a convey out of Panama which was the usual thing. His worries were not unfounded, since, just about two months before that, we'd had a Colombian ship that had been sunk right off the mouth of the river there and the only people who got off were two members off were the American gun crew and a Colombian sailor. And they got off because they put their cot right under the life boat so, when that thing started to go down, they could jump straight into the life boat. Anyway, this Captain called me up on the first night, just as we were leaving (the sun was starting to go down and the blimp had left us) and he said, "This is the worst time of day. They can see us and we can't see them." And he says, "Have you been assigned a place in a life boat?" I said, "No." "Hey, assign this man a place in a life boat." And he says, "You sleep with your clothes on. Anything can happen." And we took off right across the middle of the Caribbean towards Cuba. The Captain knew where we were going, but we didn't know. Anyway, I slept that first night - I didn't sleep very much - but I went down to the sickbay and spent the night there and then the next day I got a cot and put it under the life boat so I would be ready in case of an emergency.

But anyway, the only place you could go from Barranquilla, you know, if you wanted to get a holiday on a Monday or something, was to get two days off, and then go over to Santa Marta and take a ferry boat to a place called Fugacion, which was in United Fruit Company area, and then you'd take a train into Santa Marta. After that you'd take a taxi up the side of the mountain, and there was a little motel up there where you could stay in and you could rent a mule to ride around on. Or you could go down to Cartagena; it was the only paved road they had outside the city, which is quite a historic place. We'd go down there once in a while. Then one time, one of these Navy pilots I met at one of those place where you had recreation at the hotel - where they had dances on Wednesday night and Saturday nigh - well I got to be a friend of his, and I said, "I'd like to fly in one of those things, one of those Grumman fighters. So he says, "Well, if you get an official excuse, I'll take you for a ride." So we used to pick up our mail down in Cartagena that came surface from the Navy. So he said, "I'll fly you down there." So I went. A flight in one of these Grummans, I tell you, I was... He decided he'd have fun with me, you know, he went up pretty high and then dove, you know, and did all these maneuvers. But anyway, at one time I decided to go to Bogota and I got a couple of weeks off and I took an old Junker's pontoon plane up the river and put in at these ports, you know, they'd unload mail and passengers. They were just a four or five place plane. Up to Barranca where EXXON had their oil operation; they had golf courses and the whole thing. I played a little golf. Then I took a paddle wheeler up the river to a place called Porto Bello then I went to Medellin. I stayed in the country club there for about three or four days, played a little golf and rode horseback and then I took a bus over to the rail line in a place called Parrejo and went over to Cali then came back on this Italian autoferro. You had to take a taxi over the mountain and then on to Bogota. Spent about a week there and then

came back to Barranquilla. But anyway, you had a feeling you had to get out of here for a while and so that was what you could do. I think I went over to Santa Marta about three times and got to Cartagena.

Q: Did the Ambassador to Colombia ever come down?

LEONHARDY: No, we had very few people from Bogota that ever came down there. I met him, his name is Arthur Blisslane. Anyway, then we had one of the officers from the Embassy who was assigned as consul for a while, a guy named Daniel Anderson. But anyway, when I went up to the States (it was late in the assignment) working my way up on this... My main job on that ship was to take the rough log, write up the smooth log, but I also swept the floors a little bit. Anyway, when I was up in the States, I went to my home town in North Dakota and my dad saved up a lot of shotgun shells for me so I could go out pheasant hunting.

Q: Because we're talking about the war time, of course, so the supply of shells was limited.

LEONHARDY: I came down to Washington and talked to Walton C. Ferris and he said, "Well, we're thinking about assigning you to Europe somewhere, you know, after the War you'll be going in." He says, "We'll send a letter down." Well, I kept getting these different letters assigning me, first, to Naples and then to Warsaw, but I had to wait to go into Warsaw when things were propitious. And then they said first go to Naples, then London. And then they sent me up to the States working on a special project over behind the White House there. It was in a temporary building. Then I was interviewed again by Walton C. Ferris. Well, I had my dad get me all kinds of heavy clothes for Warsaw, Poland. He went into the local men's store and got all these heavy coats and jackets and stuff, while I started studying the Polish language - not taking formal lessons but I was studying Polish on my own. And then one day, I was flirting with a girl in an elevator that worked in the old Walker-Johnson building there (I'd met her at a party the night before) and I asked her if she was busy. She said, "Oh, I am terribly busy." I said, "Well, maybe I could come up and help you." I was just kidding her. The next thing I knew, I was getting a call from Walton C. Ferris and he said, "You know, her boss called me and said he thought you didn't have anything to do and he was looking for somebody." He says, "While I had your file out and (I'm trying to think of his name, he was Director of the Foreign Service) called and said he needed somebody in Denmark, Copenhagen. So I called Arthur Blisslane. He said he'd release you." Anyway, the next thing I knew - Ferris was very demanding - he said, "At such-and-such a time, you've got to go at such-and-such a place. So the assignment was changed to Copenhagen. So I went off to Copenhagen.

JEAN MARY WILKOWSKI
Economic/Commercial Officer
Bogota (1946-1950)

Ambassador Jean Wilkowski entered the Foreign Service in 1944. Her career included assignments in Trinidad, Colombia, Italy, France, Chile, Switzerland, Honduras, and an ambassadorship to Zambia. Ambassador Wilkowski was

interviewed by Willis Armstrong in 1989.

WILKOWSKI: The Bogota assignment was terribly exciting because of the "Bogotazo" - a national uprising which lasted 8-10 years. It started with the assassination of Gaitan, the political party leader, the break-out of nearly 5,000 prisoners from jails, looting and rioting. The uprising was said to have inspired Fidel Castro.

My job in the Embassy was economic and commercial reporting. The fireworks started during a lunch hour. People were running in all directions. The Embassy bus dropped us off and then began our nearly 24 hour ordeal with much plunder and killing in the streets. We were marooned without food or sleep.

Roy Rubottom and Aaron Brown were our political reporting officers who sent hourly reports to the Department. Willard Beaulac was our Ambassador. Assistant Secretary Norman Armour was in Bogota for the Inter-American conference.

The "Bogotazo" radically changed the history of Colombia, setting Liberals against Conservatives for years in bloody strife. Finally, legislation was passed alternating the presidency between the two parties.

ROBERT F. WOODWARD
Deputy Director, Office of American Republic Affairs
Washington, DC (1947-1948)

Robert F. Woodward was born and raised in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He entered the Foreign Service in 1932. His career included several Deputy Chief of Mission posts: Bolivia, Guatemala, Cuba, and Sweden. He was ambassador to Costa Rica, Uruguay, Chile, and Spain. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on two different occasions, once in 1987, and again in 1990.

WOODWARD: The next spring, time went on and we were handling work as it went along...as a matter of fact something very important was taking place at just this point. It was apparently being handled on a very high level because I had had nothing whatever to do with it. It was the conference in Rio de Janeiro which resulted in the Rio Treaty, which was the mutual defense, the basic treaty for the American Republics. General Marshall, the Secretary of State, was handling this with Bob Lovett, the Under Secretary, a very, very capable man who either had been, or was going to be Secretary of Defense. This treaty was being concluded and the next spring there was an Inter-American conference at which the whole Organization of American States was converted from the Pan American Union into a new type of organization, the basic element of which was formal equality between the United States and the Latin American countries. We were all in this together, and it was no longer a question of having the big chair at the head of the table of the Pan American Union occupied by the Secretary of State of the United States. But

there was going to be a rotating chairmanship, and there was going to be a regular elected and more authoritative Secretary General. So this conversion was made. Of course, my boss Paul Daniels and Norman Armour, and General Marshall, all went to this conference in Bogota, Colombia where this reorganization was carried out. And that's where the rioting known as the "Bogotazo" happened.

I remember in the middle of the night I was awakened by a telephone call -- and I was still in my mother-in-law's house up at 2409 Wyoming Avenue -- and the telephone call came to somebody across the street, and they came over and awakened me. I don't know how that happened but apparently they couldn't get our house for some reason. They told me that the United States delegation was in a building that was burning down in Bogota. So I hurriedly put on my clothes, and rushed down to the State Department. We made a telephone connection promptly -- without difficulty -- with the people who were in this burning building. I talked with Paul Daniels, and he said, "This is a big building and the stores on the ground floor of this hotel where we are living -- the shops -- are burning. I can see out the window, I can see the awning and there's a textile shop on the ground floor that's on fire. The fire department is trying to put it out, and we're marooned in this building. The Secretary of State, General Marshall, is in a residence in the residential district. The rest of the delegation is in another hotel, I don't know what condition that's in."

Well, the upshot was that a chaotic mob of people were roaming around the streets of downtown Bogota. There was no objective to this group of people. They had seized a radio station, but they didn't have any objective, and they were all chagrined because a very popular candidate for the presidency, who had been mayor of Bogota named Gaitan, a strange leftist character who had become very popular, had been murdered. He'd been shot on the street by an unknown assassin. The motives of the assassin were never established. He was a workman, a house painter I believe, and shot Gaitan on the street that afternoon. Then buildings were set on fire and cars were overturned around the town and burned up. The assassin was promptly mobbed and killed. It was simply a manifestation of popular chagrin and sorrow that this man that they had placed a lot of hope in, as a potential president, had been killed. And killed in a wanton, inexplicable way.

There were delegations there from other countries, and a delegation from Cuba, and as was the case in a number of delegations, there were appendages of people, who were sort of self-appointed delegates, and among them was a student delegation from Cuba, and Castro was their representative. He had already been in jail for a while in Cuba because of a kind of abortive revolutionary attempt in Cuba, and he'd been let out. He was representing a student group sort of appended to the Cuban delegation to the conference. Whether it was appended officially, or whether it was actually part of it, or totally unsolicited, I don't know.

Anyhow, that gave reason for subsequent conjecture that he had been somehow responsible for the chaos that ensued. But it was chaos that just came from the grass roots. I think that Castro may have joined in, in some of the demonstrations of the people because the man who had been killed was a popular leftist type, and Castro would have had sympathy with a popular uprising.

This all calmed down after a day or two, and the delegation of the United States was not harmed, and no other delegation was harmed. There was talk of adjourning the whole thing down to Panama, but it was decided that they could go ahead and have their final plenary session and

conclude the agreements which had already been organized by the committee. So it wound up in a reasonably peaceably way, but it was exciting for a while. The demonstration was totally inconclusive.

Q: Was there a retaliatory...because it begins to come back that the Colombian president was sought out in his house and killed, and his body dragged down the street by a mob.

WOODWARD: I can't recall learning anything in the State Department about this demonstration except talking on the telephone repeatedly with the people who were in the building, and they got out all right and handled their affairs in a very stout and courageous way. Paul Daniels is a man with a lot of guts. It turned out that Paul was much more conservative than I had imagined he would be. At that time ideologies weren't seeming to matter very much. We were just handling practical problems, mostly economic problems, and Paul was very able at this sort of thing. He was also carrying on the work of being the Ambassador to the Organization of American States. He was carrying on two jobs at once, but he could turn out more work in a day than any man I ever knew. He got into a lot of arguments and they grew in significance because he knew what to do, and he did it, and some of the people in other parts of the State Department who were initialing telegrams, didn't always agree with him. But Paul, I think, always, always had the right answer. He got into trouble with Willard Thorp who was the Assistant Secretary for Economic Affairs. The upshot was that Paul wasn't very popular in the State Department, unfortunately.

In the broader ideological sense, his judgment was not the most perfect. For example, his principal objective at this meeting in Bogota was to get across a resolution which he himself had designed, and which he got passed by the conference...I forget the number of it, but it had a famous number for a while -- it was a resolution asserting that the nature of a government, the ideological nature of a government, should not be the criterion for reestablishing diplomatic relations.

ROY R. RUBOTTOM
Second Secretary
Bogota (1947-1949)

Roy R. Rubottom was born in Texas and studied at the Southern Methodist University and earned a Master's degree there in 1932. He was studying for his Ph.D. in Latin American Studies when World War II broke out. In 1941, he received a naval commission in the Office of Naval Intelligence. He entered the Foreign Service in 1947. He served in Colombia, Mexico, Venezuela, and Spain. In 1956, he served as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs. In 1960, he was appointed Ambassador to Argentina. This interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy in February of 1990.

RUBOTTOM: I was assigned to Bogota, Colombia as Second Secretary of the Embassy and stayed there over two years.

Q: I would like to go back, and then we'll start moving into more detail. When you went to Bogota, what was the situation in Colombia in 1947-49 period?

RUBOTTOM: Well, if you were to speak to the average Colombian, he or she would probably tell you "la violencia" had already begun about that time. One evidence of it was that in my work I had liaison with American missionaries, and they had so many problems -- those who wouldn't leave. I had so many problems on their behalf with the Colombian Government, depending on their location, that I became known as the "ecclesiastical attaché." Seriously, the violence did not really start until after the famous "Bogotazo," which is an ugly pejorative ending in any Spanish word. Azo means its mean, ugly, bad. Gaitan, the politician and candidate for the Presidency a year or two before that, was assassinated on the streets on April 9, 1948, nine days after the opening of the Ninth Inter-American Conference. And all the foreign ministers were there along with the Secretary of State, George Marshall. It was an extraordinary time to be there.

Q: You were there?

RUBOTTOM: I had been there about seven or eight months and the Ambassador had assigned me the junior work to get ready for the conference. He had, of course, done the senior work on major policy issues. But I had very good friends at the Foreign Ministry who had been very helpful. We had a delegation of forty to fifty people, and lo and behold, when the list came out, I found myself as the bottom man on the totem pole as the Technical Secretary of the U.S. delegation. Of course, I was following the conference from day to day, hour by hour. I sat right behind Secretary Marshall when he made his principal speech. Everybody was expecting, or should I say hoping -- I should say everybody among the Latin Americans -- that he would announce a Marshall Plan for Latin America like he had done for the European war-devastated countries at Harvard the June before. Well, he did not do that. He announced an extra five hundred million dollar loan capacity for the Export-Import Bank. You could see people literally going down like a pricked balloon when he made that speech. Many times I have wondered, and wished that he might have said, "We're going to have a Marshall Plan for Latin America -- it's going to be five hundred million loan capacity," because in those days that was a lot of money. We could have gotten all the PR advantage of that and we could have put it into the Export-Import Bank for administrative purposes, management purposes, but he chose not to do that. It was the first experience that I had of seeing the United States, if you please, not living up to the aspirations of Latin America. This happened many times before and many times since.

Q: Why do you think, is it that Latin America doesn't rate high -- that the American interests just aren't that important there -- or is this just an attitude?

RUBOTTOM: Well, I think you have to look at the setting and realize that no Latin American country suffered an armed attack. There was nothing approaching the situation that Europe was in, and indeed you had the case of Argentina in particular, and to a lesser degree in Uruguay, Paraguay, and Chile -- you had countries with open sympathies for the Axis cause. Argentina was quite notorious as a matter of fact and they had to be forced, in 1945, literally forced to declare war on the Axis powers. The Soviets insisted on it. It made it easier for us -- we might have insisted too. "You can't get entry to the U.N., Argentina, unless you declare war on the

Axis. I think also that Latin America was very much in the economic hegemony of the United States. The advocates of doing business through the private sector, rather than through Government assistance was certainly strong. Opponents of a "Marshall Plan" for Latin America had the strongest positions in the economic bureau in the State Department, and certainly in the Treasury Department. I'm not sure that Latin America deserved a Marshall Plan, but I, wondering whether for the same money, for PR purposes, we might have called it that.

Q: How did our delegation behave? I'm not talking about corridor behavior, but there was a large delegation that came. This was the beginning of the Organization of the American States. Was there much interchange with the other countries or understanding, or not? What were your observations at that time?

RUBOTTOM: Oh yes. We had extremely well qualified people. Besides Secretary Marshall and Commerce Secretary Harriman, who was there and lived in the house with Marshall. They didn't have any hotels adequate to accommodate the twenty foreign ministers who were there so the Colombian Government made arrangements with twenty families who had lovely residences to turn the residences over to be the homes of these visiting foreign ministers. Interesting enough, Secretary Marshall was in the home of a family who made its money brewing beer, the best beer in Colombia. They were a well known family whom I knew socially a little bit -- not as well as I knew some other Colombians. When you got below him [Harriman] then you had Norman Armour. Norman Armour was a tremendous presence in Latin America. He had been Ambassador to Argentina and he was the top man back in Washington at that time. You had Bill Pauley, who was a non-career type, who was I guess at that time Ambassador to Brazil, no I believe he was in Peru. You had Ambassador John Dreier, you had Cecil Lyon, you had William Sanders, who had later become our Ambassador to the Organization of American States, and Ambassador Beaulac himself. These men were not only able to speak Spanish but were experienced in this area. Then you had junior people, including myself, who were able to do the leg work and keep in touch with the junior members of the other delegations. So, I would say that the rapport between the American delegation and the Latin American delegations was good. This was born out after the terrible occurrence on April 9th, following which the city in the downtown part was pillaged, looted, several major public buildings were set afire. An estimated 1500-2000 people were killed. Virtually all of them civilians, men, women and children. It was a terrible, terrible several days. All of downtown Bogota became a "no man's land" for about a week. At the Conference, and I'm getting to the point, the Cuban delegation, and I believe the Argentine delegation, immediately wanted to cancel or postpone the Conference -- call it quits and get out. General Marshall was determined to stay. He got enough support from the Brazilians and the Mexicans and a few others who wanted to stay that they took what you might call an ex-officio decision. How we got to that, was extraordinarily interesting. The assassination occurred about 1:00 or 1:30 on the afternoon of April 9th. I was at home eating lunch. I immediately went over to the Embassy residence, Secretary Marshall was coming to dinner at my house that night, believe it or not. Here I was Second Secretary at the Embassy. I got word through his assistant that he would like to see how a typical Foreign Service family lived, and so we invited him to come to dinner. The Foreign Minister of Colombia was coming along with Ambassador Beaulac and two or three others. We could seat fourteen at our table. Of course, after the assassination the dinner had to be canceled. I called the Ambassador when I got word about the incident downtown and we got in his car and went to town, but could not get to the Embassy, that is, the

Chancery. We had to go back and get in the car. We saw people coming up two street towards us waving machetes and it was rather frightening. So we got into the car and drove over to an apartment where a number of delegates were living. Strangely enough, in spite of the fact that the Communists took control over all the radio stations at that time, they never cut the telephone lines. So, we were able to communicate with the people in another downtown office which was right across from the Chancery. Norman Armour happened to be with those people. They escaped during the night, but I don't want to go into too much detail about how they got out, and the dangers involved. Beaulac and I eventually walked from the apartment house where we were to the house where General Marshall was. We slept about two or three hour that night. About 6:30 or 7:00 in the morning, Beaulac recommended, and the Secretary accepted, to have sort of a rump meeting. We invited the Mexicans to come also, because Marshall decided the Conference should continue. The problem was that the Colombian Government was practically out of business. The President's home and office were being besieged and there was a lot of pressure on him to resign. The President of Colombia was Ospina. So at this little rump meeting of Secretary Marshall, Secretary Harriman, Ambassador Beaulac, and Ambassador Quintanilla, who was a left-wing Mexican type who was their Ambassador to the OAS. He was there with a Secretary of the Embassy named Peon del Valle, what a marvelous name -- peasant of the valley, and I was there as the junior Secretary of our delegation. Marshall decided that we ought to try to encourage the calling of a rump session of the conference at the home of the Honduran Vice President of the Conference. The President, of course, was the Colombian Foreign Minister. So we divided up the list to call people to come to the meeting that afternoon at three o'clock. The Mexicans, who didn't know Bogota, took the people who were out in the residential part, and I took the ones who were closer to town. We started out in a jeep to notify these people to come to the meeting. Several jeeps had been flown in that night from Panama and quite a number of people, including some who had been injured, including my Secretary, had been flown to the hospital in Panama. All within the space of sixteen or eighteen hours. As I was about to drive off in the jeep, Secretary Marshall came down the front steps of this residence and he said, "Mr. Rubottom, do you have an arm?" And I looked at my arms and I said "No, I don't have an arm" and he said "Well, wait a minute." He sent Pat Carter who was a Brigadier General and who was his assistant (later, Deputy Director of the CIA) upstairs. He came down and handed him a Colt Automatic 45. The Secretary handed me this and said you better take this. I've still got it. I got my half notified and Peon del Valle got his half notified. The meeting took place, literally, in the garage behind the Honduran residence. Fortunately, there was enough room to set up a kind of round table and chairs, almost like a get acquainted session at a church function, and these foreign ministers sat in these chairs and after some discussion the vote was taken and it was about 18 to 2 to continue. After I had notified the people to come to the meeting, on the authority of the Secretary, I went to the Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee of the Colombian Senate whom I knew. I must have gotten there about 12:00 or 1:00 o'clock and I said, "On behalf of the Secretary I would like to inform you that we have decided to continue the Conference. We realize that you may not be able to come, but we want to show you the courtesy of letting you know that we are going to do it and we do not intend to be run out of the city." He appreciated that. So the Conference site was moved out to a school, in the residential section, and the Conference continued for about twenty days. Secretary Marshall didn't stay more than another two or three days, but the Charter of the OAS was put together under those conditions.

Q: I wonder, looking at it from today's perspective, the fact that a man who had as much on his

plate as General Marshall did at the time the world was in sort of chaos, you almost have to drag a Secretary of State kicking and screaming for a very short meeting in Latin America. And the fact that he was willing to devote that much time is really remarkable considering the amount of time other Secretaries of State have spent. Why did he want to do that?

RUBOTTOM: He wanted to keep the meeting going. I think he truly believed that it was important, and furthermore, in the aftermath of WW II, the Rio Treaty had been negotiated about six months before the summer of fall of 1947. Actually the Rio Treaty antedated NATO by a few months. This is where the principle was enunciated of "an attack on one is an attack on all." Mutual security was sort of imbedded in rock in those two treaties. Marshall, being a military man and knowing how important the South Atlantic had become, wanted a security pact with the Latin governments. I think he felt that we need to give it priority. He was a wonderful man. He was a remarkable man.

Q: What caused the assassination? What was behind the assassination? What were the political dynamics of the whole -- the Bogotazo?

RUBOTTOM: Gaitan practiced law as a criminal lawyer. No one was ever to pin down the real motive for his assassination. It is generally believed that some person, member of a family or otherwise, might have felt ill-treated by Gaitán. If you know the depth of feelings between the Conservative and Liberal parties in Colombia, it is not so surprising that the event occurred. Gaitán was a prominent Liberal. A few years later, Laureano Gomez became President, then was forced out by coup d'etat. Gomez was a Conservative. Colombians are capable of very extreme political action. One of the leading politicians had been assassinated on the steps of the Capital about two generations before that. Members of the family of the man who was killed were named Samper, were good friends of mine and told me about it. So, its not so unusual, in the context of Latin American politics that this would have happened. The Colombians invited Scotland Yard to come over and investigate to find out to what extent there might have been a conspiracy, perhaps Communist conspiracy, behind it. They were never able to prove that was the case, although once the assassination happened, the Communists moved very quickly into the breach to take advantage of the chaos.

Q: You're talking about the Communists?

RUBOTTOM: Yes the Communists.

Q: So this was not either a pro or anti Communist action. It was the Communist moving in to create a situation more than anything else?

RUBOTTOM: Beaulac wrote about these events in his book, Career Ambassador, and it was published only a year or two after this happened, in 1949 or 50. I believe in that book he does not ascribe responsibility to the Communists, although they certainly did take advantage of the opening that they had.

Q: You were saying that la violencia started from that period on?

RUBOTTOM: It lasted another decade. It didn't really cease until 1958. The Colombians put together something called "paridad," or parity, in which they made a deal where the two parties reciprocally exchanged the Presidency. Four years for one party, four years for the next for a sixteen year period. This happened. They automatically in this paridad formula divided the Congress in half, divided all the Governorships in half, divided all the Mayor's positions in half, so that you had half Conservative and half Liberal. Those parties are spelled with a capital C and capital L in that country.

Q: You were a political reporter. Was this your main responsibility?

RUBOTTOM: Yes.

Q: What were our interests in Colombia at the time -- the 47-49 period?

RUBOTTOM: Well, Colombia had quite a bit of importance in World War II because of its Caribbean coastline. Its principal airline had been founded by Germans. It was one of oldest airlines in Latin America. So from a strategic standpoint by virtue of its location, by virtue of German knowledge of the country, it took on certain importance. It was a supplier of petroleum, the Barco concession, which was a belt of oil production up in north-central Colombia producing oil that was important; a major coffee producer, of course, and a fairly major banana producer, and it had some other economic significance. It had been one of the leading countries in Latin America. It was for me a magnificent experience to go there and get to know the country. But mind you that was my first diplomatic assignment, if you don't count my experience as a naval attaché. That was a diplomatic assignment down in Paraguay. But this incident, being there at the time, overshadows everything else. I think Colombia was of interest then. The very farsighted, courageous "paridad" formula that I described a moment ago that gave them sixteen years of peace and enabled them to put down the violence, was certainly to their credit. Right now, if you can separate Colombia from the drug scene, it is one of the two or three economically soundest countries in Latin America, along with Chile. It has very little foreign debt, and it is a country with good resources, well-balanced resources, with manufacturing and some exports as well as the commodities, the raw materials, on which so many Latin American countries are almost exclusively dependent. It's a very well-balanced country. I have a certain emotional tie to Colombia and Colombian friends with whom I still maintain contact. In fact, I know President Barco. [President from 1986-90] Mr. Barco is a magnificently prepared man for the Presidency. He is a graduate of MIT, served on the Board of Visitors of MIT, and had been Ambassador to the United States. He's had tremendous experience and it's just a tragedy to think of the drug scene having come along to totally disrupt one of the best balanced nations in the hemisphere.

Q: Did you feel at the time that there was undue American business influence? I'm thinking of the Banana Republic type thing and the various accusations that American business had so penetrated and that it was not for the good of things. . .

RUBOTTOM: The Banana Republic nomenclature has been used disparagingly for many years, decades, and I guess it is applied principally to the Central American Republics. I don't think that in the eyes or language of any knowledgeable person that Colombia would have been put in that category. It's interesting that you would have mentioned bananas in this context because I had an

experience going back there in 1977, 30 years after my earlier assignment -- I took early retirement from the Foreign Service in 1964 -- and had another career in higher education. I was Vice President of my Alma Mater for seven years, then I was President of the University of the Americas in Puebla, Mexico, and then I taught Political Science for ten years at Southern Methodist University. In 1977, while I was a Professor, I was a Fulbright Scholar and lecturer to Colombia, and I lectured at three Universities there one summer for about four months. Ambassador Peter Vaky, a highly respected Ambassador and former Assistant Secretary also, and a very close friend of mine, was also the Ambassador. Maybe he was the Ambassador a little earlier. Vaky told me the situation of the United Fruit Company. Which has been pilloried and excoriated, of course, as being a company that helped create the "Banana Republics" by taking advantage of them, although later I think they changed their behavior. In the late 60's or early 70's, United Fruit wanted to pull out of Santa Marta, Colombia, which is the principle banana producing area up on the Guajira Peninsula in northern Colombia, right across from Lake Maracaibo, Venezuela. The labor unions were so upset when they got ready to pull out that they begged them to stay and I think they managed to postpone their departure for a few years, which is a little bit contrary to the mythology about United Fruit.

WILLIAM D. BRODERICK
Vice Consul
Medellin (1951-1953)

William D. Broderick studied at the University of Detroit and served in the U.S. Army in World War II. His first post was Medellin, Colombia. He also served in Canada, Yugoslavia and Bolivia. In Washington, DC he worked in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research, ARA and as Dean of Professional Studies at the Foreign Service Institute. He retired in 1976 and was interviewed by Hewson Ryan in 1990.

BRODERICK: On graduation I had taken a job teaching in high school in a working-class suburb of Detroit. I taught for two years and got called in January of 1951. I actually left my teaching job with some reluctance because I was enjoying it. But I figured that I had to try the Foreign Service, at least. I went through junior officer training and was assigned to Medellin, which in those days was known as the orchid capital of the world.

Q: The orchid capital of the world!

BRODERICK: Yes, in those days it used to export substantial quantities of orchids to Miami. Medellin is the center of a big orchid growing area.

At the time of my arrival in Medellin only the principal officer, the consul, was there. I was the only other officer because the other vice consul was on home leave. So I was in charge of everything, since the consul had pretty much decided that he did not need to work much any more. One of the things I had to do was write the annual report on pulse crops -- so the first thing I had to do was find out what a pulse crop was. (It is beans and peas and things like that.) So I

went around to the local statistical bureau and asked, "How many beans did you grow last year?", and he gave me the numbers, so many thousand. I said, "Tell me, how do you do compile this list?" He said, "Well at the beginning of the growing season every year we send a memo to all our regional offices to ask them what is the size of the anticipated crop this year? We get the data and send it in to Bogota. I asked if they ever follow through to see if that is what actually happened? The answer was no. That is how I learned about statistics in underdeveloped countries.

Q: What were the main policy thrusts in Colombia and particularly in Medellin at that point?

BRODERICK: At that point we were very little involved in Medellin in policy affairs. In 1948 there had been the famous *Bogotazo* as it was called. A leader of a leftist political party had been assassinated, which resulted in tremendous riots in the city of Bogota and around the country. One result of this was a conservative government was in power in 1957, ruling by decree, and our relations with Colombia were friendly, but distant. We had very little involvement with the embassy. One involvement I had was that Ambassador Beaulac was there at the time and he had written a book which was called *Career Minister*. I had read it and thought it was a pretty good book, at least if you were in the Foreign Service. I got the job of persuading the local bookstore, the only one that carried English language books, to carry about a dozen of his books for sale. I succeeded.

My other ambassadorial involvement was even stranger. The consul was leaving on home leave. My wife and I went to the airport to see him off. The entire consular corps was there; they were largely honorary consuls except for us and a Panamanian consul. The American consul, apart from not wanting to work, did not speak more than a half dozen or so words of Spanish, so I was taking care of things, standing in line for tickets and so forth. The consular wives had brought his wife a farewell orchid corsage. I watched the plane landing that he was to go out on. It was a little DC-3 coming from Panama; it flew back and forth daily. It landed and I watch the people getting off. To my consternation there was the new American ambassador coming down the gangway. He was a political appointee, whose name was Capus Waynick. We had had no word at all that he was coming. I went over to the consul to say, "Look, that is the new ambassador coming, I'll finish what I am doing for you. I think it would be best for you to go and greet him. Make sure they do not put him in that little customs cage with iron bars." (It was about 15' x 20' where everybody would be packed in while their bags were checked.) He went off and I went off and did the rest of the checking in for him. When I got back I found the consul did not know how to stop anything because he did not speak Spanish. I charged into the customs office and took the Ambassador's diplomatic passport. I explained the situation to customs and got him out. He was furious, not about this, but because no one was prepared for his arrival. He said, "But I told Pan American to let people know". (Pan American was not much better then than it is now about a lot of things.) The Ambassador had a little bull terrier dog, which was very nervous and had been pregnant. On the plane coming down to Panama the dog gave premature birth to two puppies which, because of the oxygen problems in that altitude were in pretty poor shape. The pilot had radioed ahead to Panama, and Ambassador Waynick was met there by the head of Gorgas Hospital, or somebody close to the head. The dogs and the ambassador were rushed to the hospital to try to save the lives of the puppies, but the puppies both died. So the mother dog was nervous and the ambassador was furious. Unfortunately the ambassador had a four hour layover

before he could go to Bogota; but fortunately the consul's wife had the presence to present her bouquet of flowers to the ambassador's wife, who was much calmer than the ambassador was. The honorary Dutch consul invited them to lunch at his house.

Mary Ann and I had the privilege of taking the ambassador's dog to lunch. The dog came home with us. She was nervous as a cat, and kept trembling. I would take her out for a walk every three minutes, but nothing happened. Finally we took the dog down to the Dutch consul's place just before the ambassador was due to go out to the airport. At that point the dog exploded all over one of the consul's best pieces of upholstered furniture. So that was my experience with the ambassador.

I phoned the embassy in Bogota. It was around noon hour and nobody was there; there was a Rotary or Chamber of Commerce club luncheon and everybody was attending. I told the Marine guard, or whoever I talked to, that for God's sake he should get word to the DCM and others that the ambassador would be on the plane from Medellin and would arrive about three o'clock or so. I later heard that the message went into the luncheon room and was passed down the line to all of the embassy people there who got up one by one and walked out to get ready. So they at least got out to the airport to meet the guy.

Q: One thing that is sort of interesting to me is that the consul did not speak Spanish. In Medellin was that common, or unusual?

BRODERICK: He was unusual, he had come into the Foreign Service in 1923 or 1924, I think, prior to the Rogers Act even, and he had never progressed very far. He had spent ten or twelve years out in Shanghai before the war. He then served for a few years at a Mexican border post, Agua Prieta where he could have learned Spanish -- but you know, he was one of these losers. At the time, after nearly thirty years in the Foreign Service, his rank was FSO-4. At the time of the 1946 Act he had been brought in as a FSO-4 and he had never been promoted. The year after I left he was finally selected out. He was not typical, thank God. But it was a very useful introduction as to how to deal with problem bosses.

One other story -- the other vice consul was a staff corps officer, Phil Miner. The consul hated him. While the consul was on home leave, a very nice fellow from Senator McCarran's staff came down. This was shortly after the McCarran-Walter Act had been passed, which as you may recall, was a very stringent [immigration] law; nobody in the State Department liked it very much. When Joe McConnell arrived, Phil and I took a liking to him and took him out to lunch at the club. Phil also took him out to somebody's country home, and we just took good care of him for the three days he was there. As it turned out he had been treated pretty much like a leper everywhere else he had gone because of his connection to Senator McCarran, and of course he had been dealing with the ambassadors and DCM and people like that. So when he left he said, "Well you people have done right by me; if I can ever help you, let me know". We thought, "Well that is what they all say".

Several months later, I think it was just after the Eisenhower administration came in, the Department was RIFing [Reduction In Force] a whole bunch of staff corps officers and Phil got a notice that he was being RIFed. The consul was delighted at this. Phil said to me, "What am I

going to do?" I said, "You had better write Joe McConnell a letter", which he did. Two weeks later in comes a cable from State that "We regret the terrible misunderstanding and mistake that was made by some low-level clerk in personnel, Mr. Miner is not being RIFed, he is being transferred to Mexico City as assistant agricultural attaché". The consul said to me, "How do you suppose this might have happened?" I said, "I don't know, they must just have figured they could not afford to lose a guy with such talents." That was Medellin.

Q: *How long were you in Medellin?*

BRODERICK: Just over two years.

HEWSON RYAN
Director, Binational Center, USIS
Bogota (1951-1953)

Hewson Ryan entered USIA in 1951. His career included posts in Colombia, Bolivia, and Chile. He served as Assistant Director of USIA, Latin American Operations, Associate Director, USIA, and Deputy Director, USIA. He was ambassador to Honduras from 1969-1973. He was interviewed by Richard Nethercut in 1988.

RYAN: I went to Washington to prepare to go to Chile and, as so often happens in the Foreign Service, by the time I was ready to go to Chile the job had changed and I ended up in Bogota, where I was Director of Courses and later the Director of the Binational Center from 1951 to 1953.

By this time I had figured out the angles necessary to get into the Foreign Service so I was able to be considered for an appointment as a Staff Officer in USIA and taken aboard and sent to Bolivia where I believe I was the first person to hold the title of Cultural Attaché in the USIS setup there. That was my first exposure to the inner workings of the embassy, although I had done a great deal of related work in Bogota where in education exchange operations I was Secretary of the Educational Exchange Commission. A good part of my time in Bogota there wasn't any Cultural Attaché, so I did a lot of speaking around the country on various cultural topics and talked to a lot of people who wanted to come to the U.S. to study, and so forth.

FRANCOIS M. DICKMAN
Vice Counsel
Barranquilla (1951-1954)

Ambassador Francois M. Dickman was born in Iowa City in 1924. After serving in World War II, he graduated from the University of Wyoming and went on to receive his Master of Arts at the Fletcher School. He

entered the Foreign Service in 1951 and his first assignment was in Barranquilla, Colombia. In addition to Colombia, he was posted to Lebanon, Sudan, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia, Abu Dhabi, and Kuwait. Ambassador Dickman was interviewed in 2001 by Stanley Brooks.

Q: So, finally, you're in the Foreign Service. What was your first posting?

DICKMAN: After three months of indoctrination at the Foreign Service Institute, I was told my assignment would be as vice consul in our consulate in Barranquilla, Colombia. I should admit that this was not my choice of area. I had assumed one reason for the assignment to Barranquilla was my knowledge of Spanish. I had minored in Spanish at the university and I guess I was reasonably fluent in it. But what I discovered was that another officer in the entering class had managed to avoid this posting, but for another reason. I learned the reason why. Vice consuls assigned to Colombia were denied diplomatic privileges for the entry of their cars. So, in order to bring our two year old Plymouth, I had to pay \$900 in duty, which meant wiping out our meager savings. Three years later when we left Barranquilla, the car would be sold for less than the duty that was paid. I complained about this to the Department. Several officers were sympathetic with my complaint but offered no remedy. Barranquilla was the assignment. Take it or leave it. So, the thrill of entering the Foreign Service was marred a little bit. But it was further marred when I was told that taking one of the Grace Line boats that regularly stopped in Barranquilla was out of the question. First of all, the person I was replacing had already left the post, so I was needed urgently. Besides, the Department was stopping or trying to discourage travel by boat to cut down on per diem. So, we arrived in Barranquilla by plane in the first days of January 1952. I think it was about the third of January. These early disappointments made me wonder what I had gotten into and whether I should remain in the Foreign Service.

The consulate in Barranquilla was a small post. It consisted of the Consul, Doug Flood, and two Vice Consuls. As the junior, I was the one responsible for issuing visitor and immigration visas, handling citizenship matters, protecting American citizens in trouble (such as American seamen who jumped ship, which was a fairly common occurrence) or dealing with Americans who were wanted for crimes in the United States who had fled to Colombia. This involved having to deal with the local police authorities. What also added to the consulate's workload was Barranquilla's geographical location. Under the 1952 McCarran Immigration Act, persons seeking to immigrate to the United States who had previously immigrated to countries contiguous to the United States were ineligible for immigration, much less for obtaining a visitor's visa, unless they had resided at least two years in these contiguous countries. Well, contiguous territory was defined to include Canada, Mexico, islands in the Caribbean, and the Central American republics, including Panama. So, Barranquilla, as the nearest non-contiguous Consulate, became a real learning experience for a consular officer in citizenship and visa matters, especially in having to deal with pushy visa lawyers who were seeking to facilitate the entry of their well healed clients.

We spent three years in Barranquilla. No home leave was authorized during this period, again because of the shortage of funds. My assignment coincided with a major reduction in force (RIF) under the Eisenhower administration where a number of Foreign Service officers were pushed into involuntary retirement or were forced out. Our consul in Barranquilla was one who was

affected. For several months, there was no replacement for the senior vice consul or for the replacement consul, who was Camden McLain, which meant that I was left in charge for several months.

This gave me an opportunity to do some economic reporting on the Magdalena River region, particularly focusing on coffee, fishing, and bananas, as well as doing some labor reporting. I enjoyed this opportunity since I wanted something else than just doing visa work.

Labor reporting was interesting because it had never been done before to my knowledge and it attracted some readership. Although labor unions were highly suspect by Colombia's ruling elite, I managed to attend several union meetings and report on their litany of complaints. Attending these meetings and dealing with local police authorities in the rundown barrios meant viewing the seamy side of life in Colombia and the extreme poverty of most of its inhabitants. In a society where there was virtually no middle class, theft was rampant. Unrest in the interior was spilling over into the major cities. Later, with the rise of Fidel Castro, I could appreciate the appeal that Fidel had for these poor people.

While I consider Barranquilla as the worst of our Foreign Service assignments, it's where our son, Paul, was born on August 19, 1952 at the Clinica Bautista. It is where my very resourceful wife managed to raise the kids, do the shopping, and develop a wide circle of friends. Since no government housing was provided in Barranquilla, we had to find a house that we could afford. In other words, within the rental allowance that was permitted. So, it meant that we found ourselves living in a not particularly affluent neighborhood; but the house did have room for a nursemaid and her young son, who was then going to the equivalent of the sixth grade. They stayed with us during our entire tour in Barranquilla. Margaret always made sure that the nursemaid's young man exited from the front door – not the side door – of the house as he boarded the school bus in order to avoid his being tagged as an “hijo naturale.”

LEWIS M. (JACK) WHITE
Consular Officer
Bogota (1952-1954)

Lewis M. White was born in August 1921 in Virginia. After serving in the US Army from 1943-1946 he finished his bachelor's degree at Georgetown University. His career included positions in Colombia, New Caledonia, Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, and Morocco. Mr. White was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in June 2001.

Q: How did you get there?

WHITE: We went by plane from Miami, but I remember when we got a third of the way from Jamaica to Barranquilla, Colombia, we had engine trouble and we had to go back. So we spent the night in Jamaica, which I liked very much. It had such a nice tropical atmosphere. And then we went on the next day.

Q: You were in Bogotá from when to when?

WHITE: I got there around January '52, and I spent three years there. I think I left around December '54. Three years.

Q: What was Colombia like when you got there?

WHITE: Well, the big event was the "Bogotazo" in '48.

Q: You might explain what that was.

WHITE: Well, the Liberal party was pretty much in control - Alfonso Michelsen and Eduardo Santos - during the thirties. In the 1946 elections, the Liberals were split with two candidates, Gabriel Turbay Ayala, a moderate, and Jorje Eliecer, a populist on the left. The Conservative candidate Mariano Ospina Perez won the election because of this split in the Liberals. At first he had Liberals in his cabinet but eventually they were excluded. The Liberals united behind Gaitan for the 1950 elections. Then Gaitan was assassinated at a time when the OAS was meeting in Bogota. The resulting outbreak of violence was called the "Bogatzo." About 1,500 people were killed and 20,000 wounded.

The Liberals stayed out of the 1949 elections and the Conservative candidate Laureano Gomez. He was the publisher of *El Siglo*, the Conservative newspaper. He was way on the right side of the conservative party. He didn't have any Liberals in his government. He admired Franco and he wanted to have a constitution that would be more or less along the Phalangist lines of Franco.

He was always anti-American, but in spite of all that, he sent a battalion to Korea during the Korean War. I think at that time he was thinking that the United States was the principal protection against communism, so as far right as he was he thought we were the best alternative for a lot of leftist activity in Colombia. It wasn't safe to go into certain regions of the country at that time.

When I was still there, they had a coup by the military, the first one in a hundred years. It was led by General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla, chief of staff of the army. At the time both Liberals and moderate Conservatives preferred Rojas Pinilla to Laureano Gomez with his new constitution. So Rojas Pinilla was approved as president and later he was elected for a full term as president. But eventually he became dictatorial and unpopular.

And then after that the Conservatives and the Liberals got together in 1958 and decided they would have sixteen years of alternating the presidency. The first one was Alberto Lleras Camargo, and he was a very good man on the Liberal side. At one time, he came into my office for a visa for him and his wife when I was in charge of the consular section. I knew his background. Both he and his wife had diplomatic passports. I was pretty new to the game and the regulations did not say that as an ex-president he was entitled to a diplomatic visa. At the time he was the publisher of a weekly magazine like *Time*, called *La Semana* I knew that he

was a good friend of the U.S., that he had been secretary general of the Organization of American States, and that he had briefly been provisional president of Colombia in 1945 when President Alfonso Lopez resigned. I did not want to have him bring in wife so that both could be fingerprinted for tourist visas.

So I explained to him my situation. He said, "Well, what kind of visa did you give Alfonso Lopez?" So I looked it up. Lopez was an ex-president and we gave him a diplomatic visa. So we had a precedent and I was delighted. Later I found I probably could have decided it all on my own in spite of all those regulations, but I was new to the game and I was in charge of the consulate, responsible to Congress for every visa I issued.

Q: When you arrived there, what was your first job?

WHITE: I was first a vice consul in the consular section. The consul was Bill Kane. His wife and children had returned to the United States. Bill was living alone and suggested we get an apartment together. He was handling German passports and everything connected with the Germans. He was also handling the immigrant visas and I was handling the non-immigrant visas and the citizenship. Then after a while they rotated me into the economic section under Tom Campen. Then when Bill was transferred they put me in charge of the consular section as the only officer there. I liked consular work as well as economic work.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

WHITE: At first we had Capus Waynick. He was a newspaper publisher in North Carolina and a political appointee. After that we had Rudy Schoenfeld, who was career man, an old bachelor. He was ambassador in Guatemala before coming to Colombia. In London during World War II he was minister to the representatives of governments-in-exile. On the whole I've always preferred career ambassadors to political appointees.

Q: In the consular section, was there much of a demand for visitors' visas; I mean were many people going from Colombia?

WHITE: There was a huge demand. The waiting room was always full. Visa applicants had to make an appointment and you had to check to see if they were excluded by our legislation. The U. S. came out with new visa regulations while I was there, excluding over 20 categories of people.

It was difficult to give people visas without forcing them to wait for our security check. We had lookout cards going way back to the war years and we frequently had to get into old files that were not in the consular section. I remember we had a lookout card on one man and we didn't get clearance in time for him to make his plane. The investigation showed there was nothing against him. I felt so badly about it that I invited him and his family to dinner and gave them their visas and made some friends that way. I felt a great responsibility to abide by the law in issuing visas. But I thought it was great experience.

Q: How well did you find you were supported by the Colombians that were working for the

embassy, the FSNs?

WHITE: Oh, they were great. Actually, I would say that the ones I had were great. But the one that was a staff employee before I got there in the visa section was selling visas, so they removed him. He was gone by the time I got there.

Q: Was the drug problem at all_?

WHITE: I don't recall in any big drug problem like they and we have now. We did have to inspect coffins in which bodies were being shipped back to the States to see if there was some contraband inside. I know of one case where we had an airplane accident and an employee of Texaco's plane ran into a military plane and he was killed. I was supposed to go and check whether there was just his body in the coffin or whether they stuck something else in there, too. That went back to the old days of Prohibition, I guess. I don't recall any great concern about drugs at that time.

Q: Were you in the consular section most of the time, or did you move around at all?

WHITE: I moved around. I worked more time in the consular section than in the economic section. But they were rotating me. I thought it was very good experience. The problem with the economic section at that time was the lack of statistics on Colombia; it made it very difficult to do economic reporting; they didn't have the statistics themselves. I had excellent relations with the chief of statistics in Colombia. He used to invite me to parties in his home.

Q: Was this a lack of organization or was there a demand for statistics?

WHITE: Well, I think there was a demand, but they just didn't have them; they didn't have it organized properly. If they had them, they'd give them to you. We had very good relations with the Colombian government when I was there; I had good relations with all the officials. I loved the Colombians. I used to date a lot of Colombian girls. Frequently they were chaperoned.

Q: Did you have any problems with protection and welfare of Americans?

WHITE: We did; I had one case of a guy with schizophrenia, a big guy, and he was trying to commit suicide. I used to go out to the insane asylum where they were keeping him. They kept him very well, but we had to repatriate him, and I had to arrange to fly him to Panama and put him on a Navy vessel.

The American Society gave me some money to get clothes for him. I took him up by plane to Panama and spent the night with him in a hotel in Panama City. I was a little worried because he was a big guy and suicidal, and they had a balcony right outside the window. He'd step out there every now and then, and I'd have to watch him.

I put him on a train the next day and took him over to Colon where I put him on a Navy ship that took him to New York. They sent us a message that they'd put him in a straight jacket as

soon as they got him in New York. But I was lucky because he was docile all the time he was with me.

We had a lot of welfare cases there. I had to go down to the jail when Americans were incarcerated for one reason or another. I would offer to get them an attorney.

I thought it was all very interesting and I wouldn't have minded doing more consular work at other posts.

Q: How was jail for Americans?

WHITE: They treated Americans pretty well, I think. I know I went to visit one American down there, he'd gotten in a brawl and he showed me a knife, and he said "I'm glad they didn't find this knife on me." So we saw that they got a lawyer, and kept an eye on them. They probably treated Americans better than they did the Colombians.

Q: Did the ambassador pay much attention to you all?

WHITE: Ambassador Schoenfeld did. When I went to get married in Washington, he wanted us to call on his mother and to bring him 10 boxes of candy back. I think we were on very good terms with Ambassador Schoenfeld. He seemed to think I was doing a good job as chief of the consular section.

Now Ambassador Waynick for some reason had the idea that I was down there playing poker in the Jockey Club and criticizing the president of Colombia. But I had never been in the Jockey Club, and I hadn't played poker since I was in Colombia. And I certainly wouldn't criticize the president or any other Colombian official. I had great respect for all of them. The ambassador finally found it was someone else.

Q: How did you meet your wife?

WHITE: I met her to a certain extent through my boss, who was of Czech descent, Bill Kane - he was originally Bill Kubalik. His family had emigrated to the U.S. but eventually returned to Czechoslovakia. He joined the embassy as a visa clerk in Prague, eventually worked up to consul, and he knew a lot of Czech refugees in Bogotá. Since we went to many things together I also got to know many of the Czech refugees.

I was sympathetic to the Czech refugees; I was sympathetic to anybody who was anti-communist or anti-Nazi and for democracy. The Czechs were telling me what wonderful wives Czech women make. So I said in a joking way, "Maybe I should get a Czech wife." So they took me seriously and one of them fixed me up with Dagmar.

All the Czechs there knew her family, because her father was one of the top generals over there in World War II. After the country was occupied by the Germans in March 1939, he escaped the Germans surveillance and went to fight in France. When the French collapsed, he went to London and served as President Benes' military adviser. He had also been in World

War I, fighting in Russia for Czechoslovak independence, and came out as a colonel. So the Czechs there all either knew him personally or by reputation and thought highly of him. When the Communists took over Czechoslovakia in 1948 he came with his family to the United States.

The family settled in Washington. They'd been there just about five years when we met Dagmar. So I thought that there would not be any problem with marrying Dagmar, because she had received a university education in the United States. She had gone three years to Charles University and three years to the Conservatory of Music in Prague before coming to the U.S. In the U.S. she went to the University of Kansas and got a degree; she went to the Julliard School of Music and got another degree; she went to Columbia University and got a master's degree. She spoke five languages. She was 26 and a beautiful girl. We hit it off right away. I thought she would be a great asset. I was right and we are still married.

Q: What was the situation then if you became engaged to a foreign national? What did you do?

WHITE: Then you would have to get permission to marry. One of my officers in Nicaragua had to wait maybe a year for approval for him to marry a girl from Guyana. I'm sure that they would have authorized the marriage to Dagmar, because her father was working with the Pentagon, he was anti-communist, he was anti-Nazi, and pro-democratic. In fact, her brother was engaged to the daughter of the American ambassador in Prague at the time; eventually it broke up, but they were well connected and I didn't think there would be any problem in that respect.

Anyway, she got citizenship two days before we got married. And actually the time in Colombia didn't count against her because they passed a special law in Congress to authorize her to get citizenship. Just in time for the marriage. She had come to Colombia after graduating from Julliard because she had a contract to teach in the Colombia National Conservatory of Music. She was also continually singing with the National Symphony and giving recitals. Eventually she had a regular television program with selections from operas.

Q: Was there a problem with Nazis? Had they all been cleared up by this time?

WHITE: No, it hadn't. I had a number of people that came in that had Nazi associations. Sometimes it was just a question of passing out Nazi propaganda, and I turned a number of them down. But then we had a law come through that unless they were concentration camp guards they could be eligible. A lot of them had been detained in Colombia during the war, because Colombia was on our side. I remembered some of those I had regretfully turned down that had become eligible and I invited them to come in for a visa.

Q: That was the Immigration Act of 1953, the McCarran-Walters Act.

WHITE: Yes.

Q: Obviously, everybody was alerted to be concerned about communists, but did that involve

you at all?

WHITE: It did. I am sure I turned some down because the files showed they had Communist activities. I tried to be fair though. The file had to be pretty convincing.

Q: Was there a strong communist movement in Colombia at the time?

WHITE: It was substantial. They weren't in the government, but they were creating problems. Leftists, you know. I had some come in. You had to make a determination whether they were real communists or whether they were just a newspaperman keeping an eye on them. You had to be just, and their families, you couldn't penalize the family for something the husband did. You had to be fair. You had to make a decision in every case.

Q: Were we concerned on the communist side with the universities? There is a tendency in so many universities, particularly in Latin America and even elsewhere, where the students become red-hot communists while they're in the university and quickly become capitalists as soon as they get out and start working for Daddy or something like that. Were you finding that the universities caused a problem at the time?

WHITE: They were having problems with the government, because the government would go in reacting to some demonstration. The students would demonstrate and celebrate - recognize the day when a student had been killed by the military. Sometimes the government would shoot some of the demonstrators.. There were problems like that. I don't remember any specific visa cases involving students.

I think there was a certain amount of communist sympathizers, but there had to be a certain amount of anti-Americanism, too. Some would think like the Argentines that the United States was an imperialistic power. You had to make friends and show them that we were benevolent, that we really wanted to help Colombia.

They had to learn that communism was a very bad system. A lot of the Latin Americans have. You take the president of Brazil right now, Fernando Henrique Cardoso. He used to be a Marxist; now he's free market. They have a lot of them like that in Latin America.

Q: The prime minister of France was a Trotskyite.

WHITE: Jospin. He tried to deny it until recently. Actually, when Felipe Gonzalez came in as prime minister in Spain, he was a Socialist. But he said he wasn't going to make the mistakes of Mitterrand and was not going to nationalize everything. He considered himself more of a centrist. And the government of Spain right now is more of a centrist than a rightist. Actually, they're no longer a pariah among nations. Spain has arrived.

Q: What was social life like there?

WHITE: It was great if you could get out in a car and get around. Local transportation wasn't any good--I had to buy a car. But we were invited every place by the Colombians. That's the

reason I think in many respects Latin America is one of my favorite places; you always get invited, you always get to know the people.

We used to get invited places in Morocco, too, but it wasn't quite the same relationship that we had with the Colombians, or the Nicaraguans, or the Dominicans – any place I served in Latin America.

QUENTIN ROY BATES
Agricultural Attaché
Bogota (1953-1955)

Quentin R. Bates served in the military in World War II. He entered the Foreign Service through the State Department, but switched to the Foreign Agriculture Service (FAS) in 1955. His posts included Colombia, Canada, France, Argentina and Washington, DC. He was interviewed by Jennifer Nyberg in 1990 and by Richard Welton in 1994.

Q: *Did you have to choose between FAS and the State Dept. in 1955?*

BATES: Yes I did.

Q: *What motivated you to choose FAS as opposed to State? I noticed it was right in the middle of your posting in Bogota from '53 to '55 and it looks like in June 1955 is when you switched.*

BATES: Yes, I think the actual transfer date was in Sept., but the actual paper work started a little earlier. It was a hard decision because I enjoyed agricultural work, which I had been doing more or less full time, although I'd also done some normal Foreign Service officer work. For example, when I was in Winnipeg, in addition to doing agricultural work, I was also issuing non-immigrant visas, and doing some other consular-type work, and I did some political reporting.

When I was in Bogota as the attaché, it was a hard decision, but the understanding was that virtually all of the agricultural work would be done by FAS officers, and I just couldn't bring myself to give that up completely. As it turned out, nearly all of my 12 colleagues who were in the same category - FSOs who had been in agriculture, - like Philip Habib and Howard Cottam, e.g., had great careers in the State Dept. after they opted for State over Agriculture. Phil had a legendary career and Howard was an ambassador to Kuwait as his last post. There were at least two other agricultural officers who became ambassadors and others who became ministers and counselors. So there was life after ...

Q: *After State. So when you were doing the State Dept. duties it sounds like you had a wide range of duties, consular, everything in the political office, also. So once they created FAS and you had chosen to go into FAS did your duties change significantly?*

BATES: They didn't change at all. I continued to be the attaché in Bogota. The only thing was

that I had somewhat more freedom of action because no longer getting my paycheck from the Dept of State, even though technically I was still ...

Q: A Foreign Service officer?

BATES: No, I wasn't a Foreign Service officer. I started out as a GS-13, but I was still an embassy officer and of course responsible to the ambassador and, when he delegated his authority, to the economic counselor of embassy. So I worked very closely with the economic counselor as well as the political counselor but there is always a difference when your paycheck comes from another agency. You feel a little freer to act on your own.

Q: Let's take two different postings examples like I noticed that you worked for Paris and Paris is probably one of the larger and busier embassies and involves, probably, greater work loads than some other postings and, I suppose, a number of challenges. Was there anything that you enjoyed most or was there anything that was most frustrating about such an active embassy to work in?

BATES: Well, in some ways a big post can be easier than a small post.. depending on the circumstances. For example, in Bogota, I was the only agricultural officer there, with one part time secretary.

Q: Not even local staff?

BATES: No local staff. A part time secretary that was also secretary for one of the other economic officers. And that was it. In Paris we had three agricultural officers and several local staff and three or four secretaries, so it was well structured. Each of us had an assigned job to do and that was mostly what we did. There was a lot of work to do, but a lot of people to do it. In Bogota there was less work to do, but there was nobody else to do it but I and half a secretary! So that is the difference between a large post and a small post.

Q: Then it must have been quite a change to come from a post like Paris with so much support and then go straight to Bogota. Did you have language skills? Had you studied both French and Spanish?

BATES: French was my language in college but I don't know whether you've had the experience or not of studying... I'd had about three years of French, two years in high school and one and a half years in college. It didn't help much as far as speaking was concerned, but of course I worked on it while I was there and was able to get along fairly well.

Q: Did you have any language training between Paris and Bogota?

BATES: Yes, I took a very short course because my posting to Bogota was fairly close. I had come home on home leave from Paris in 1952, and in 1953 there was a major layoff, a major reduction in force, a RIF. A lot of people lost their jobs and they cut staff positions out. They eliminated one of the assistant attaché positions in Paris, so then they had to find a slot for me.

Q: *and "RIF" stands for?*

BATES: "Reduction in force".

Q: *I hadn't heard that before. I'm like .. what's this an acronym for?*

BATES: Being "RIFed" then was a big deal.

Q: *What was the political environment in Colombia?*

BATES: It was a very interesting time to be in Colombia. Just a few months before I got there an army general had overthrown a right wing dictatorship and established a sort of middle-of-the-road military dictatorship. General Rojas Pinilla was his name.

Q: *You arrived in Bogota right after the civil war?*

BATES: 1953.

Q: *So the civil war was just waning.*

BATES: Well, the civil war was still on, really. There were still many guerrillas. All the time I was there, there were guerrillas in the countryside and we would have what they call "retenes," which were checkpoints, all over the country. You would be stopped if you were driving from one town to another and you would have to identify yourself. And you'd better stop! The foreign minister's driver once thought, "Well, everybody knows this is the foreign minister" and so he didn't stop. And the first thing they knew a bullet went right between the foreign minister and the visiting guest into the back of the seat. Anyway, it was a very uneasy calm, although it had eased up quite a lot from what it had been earlier in the so-called "Bogotazo" in 1948 after the left-wing leader was assassinated, when they practically sacked the whole city. We also did have one major attempt to overthrow the government while I was there.

Q: *Was the U.S. Embassy in the same place as it is now.*

BATES: No, it was in an old building, I can't remember just where.

Q: *Security was just as big an issue then.*

BATES: Yes, for a couple of days we had to be escorted to the office with half-tracks,

Q: *What are half-tracks ?*

BATES: Military vehicles with machine guns and cannon mounted on them. It was a funny feeling having one in front of you with that cannon pointed directly at you!

Q: *It was for your protection. It must have been necessary because working in agriculture, since that was what you were doing, you had to go to the countryside and that's where a lot of the*

violence was occurring-

BATES: Right.

Q: -where people were divided between conservative and liberal lines and there was a lot of violence going on.

BATES: Exactly

Q: At that time, did you encounter any of that?

BATES: No, in my travels around the country I never had any problems. As I said, the guerrillas were mostly in pretty remote areas. They had been pretty well compressed. They'd come out every once in a while and raid a bank or a ranch or something like that but it was relatively quiet compared to what it had been, but still there was a certain amount of tension. It was quite a challenge - getting information was very difficult, and it is a difficult country to travel in, a rugged country, and the agricultural areas were very widely scattered.

Q: Well, Colombia's biggest export has traditionally been coffee, but Colombia also produced its own wheat.

BATES: Colombia had some wheat, but it also had to buy some wheat.

Q: But didn't that grain production of Colombia wane when Colombia went into an agreement with the United States?

BATES: It might have slightly, but production was not very high and costs and prices were exorbitant. I negotiated that first PL 480 agreement with Colombia in 1954. Not the first one in the world but one of the early ones.

Q: You must have spent a lot of time on the initial agreement with Colombia?

BATES: Oh yes, because it was so new and all.

Q: What did that involve? Did that involve Colombian importation of wheat only?

BATES: I think that was almost exclusively wheat but now I just can't remember what the composition of it was, but I believe it was wheat that was the major commodity.

Q: How did Colombia react to that?

BATES: They were very happy to get it, and at the very highest levels. I know, I have a picture of the signing that I just saw the other day showing the foreign minister, and the ambassador, and I was there, and the minister of agriculture who was a good friend of mine.

Q: Did you make good contacts?

BATES: Oh yes, (in the local government) The minister and the deputy minister of Agriculture had both studied in the United States. The minister had studied at the University of California and the deputy minister at Houston University. Both spoke English fluently and at that time, as I said, I had been sent to Colombia with virtually no Spanish background.

Q: With your French background?

BATES: Yes, well French doesn't help at all with speaking because the pronunciation is so completely different. It helps with reading. I could always read Spanish fairly well, but I took intensive training courses there, language courses. I got along pretty well and, with the top agriculture officials speaking English very well, it made it a lot easier. I could always get through to the minister personally. It makes things easier when you can do that. (Right, exactly) Still, I also had a lot of lower-level contacts. You can't go over the heads of the departments too much.

Q: What about the other agricultural things? You talked about negotiating the first PL 480 agreement. But everyone speaks about the cocaine problem in Colombia now and also the other product that Colombia is known for most widely, I imagine, is coffee. Did you go through the Zona Cafetera in Colombia then? Did you have to go visit coffee plantations?

BATES: Yes, but the U.S. wasn't as interested in coffee as it was in competitive commodities. Because we bought a lot of coffee, of course, they were interested in it from the point of view of what the crop was going to be like and so forth. I didn't visit the coffee producing areas so much but the president of the coffee association was a friend of mine and I could always call and get information. He was very good about giving information about production, price and that sort of thing. So I had no problem with getting coffee information, that was one of the easiest things because it was the commodity, the life blood of Colombia.

Q: What was the most difficult thing to get information on?

BATES: Probably cotton. Cotton was a new crop that they had just started producing in any quantity at all just a few years before. It was in three of four different areas up a little further north in the Monteria area of the tropics. They had more traditional producing areas which weren't quite as tropical - it was more in the middle altitude, not quite as high as Bogota, but not the tropical area. So they got some terrific crops for a couple of years in the tropics and then the insects starting taking over. And this was right in the middle of that period when I was visiting the area, and they didn't know what to do about it. Being a fairly new crop there wasn't anyone who knew too much about it, because, in almost any of these countries that are fairly large (this was true in all the posts) you have to rely on people. It is impossible for one man to do a very good job in estimating what the crop is going to be over millions of acres scattered over tens of thousands of square miles. So you do have to do some eyeballing and you get a feel for whether they are conning or snowing you about what the crop is going to be. But generally speaking you keep in touch with elevator operators and the grain boards. (The National Grain Board in Colombia. The Chairman was a good friend. So I just had carte blanche to visit any of the elevators and they were all told to be completely frank and open with me). The interesting thing was that the reports that I would write after that would, sometimes, become..., my crop estimates

I would often find being reported in the press. They were given out by the government as their official forecast.

Q: I'm sure that still happens.

BATES: I would often give them a copy of my report or tell them what my estimates were. I remember one time in particular I was very amused when an official report came out which went right down the line with my estimates.

Q: What was it like to have children overseas?

BATES: In Bogota, there was also an American school. There were many U.S. oil people in Colombia. We had quite a large A.I.D. mission and also a Rockefeller Foundation group. I worked closely with all of those people. See - I had good posts, they were nearly all capitals and most of them were fairly large cities.

Q: I want to talk about your time in Washington, too and when you worked for FAS. Are there any accomplishments you are particularly proud of in any of these posts? Are there any of these postings you were much more fond of or would never want to do again?

BATES: No, I enjoyed them all. There was usually something very enjoyable and interesting about each post . . . As I said, the negotiation of the PL 480 was one of the highlights in Bogota. I think that my contacts there were at high levels of the government for a fairly junior officer. For example, the minister of agriculture, personally, his whole family, the deputy minister and some of his staff came to the airport to say good-bye to us when we left. He also gave a big dinner for us. He invited our ambassador, Phil Bonsal, but sat him at the end of the table because he didn't know anything about protocol! I was terribly embarrassed.

Q: You didn't get up and move around?

BATES: No, Phil signaled to me to stay put and laughed.

Even in a place like Bogota we had quite a few visitors. In the small posts, you are more likely to be Control Officer for the top ranking Agriculture visitors. For example, when Secretary Bentsen came to Colombia, the Minister of Agriculture took me on the President's personal plane to pick him up in Venezuela. I was in charge of his visit. I took him to call on the President and was invited to the official luncheon given by the President.

(Excerpts from the Welton interview):

Q: So then, after Paris, you went to Bogota? You were involved there with one of the early PL 480 agreements?

BATES: Yes, that was something like the 12th agreement. I don't remember exactly. It was a few months after they had negotiated the first one. It was a fairly modest agreement. I don't remember much about the details. I think that the interesting thing was, as I mentioned in that other interview, that I had very close relations with the Minister of Agriculture. He and his

deputy both had gone to college at Universities in the United States and spoke fluent English. We became very good friends so it made negotiations a lot easier.

Q: Did you have pretty much the lead role in the negotiations in the PL 480?

BATES: Well, of course, the Economic Counselor was the titular leader, but being the only Embassy agricultural officer there, naturally they counted on me to do most of the work..

Q: You didn't have an assistant in Bogota at that time?

BATES: I didn't have an assistant, I didn't even have a secretary. I shared a secretary with one of the Economic officers.

Q: You didn't have foreign nationals either, I guess.

BATES: No, no foreign nationals. The last year I was there FAS did send me an American secretary after I became a Foreign Agricultural Affairs Officer.

Q: That was when you had a trade complaint, I believe, on egg imports?

BATES: Yes, that was interesting, I think. Bogota had an egg shortage for some reason, and they started importing large quantities of eggs. Then, all of a sudden, the chief veterinarian, whatever the title was, said that there was a poultry disease in the United States, I think it might have been Newcastle, that they didn't have in Colombia, and that the disease could possibly be transmitted through the eggs. So he wanted to get a certificate with every shipment that it was free of Newcastle Disease. Our veterinarians said that was not feasible, but that there was no possibility that it could be transmitted through the eggs. I visited the Minister and he called in his chief veterinarian who said "Well, we're fairly sure that there is a possibility of it. Our poultry industry is very important to us. We can't take that risk." I said that our veterinarians claim there's no risk, and I have a lot of confidence in them. The minister gently but firmly cut me off. He said "Dr. So-and-so is my chief veterinarian and I've got to follow his advice". That was the end of it. I learned my lesson. You can't push personal relationships too far.

Q: Where I saw more of that was in coffee reporting in Bogota. They all had quotas and they wanted to convince us that they really needed more quota and they had a big crop coming along, etc.

BATES: When I was in Bogota, they didn't have quotas. The head of the Coffee Federation was a good contact and never misled me in any way.

HARRY W. SHLAUDEMANN
Consular Officer
Barranquilla (1955-1958)

Harry W. Shlaudeman was born in California on May 17, 1926. He got his Bachelor's degree from Stanford University. He was in the United States Marine Corps overseas from 1944 to 1946. He served in Barranquilla, Sophia, Santo Domingo. He was Deputy Chief of Mission to Santiago. He was ambassador to Caracas, Lima, Buenos Aires, Brasilia, and Managua. He was Desk Officer to the Dominican Republic, Deputy Assistant secretary of Inter-American Affairs, Assistant Secretary of State, Executive Director to the Commission of Central America and Ambassador at Large. He was interviewed by William E. Knight on May 24 & June 1, 1993.

SHLAUDEMAM: I had passed all of the tests. So I actually got orders and assignment to Durban, South Africa, even before I had been through the school. When I got to Washington, however, the Vice Consul who had been assigned to Barranquilla, Colombia, refused to go, so they changed me to Colombia.

Q: *This is what year?*

SHLAUDEMAM: This is very early 1955 -- I never even heard of the place, so I went. We had very little training in those days. I think I had a month of Spanish and a short course on visa issuance, and that was about it. In any case, that's how I became a Latin Americanist, in a totally accidental way. One of the interesting things that happened to me in Barranquilla, was that in those days -- this was before the jets -- in order to fly up to Bogota which is 8600 feet, the planes had to stop in Barranquilla, and also, going out, they had to do that, and our Ambassador at the time was Phil Bonsal, who is still very much alive. Phil, during one year that I was there, was the Liaison Officer in the UN during the General Assembly, so he came and went repeatedly, and I met him at the airport -- I don't know how many times -- and thus got to know him going and coming, and he asked me to come up to Bogota and be a Political Officer, which was something I very much wanted to do.

From there I took -- it was very much the fad in those days -- after serving in Bogota with Bonsal and John Moors Cabot, I opted -- as we were all being urged to do -- for a hard language and ended up taking Bulgarian and went to Bulgaria when we reopened the post in 1960. It was an interesting tour. It was the only tour I had outside of Latin America. We were there during the erection of the Berlin Wall, the Chinese-Soviet Break.

ROBERT W. DREXLER
Vice Consul
Barranquilla (1957-1958)

Robert Drexler was born and raised in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He received his Bachelor's degree from Harvard University before entering the Foreign Service in 1957. In addition to Colombia, he was posted to Malaysia, Hong Kong, and Geneva. Mr. Drexler was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1996.

Q: We'll come back again to the training, but let's go to Barranquilla. You were in Barranquilla, which is a port of Colombia, from when to when?

DREXLER: I got there in early 1957, and left in 1958. I was a replacement for Harry Shlaudeman, who went on to much greater things than I did. Harry was unable to get along with the Consul at that time, George Phelan, who insisted that he be removed from Barranquilla, and Harry was sent up to Bogota, and as I said, on his way up. So I was sent to take Harry's place as Vice-Consul with George Phelan.

Q: Could you talk a little about George Phelan, because he's one of the old Consular hands.

DREXLER: Yes he is. He was a Latin American hand, he had relatives, an uncle, a brother, perhaps both were also in the Service. And George was for me the perfect first supervisor and Consul, and we remained lifelong friends. I had the pleasure of seeing him again when I was head of the Board of Examiners and he was brought back from retirement as an examiner, helping to fulfill our need for people with a minority background. I guess, on his mother's side, there was a Latin-Hispanic connection. He was bilingual, and an expert in his Consular work, and well loved in the Barranquilla community, particularly for the important role he played. He and I happened to be in Colombia at one of the two major turning points in its modern history, which was when the military dictator, the only one they had, was overthrown -- Rojas Pinilla. He was one of the dictators who was coddled and encouraged, even, by Dulles, and to some extent, by Eisenhower. Rojas Pinilla had commanded the Colombian brigade in Korea, which gave him a special standing in the eyes of the American military, and someone like Eisenhower. By the time I got there his rule had become increasingly brutal, and he had a secret police, who on one occasion when I was alone at the Consulate, came in and dragged out a man seated at my desk, and threw him in prison.

There was heavy loss of life, as Rojas's army turned their guns on people. But none of this bothered Dulles. And about six months before I arrived, Dulles came to Bogota, and had a meeting with Rojas. Dulles was criticized over that in the States and in Latin America for obvious reasons, his association with a brutal dictator. But some of us thought that maybe what they had said privately would make Dulles look better. But when I did research for the book that I recently finished which will be coming out soon on the history of our relations with Colombia, I finally saw the documents that were released 30 years later in the normal process by the Historian of the Department, recording the conversations. And they make it look even worse. Dulles said to Rojas that at that time in world history, in late 1956, there were three Christian leaders manning the ramparts of defense against Communism: Syngman Rhee in Korea, Diem in Vietnam, and Chiang Kai-shek in Nationalist China. And now Dulles welcomed Rojas Pinilla into this pantheon. And of course the dictator was overwhelmed by Dulles tribute, as were other people present. And the transcript record of their conversation, which one supposes was sanitized a bit, even so is still appalling.

So there we sat in Barranquilla with George Phelan, watching the regime and its horrors. But George cultivated the opposition political leadership, especially the liberals. And on the morning of the day that the planned uprising was to begin to overthrow Rojas, a couple arrived at the Consulate, to whom I was introduced by George. The lady I was told was to be put in our walk-

in vault, and lock her in, if the secret police came to arrest her. Her husband was a Liberal Party leader, and he was going to work from our office, which was above the Central Plaza in Barranquilla and had communications that the police were reluctant to intercept or curtail. So I can still see the Liberal Party leader there in the offices, looking down on the city and using our phones and coordinating the operations which brought Rojas down. Now, of course, the most decisive drama was being played out in the capital. But Colombia, then as now, is unique, because it has four large metropolitan centers. Most Latin American countries has one chief capital city and everything happens there. But in Colombia there is Barranquilla, Medellin, Cali, and Bogota, and they are quite different and separated by high Andes mountains. So if you're going to bring something off, you can't just bring it off in Bogota, the way you can in Buenos Aires, say, or Lima. It has to work everywhere. So it worked in Barranquilla, because of the assistance that George provided, without authorization of course.

Q: I'd like to spell this out a little more, because I think it's fascinating. Was the leader actually doing this from our Consular office?

DREXLER: Yes, yes, he was in my office. I still see him looking out the window with my phone.

Q: This goes against everything we're supposed to do.

DREXLER: Yes, but of course it went with everything we should have been doing to support democracy. And since Rojas was brought down, George was Number One in the eyes of the liberated people of Barranquilla, as we all were, because of this role.

Q: Afterwards, obviously it must have been known that he was there.

DREXLER: No, I don't think so. There was a great deal of confusion in Colombia at that time. We did not have an Ambassador. He had been forced out because the dictator disliked him -- this was Philip Bonsal. And because he appeared at the bull fights with the leader of the Liberal Party, and so he had to leave. And communications between Barranquilla and Bogota were very poor. I remember in those days I had to use a one-time pad to send a classified cable, which involved going to the Cable and Wireless Office or whatever it was called, writing it out, if they were open, and handing it in, and then it would go up to Bogota. We had no secure phone communications. So this was never known at our Embassy. I've recorded it in my book. I wanted to pay tribute to George.

Q: How did you feel about it? This was your first time there. Were you a little bit wide-eyed about seeing something like this, because this is as atypical as I can think.

DREXLER: Well, it was rather exciting, especially to put the lady in the vault. As it happened, the secret police did not come, but I was thoroughly fed up with these people, from the incident when from the secret police came into my office and dragged this poor fellow away. We had no guards. We were in an office building, there was no security of any sort. And they dragged him on out. So when George came back he complained to the head of the Secret Police, who apologized and that the officer involved would be transferred immediately to Leticia, which is on

the Amazon. But George said to me, "You better be careful at night, because the fellow may come back after you to settle scores." So I was a bit nervous, but nothing happened. We had no police force in the city, we had to keep guns in our house, and we had three fierce dogs outside and one chained to the sofa in the living room every night. So it was a rather wild place. But I thought it was fine, what we were doing with the liberals, with the civilians. And of course it worked on that very day. And the dictator -- there was no bloodshed as it turned out -- the dictator was forced out by his army comrades. The military government was put in place until the civilian regime was instituted and we were on very good terms with the military commander. There was a naval base in our district, there in Cartagena, headed by a Navy Captain. And many of these officers themselves were sick and tired of Rojas. They felt he was disgracing the military. So there were no second guesses, and no post mortems.

I think that the Department, and perhaps the Embassy, must have looked very bad after Rojas was overthrown, because right up to the very week he left power, the Pentagon still had plans to bring some of his closest military comrades to Washington for a pleasure trip, to show them the town, and to play up to them. Up to the very last week. And in researching my book I found intelligence assessments and Embassy reports that were wide of the mark, both as far as the current situation was concerned, and about what Rojas's prospects were. So the downfall, I think, came as a shock to them, not only in being unexpected, but in shattering all of the Department's and I think, the embassy's assessments and allusions about what was happening. So they were not in the mood, I think, to look for what we might have done in Barranquilla, but to cover themselves. And of course, an Ambassador, John Moors Cabot was sent. He was one of the men who was responsible for some of the bad assessments when he was in the Department. But he was well received and settled down, and we had very smooth sailing from then on. I should say that although the Colombians, the political and civilian leaders, had urged that we stop our support of Rojas, there was never any pitch for US intervention to bring him down, or to do the sort of thing we had done, under different circumstances, in Guatemala. They wanted to pull this off themselves. So I don't really know how it came about that George made this arrangement with the liberals, but obviously he had been in touch with them before, because it was done very smoothly. If it had failed, we would have been in difficulty, but...

Q: What about getting to and from Bogota? Was that still a problem?

DREXLER: Yes, you could only reach it by air. There was no train then. The first Americans, like the Spanish conquistadores did it by going up the Magdalena, and then over land. But you had to reach it by air. But Colombia had one of the earliest and best commercial airlines, now called Avianca. It was founded by Luftwaffe pilots from the German World War I Air Force. There was always a large German emigre colony in Colombia, Nazis included, in the 1940s. Some of the Avianca pilots still had Luftwaffe reserve commissions, but anyway, they still knew how to fly planes. Air travel was vital to hold the country together because of the mountainous terrain, and the great climatic differences. And flying was very easily done. But communications were a problem. In a place like Cartagena, for example, which is now a prime tourist resort and has an international airport, there was only a landing field paved in gravel, I remember. And when you asked when a plane was due, the airport manager might take his binoculars and then say, "I can't see it yet." It was all rather underdeveloped. But we flew around in these little planes and got around that way.

Q: Did officers come down from Bogota to say what was going on?

DREXLER: Rarely. When Ambassador John Moors Cabot came, this was during the civilian government, he used to come down because he liked to go swimming. Although he was a Boston Brahman and Bogota is the most snobbish capital in South America, with its own patrician class, he liked to come down to the coast to relax. The people on the coast, the Costenos, are quite different from the Bogotanos. They are uninhibited and friendly and they celebrate Carnival, which is ignored in Bogota. And they have the tropical beaches, the climate, and so on. It's a wonderful antidote to Bogota. So Moors Cabot used to come down. The Embassy brought me up to Bogota once for a briefing, but I was primarily assigned to help pass the hors d'oeuvres at a reception given by the DCM. I found the DCM to be a totally intolerable person, not someone we in Barranquilla wanted to get acquainted with. And he had no interest in telling us what the view was from Bogota. Sometimes Dick Poole, who was the First Secretary for Political Affairs, would come down and brief us but he himself had a number of problems with the DCM and we didn't see much of him. There was also a Labor Attaché, whose name I can't remember, who came down, and I remember his visit because his work on the coast with trade unionists, after the overthrow of Rojas Penilla, was curtailed due to the American company, Electric Bond and Share, EBASCO, which owned American Foreign Power, which owned the electric company and system in Colombia at this time. The Labor Attaché was trying to encourage Colombian laborers to follow American union practices and organizations, and collective bargaining and so on, to counter left-wing and communist inroads. But the American company complained. They didn't want any union. American style was just as bad as Communist style. So he was told not to come down anymore. Barranquilla was a very unhealthy place. The food, the climate were very difficult to bear. Then the Department sent out word that they were going to rebuild the China corps, and I volunteered. And because I had done Chinese before, they pulled me out after about 20 months in Barranquilla, and after I had lost nearly 20 pounds.

Q: I'd like to stick to Barranquilla for a little bit. By the way, yesterday I was interviewing Terence Leonhardy, who was talking about his first assignment, which was Barranquilla, in 1942-45.

DREXLER: That would be very interesting, during the war. They had Nazis nearby.

Q: Could you talk about your Consular business -- the American community, problems, visas, Consular stories?

DREXLER: The American community was very small. There was a leading patrician American family, the Parrishes, who were landowners, and related to Samuel Hollipeter, a retired American executive who had come down and designed the city's water system and had stayed on. Grace Lines was there, Singer Sewing Machine, and Coca Cola. That was our American society.

Q: Any oil groups?

DREXLER: No. We had the wife of the Singer Sewing Machine man and the wife of the Grace

Line man, as locally hired American secretarial employees. And so our ties with these people were very close. But we also had American Protestant missionaries, who came to me shortly after I arrived, and told me about the problems they had had under Rojas, who persecuted Protestants, and missionaries in particular. And when I asked them why they hadn't come to the Consulate before, they said it was because I was the first Protestant to be assigned to the Consulate; all the other officers were known to be Catholics and would be presumed to be unhelpful to them. We also had a sizeable number of Hungarian refugees, who shortly after the Hungarian revolution, in October 1956, had unwisely accepted refuge in Colombia, thinking it would bring them nearer to the United States, which was true physically, but not legally, because we regarded them no longer as refugees, but as persons who had accepted resettlement elsewhere. We had leading musicians from the Budapest Opera and Philharmonic, wasting away there in the tropics, and also the Hungarian Army fencing team, which had been brought in by Rojas, who wanted them to teach fencing to his officer corps, and when he was overthrown, of course they had no prospect of doing this, and also found themselves, like the Budapest musicians and opera singers, unable to get to the United States.

So they regularly visited me, and we had heart wrenching scenes in my office when, I remember one opera singer got pregnant and said that surely she and her child would die if she had to give birth there in Barranquilla. It was a difficult experience for me. The people were desperate, unable to speak the language, and found themselves in this rotten tropical port. I was quite unable to help them. Sometimes these sessions went on for an hour or more, which seemed like twice as long. We had the usual visa and passport cases. At that time, tuberculosis was still prevalent, certainly in Colombia, and was grounds for denial of a visa. We would require a medical exam only if the person might be suffering or have a communicable disease. There was one case of a man who looked to me like he was dying as he applied for a visa, but assured me he was in the best of health. But I was obliged to require him to take a medical exam, and it turned out he had tuberculosis. And he came back, coughing, spitting it all around, in near hysteria with his wife, and he said that he admitted that he had tried to keep this from me, but he had to go to the United States for treatment. He had had some kind of balloon in his lung inflated to keep it going, and I said "There is no way I can let you go." And he died shortly thereafter, and I was blamed for the death by the local press, because he was a prominent person. My decision was regarded as heartless, and not understood. But that's not out of the ordinary. We had an airplane crash. One of these small planes that was always flitting about. I had to go out -- it had dropped down in a swamp outside of Barranquilla. I chartered a boat to go out and rescue the people, and we found, after we finally located the wreck, it had sort of belly landed in a marsh, and they were all sitting on top of the wings, waiting to be rescued, Americans and some others. And most of them were embarrassed rather than pleased that I rescued them, because it was a cheap, bargain flight, on a small airline called Lloyd, to Miami. And this was something that the people of the upper class in Barranquilla would not admit using, just as they wouldn't admit, perhaps, going to Sears Roebuck for their clothes in those days. And so they were embarrassed. And I remember some of them, as we were literally taking them off the wings, were telling me, you know, nothing of real urgency, but explaining to me that they had not been able to get on the Pan American flight, and that was why I had found them on Lloyd.

There was a port, and we had to deal with crew list visas, and that sort of thing. The one thing we didn't have to deal with was drugs or narcotics. There was a lot of smuggling going on, and we

had no liquor privileges through the embassy. They didn't help us in any respect, so the liquor that I and the Consul served was brought in by well known, reputable, dependable smugglers, who landed the cases on the beach in up the coast. Even the Collector of Customs at that time would proudly show off neckties and things that he had acquired and were known to be smuggled in. So there was a well established contraband operation, with no stigma attached to this type of activity. And that has had some implications for the drug problem, which was 20 years in the future, but which arose in that very same area. The criminal class was highly developed then, not so much in Barranquilla as in Medellin. It was quite sophisticated, and even then was known for its skill in counterfeiting American dollar bills, which brought regularly to us those Secret Service officers, from that branch of the service that deals with counterfeiting, or did then. And so, this same criminal class and its sophistication figured again 20 years later when the great drug cartels were formed. The use of small aircraft became vital in the early stages of the cocaine trafficking. The small airports everywhere, which were so vital at that time, just to get around, became vital for carrying the stuff to the United States. So, looking back at that period, I can see, so to speak, a kind of infrastructure already there, waiting to be developed when the drug cartels moved in. There was also a general disrespect for authority, a sort of sneaking admiration for people who got by with things, petty criminals and so on. This was also a factor.

Q: During the Rojas regime, did you have any problems with protection and welfare, arrest cases, or anything like that?

DREXLER: Yes, we did. Americans would turn up and that was the first time I ever heard the word "busted." An American called me and asked me to send a telegram to his mother, telling her "I got busted in Cartagena." And of course, I found out soon enough. The Colombian police were very good, then as later, when I was DCM, at picking out nervous American youths at the airports. They had a profile, of course, I needn't describe it to you, of the kind that was attracted to drugs there. And so they were routinely picked up. In those days it was marijuana, if anything. And I would sometimes have to go to the Secret Police headquarters to try to work things out for Americans. Sometimes also they would come in -- we had the whole north coast, and there were many little ports, and surprisingly young Americans would come all over from Panama, or God knows how, and wind up in these small ports where there was no Customs or anything, and then make their way to Barranquilla, and had to regularize their status. So I would have to take them to see the head of the Secret Police, who was named Pion Mendoza, and the poor man -- well, not so poor, he deserved it -- had Parkinson's disease, and he shook. And I thought that that was in a way appropriate, because during his interrogations it wasn't only the people who were under arrest who were trembling, but so was he. I was always able to work things out with him, as I was with the military people there. The only bad incident is the one I described.

When the military took over under a junta, as a sort of provisional government, after Rojas fell, and before the civilians came in, I had occasion to work with the military. Each of these four cities had a brigade, with a brigadier general, and I had to get the general's assurances that American property and individuals would be protected during this unsettled time. We didn't know what would happen. As it turned out there was no threat. But anyway, we got their assurances, and we had very good relations with them. There was from no quarter any anti-Americanism, really. Dulles crimes of coddling the dictator were not held against us, and we did

not have an American capitalist position there in Colombia in the extractive industries, which would have nurtured, as it did in other places, this sort of resentment. Coca Cola, Singer Sewing Machine, and Grace Lines are not in that category. There was a banana company problem, but it wasn't severe. And so we were well thought of. Of course, I spoke Spanish, which helped. My college roommate was from Guatemala, and he was responsible for my knowing the language, so I had no problem with that. And as I said, Phelan was respected, and the Consulate had a very good image. It was a fairly large Consular corps, but we were number one, of course, we were the most important people in town. I was engaged in all sorts of educational exchange programs, giving out scholarships. There was a local Colombian-American school that I visited regularly and I also made periodic official trips to Cartagena. Cartagena was still smarting from the closing of a Vice-Consulate there a few years earlier. Now of course, it's become a very important city, but it wasn't so much then, it was a bit of a backwater. But they had their pride and a great historical tradition. So I was the officer designated to go there from time to time and perform Consular services for a few Americans and Colombians, and to sort of show the flag, hold their hand, and what not. Cartagena in those days was a charming place. Now of course it has luxury hotels, the beach is highly developed and everything is very expensive.

C. CONRAD MANLEY
Information Officer, USIS
Bogota (1958-1961)

C. Conrad Manley was born in 1912. He began working with the U.S. Information Agency in Montevideo in 1955, followed by posts in Bogota, Miami (in a VOA operation), Mexico City, Khartoum, and Tripoli, for a total of 16 years with USIA. He was interviewed in 1988 by John Hogan.

MANLEY: In '58, I was transferred to Bogota, Colombia, which was quite a change from sea level Montevideo to Bogota on top of the Andes.

Q: What do you think about Bogota? Any remembrances from that particular area, particularly about USIA activities?

MANLEY: We had a tremendous radio operation going in Bogota. I think the Bogotanos were reputed to have the best Spanish in all of Latin America and we got a lot of scripts and radio novellas from the Voice of America to translate and record with Colombian actors; on our own. We produced a good many radio programs and I recall we had something like twenty thousand tapes on circulation to Colombian radio stations at that time.

VIRON PETER VAKY
Chief Political Officer
Bogota (1959-1963)

Ambassador Viron Peter Vaky served in the U.S. Army in World War II, studied at Georgetown University and the University of Chicago and entered the Foreign Service in 1949. He was posted to Ecuador, Argentina and Colombia and served in Washington, DC. Ambassador Vaky was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1991.

Q: *Well now your next assignment you went to Bogota from 1958-63. Is that right?*

VAKY: I left the desk at the end of 1957. There was one year when I was doing different things in the Bureau. Bernbaum asked me to help the public affairs advisor so the year 1958-59, I was in ARA/P, Public Affairs. It was interesting.

Q: *Did you have the feeling that in ARA public affairs you had to jump up and down and say, "Hey, pay some attention to us," compared to things that were happening in Europe, the Middle East, the Far East?*

VAKY: Yes, in a sense, but you had to deal with those people in the wire services, etc. who were themselves interested in Latin America so you were always busy. And 1958-59 you were running into some very serious problems. I was in the P area when Nixon went to Caracas in 1958.

Q: *Oh yes, he was Vice President.*

VAKY: And you had the rise of Castro. So that was an interesting period. In fact, I almost went on that trip with Nixon. Bernbaum was going and said to me, "Do you write fast?" I said, "No, I don't." He said, "Oh well, okay. I need somebody who can really hammer out these statements, etc." I said, "Well, Maury that is not really my forte." So Maury went. I am sure he has told you this experience.

So we had to field those things. You had to do the press briefings, answer questions, prepare the spokesman for all the usual stuff. It was an interesting angle to look at. Dealing with the press is a very important area. I found that I learned a lot.

Q: *This is considered one of the great weaknesses of the regular Foreign Service officer. They treat the press...*

VAKY: It is understandable because you tend to get burned a little. But the danger is you then develop a bunker mentality of it is "we" and "them." That is really very bad because they can help you. I had some very good friends in the press corps who knew a lot about Latin America and were resident there. I learned a lot from them. And you learn who you can trust and who you can't trust. If you really try to work at it they can be very helpful to you in analyzing a situation.

Of course, there was a lot of foolish work like having to type up all kinds of answers to imaginary questions and stuff like that. I did speech writing. But the relationship was interesting. I learned a lot. That was an interesting year, but I wouldn't have done it for much longer.

Q: You have had two assignments in Latin America and one on the desk. The Bureau of Inter-American Affairs always seems to have a reputation of being off to one side, sort of an enclosed, incestuous organization and one that doesn't have quite the same clout as EUR and other Bureaus, with the great exception of Africa which wasn't even on the scene in those days. Did you have any feeling about the atmosphere of that?

VAKY: Yes, you got some of that. That we were sort of a separate little entity and all the snobs were in EUR, etc. They sneered at us as the minor leagues but we didn't mind because we had a lot more freedom than they had to do policy because of this very reason. This is very interesting up to that point. So it never bothered me, except it did affect your possibilities of assignment. Remember those April Fool cards?

Q: Yes, for the record, the Department would ask you to fill out a card with three choices for your next assignment which was due on the first of April. It became known as the April Fool's report because you so seldom got your choices.

VAKY: I used to put Athens, Madrid and Rome in different sequence each year. Of course, it never worked out. By the time you get up to about FSO-4 you realize there is an old boys' network working there and the longer you were in a Bureau the longer you were likely to be there because people knew you and other Bureaus didn't. So the choicer assignments were likely to go by somebody saying, "Gee I need somebody in this slot, who do I have? I know so-and-so and he might do it." So it worked differently. It didn't bother me, but you did get the feeling that there were sort of different groups.

After that year in public affairs I was asked to go to Seville which I was very tempted to do. My wife was pregnant with our third son. We had an Rh problem so I said that I would rather not at this point go abroad. So they delayed me and Seville was lost. It actually turned out okay because Bogota turned up as chief of the political section where Seville would have been the number two slot in the consulate.

I can remember Henry Dearborn, who was the office director, coming in and saying, "I would like you to go to Bogota, would you like to go?" "Sure."

It turned out to be my favorite post.

Q: You were there from 1959-63. Could you describe what the situation was there? Let's talk first about the embassy and the ambassadors and how they operated.

VAKY: Let me talk about the situation first because that is relevant to the other. Colombia had just come out of a dictatorship. Rojas Pinilla, an army general had been overthrown. It was the only dictatorship Colombia had this century, having had a long democratic tradition. In fact, it probably has had the longest history of a two party system in Latin America, it stretched into the 19th century. At that time the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party were two parties that together really dominated. There was really no other third party. They were not ideological parties despite their names. They were very similar to our parties. In them were represented all the social strata. Their traditions were different. The Conservative Party came out of a land

owning, Catholic conservative tradition. The Liberal Party grew out of urban labor, middle class groups. So they had different traditions, but it was hard to tell the difference between them, much like the Democratic and Republican parties in this country. But the parties had very great loyalties and functioned in a sense as a system for the political dynamics to move. That is to say, if you were a peasant out in the countryside and you wanted something, you would go to your ward boss, which was like the way the machines worked in this country. So the parties went down to the grass roots, but they, themselves, were channels of political activity. What was happening as you moved after World War II was that these traditional channels...the same thing that happened to our city machines...the developing bureaucracy, other developing interests that were extra political got in the way. So that if you were then a peasant wanting to do something you had a lot of channels to go to besides the party. So the party's capacity to aggregate power began to dissolve. However, what had happened was that the rivalry between the parties right after the war became very intense. Loyalty to a party was so intense that it was a way of life. It was almost like two armies going at each other. There were whole villages of Liberals and whole villages of Conservative. The bosses, that we would have called ward bosses, became in a sense in rural areas almost warlords. So you had that kind of an operation. The rivalry was very severe and when one party would come into power they would throw out everybody in the civil service...patronage was rife.

In 1948, in the middle of meeting of the Organization of American States, to which General Marshall, the Secretary of State, was there, a charismatic leader of the Liberal Party was assassinated in downtown Bogota, Jorge Gaitan. A Conservative government was in power and Gaitan was a very charismatic figure who some people were afraid of. His death set off a social explosion and you had what is now called the famous Bogotazo in which half the city was burned. You have to think of it, for example, in terms of what happened in Washington on the death of Martin Luther King. People just exploded. Resentments came out, no particular sense to it, a real explosion.

I wasn't there and obviously can't tell you about 1948, but that triggered a repressive action by the Conservative government on the Liberal Party and began what has since been called "La Violencia." The rivalry between the parties transcended just normal civil political activity into conflict and Colombia moved very close to civil war with very bitter fighting going on. It was that situation which allowed the military finally to take over because it was getting out of hand. So Rojas Pinilla, who was the head of the army, took over and became the president. Had he just pacified the country and gotten out, he probably would have been a hero, but he liked power and became a dictator. He was not a very smart dictator. He was very corrupt.

So, the traditional two parties said to themselves, "This guy is getting out of hand. Some of us thought he was all right if he could pacify the country, but this guy has gone too far and it won't do." The two leaders, Lleras Camargo and old Laureano Gomez of the Conservative Party, bitter enemies (these are parties that have killed each other) got together in Spain in exile and said, "Look, let's get this guy out of there so we can reconstruct the country. To do that we are going to have to mute our rivalries. Let's arrange a pact and agree on a way to run this." They agreed to do this. All this discontent stimulated a coup in 1957. Rojas Pinilla was thrown out and a junta was put in. The two parties agreed on this amazing pact called the National Front. What they said was if we start to vie with each other we are going to end up where we were before so until we

can reaccustom ourselves to civil behavior let's agree to split everything 50/50. That is to say that automatically the Liberals will have half of the congress, the Conservatives will have half of the congress -- half of everything will go to the other party. The presidency will rotate between the parties. The first president by mutual agreement was to be a Liberal, Lleras Camargo. He was a very fortunate choice, a great statesman. He was the first secretary general of the OAS. A very wise guy.

This whole experiment was fascinating. Here was a country, a great tradition, in effect dividing power, agreeing on something very artificially. Lleras Camargo took office in 1958 and I came on in 1959.

Q: And you were in charge of the political section.

VAKY: Yes, and that is why I say this is my favorite post. I had more fun in Bogota than anywhere else because Colombia was very open.

Q: I was going to ask how you dealt with both the people and the government?

VAKY: Very well. The parties, although they were bitter enemies, could get together. It is a little bit like the Senate. They could spit at each other and really have a lot of problems, but they are gentlemen. There is a club kind of deal. So you could talk to them both and they know you talk to them both and they didn't care. You would go into the clubs there for lunch and they are all there. Everybody greets everybody else and then they go off and scheme against each other. It was a very sophisticated political system and just fascinating.

What happened because you had only half of the offices guaranteed to the parties and they didn't compete against each other, competition took place within the parties at the primary. So you would have to know which Liberals were going to run for the Liberal seats in the Congress. So what you began to get was the party splitting into factions. It was as if you would say the Rockefeller wing and the Goldwater wing, etc. So you would have an election and congressional slates were made up by different planks on the Liberal side and different planks on the Conservative side, like two primaries running simultaneously. They knew they were going to get fifty, but which fifty. So you got that kind of deal.

The argument of who was going to be president was worked out all right but you had to take into account all of these tendencies. So the politics was just fascinating.

Q: Okay, the politics are fascinating. I served in Naples once and the people in Rome and Washington watched all this fascinating politics, but it came out as far as America went, or really the Italians, that it didn't mean anything, it was just a bunch of people switching jobs. What were American interests and what would be the reason for doing more than reporting that nothing has really changed?

VAKY: Not a great deal, I just found it fascinating. The American interests were obviously economic. Colombia is a big coffee producer. The head of the Coffee Federation was a very important figure for American economic interests. A major producer of petroleum although not a

major exporter. A country with substantial opportunities and so therefore American investment was quite large. So political stability and the economic management of the nation was of interest to us. It was strategically located being next to Panama. The friendship of that country for security reasons and the cooperation of the Colombian navy would be important. And you still had the residue of the violence. Rojas Pinilla was thrown out and the civilian government had taken over, but a lot of these guys that had been fighting in the name of the Liberals or Conservatives, went off and became bandit groups and were the origin of what is currently guerrilla insurgency. There was one insurgent group that was Marxist, the so-called FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia). They had roots going back to the twenties. There were areas near Bogota, way up in the mountains, that were their stronghold and you didn't get in there. So you had the beginnings of a security...

Q: Also Castro was at his real prime at that time. Did you feel that there or not?

VAKY: Yes, you did. You know there were rumors that Castro got his start in the Bogotazo when he was supposed to have been there as a student, but I don't know if that is true or not. But, yes, that was always a matter of concern. What would Castro do if he were going to be exporting revolution, what would you do there when you had an insurgency. The beginning of the Kennedy counterinsurgency stuff had its first sort of test in Colombia. Here was an insurgency that had gone on for a long time and the political violence had been muted so a lot of the country was pacified, but you still had these groups that were beginning to be...a lot of it was pure banditry...the start of ideological stuff. So it was a matter of great interest.

So it was an interesting country and an important country in all of those senses. What was happening was important to know.

Q: I take it that at that point drugs was not a particular problem?

VAKY: That came in my ambassadorship to Colombia.

Q: How did the two ambassadors...you had Dempster McIntosh and Fulton Freeman. Could you compare them?

VAKY: They were like night and day. When I arrived McIntosh was the ambassador. He was a nice guy who had no clue as to what was going on and no capacity to deal with Colombia. He didn't speak Spanish.

Q: Where did he come from?

VAKY: He was a businessman and had made his money, I think, in Philco. He had been chairman of the board or something like that. He had been Ambassador in Uruguay and had gotten this assignment and it was something for him to do. The staff had the feeling that we were carrying the load. He was the boss but we were doing it. The DCM was Milton Wells, a career man, who had probably a very difficult job in the care and feeding of Ambassador McIntosh while we tried to do the work of the embassy. I liked Dempster, but he just couldn't carry on the work. You had as president of Colombia one of the most distinguished statesmen in the

hemisphere and Dempster couldn't deal with him.

Q: Did Dempster know his limitations?

VAKY: Not really. We had some good friends in the press who were New York Times stringers and who had been long time friends of Lleras Camargo and they said, "You know, Lleras Camargo is interested in land reform and rural development and he would be interested in knowing whether the United States could help or not, wouldn't you like to talk to him?" I said, "I would love to talk to him." He said, "I'll arrange a little dinner at our house and the president will show up." I had a problem, what to do. The labor attaché at that time was also a friend, Bob Hurwitch, and we talked about it and decided the ambassador had to know. So I went and told the ambassador that I had this invitation and did he mind. I don't know whether he minded or not, but he said, "Oh, no, that is great." So we had dinner with the president and he expounded on his ideas on land reform. I wrote a long report to the Department saying here is a whole area where we could help and a lot came out of that.

Ambassador McIntosh didn't run the embassy. But neither did he bother us. He was a nice guy. He knew he needed us and I didn't feel any constraints from him as you might have gotten in some cases. He let me do all of the political reporting. I would tell him why I thought we should do such and such and he would say, "Okay." So it worked out okay.

Fulton Freeman, that was a different show. I think Tony Freeman was one of the best ambassadors I had. He did know what was going on. He came and boy you felt it.

Q: What was his background?

VAKY: Tony was an old China hand. He had had some security problems. He spoke Chinese. He told me once that he took the bull by the horns when he suspected that Scott McLeod was giving him some trouble and went to him and said, "If there is any doubt, let's clear it up. Let's sit down with your security people and tell me what is happening." He said he spent two days while they went over different things. He really cleared himself of any security questions. He was then working for Clare Boothe Luce. She liked him and gave him a good boost which I think is where his ambassadorship comes from. He had had a wide experience basically in the political field but military/political too. He was very shrewd in how you deal with a bureaucracy and how you manage. I learned a lot from him.

Q: How did he run the embassy?

VAKY: When he had a staff meeting you knew he ran it. He wanted reports, he had one-on-ones with you. He wanted to see everything and went through everything and a lot of it would come back with his remarks on it. You knew there was someone up there that you had to take into account. And he was smart. He also knew the country and spoke beautiful Spanish. He was a linguist. He was a good contact man so he would begin to know as much as you knew. But he knew how to use people. He said to me, as he did to his economic section chief, "Look, I want to learn this fast and I like one-on-ones, so what I would like to do is to meet the political leaders. I will invite them to the lunch, you and I and a leader. You pick them and line them up. We will

have a series of lunches." Now, that was great for me because I had the prestige of the ambassador to make these contacts and have these one-on-ones. He, on the other hand, never cut me out. He always used me because he knew he needed that too. But he was good and I respected him. So he ran a tight ship. His management was good. Staff meetings were terse and to the point and there were a lot of them to deal with different problems.

The way he tackled problems was interesting. From him you really could learn how to deal with other people in terms of putting yourself in their skin and working it out. He was a superb negotiator. He told the Foreign Minister, "Whether I have any problem or not, Mr. Minister, wouldn't it be a good idea if we had a kind of regular one-on-one meeting every two weeks or something like that?" The Foreign Minister said that was a great idea. He was just a good operator in that sense. So I thoroughly enjoyed that tour. And as I say, it was like night and day.

Q: This is the period of the Alliance for Progress, too. What was your impression of it at the time?

VAKY: I thought it was good and again Colombia was a beneficiary. The first Peace Corps contingent in Latin America was in Colombia. The idea was good I thought. We had a big program. I thought it was an exciting program. Latin America was getting its due.

Q: At last. How did you view the American military? The military groups, both the advisory and attaché, seemed to play a fairly large role in Latin America. How did they fit in the Colombia context?

VAKY: Again this was a question that I thought Freeman handled well and I think I benefited from it when I became an ambassador. It was the question of keeping his people under control. He wanted to know what they were doing and let them feel that he was helping them too. The problems in Colombia had to do with insurgency and with military training and assistance. The military attachés suffered from not having the best people.

Q: This has been rather a constant complaint.

VAKY: I think it has changed a little.

Q: They used it as retirement posts.

VAKY: Yes, it wasn't important to them, I guess. I always thought of them, and as head of the political section used them, as contact points. I wanted to know some of the military officers and would go through them just as the ambassador went through me to meet political leaders. But their intelligence reporting was not too good and certainly couldn't match the Agency's.

Q: This is obviously an unclassified interview, but how did you find in those days the Agency? Was it effective?

VAKY: They had good sources and were very cooperative. I had some good contacts. I think they played it straight.

Q: *You didn't have the feeling that they were working on their own agenda?*

VAKY: I am sure they had their own agenda but I didn't have any problems. Their role was acquisition, there were no political action things going on. There were a lot of personnel changes during the time I was there, but I had very close and open relationships with them discussing the situation and getting their view of the analysis. etc. I think we sort of fed each other.

Stu, I am going to have to take off.

Q: *Okay.*

SAMUEL D. EATON
Economic Officer
Bogota (1959-1965)

Samuel D. Eaton attended Drew University in 1940 and served in the Army Air Corps in 1943. He entered the Foreign Service in 1947. His first post was La Paz, Bolivia. He also served in Brazil, Thailand, Peru, Spain, and Ecuador as Deputy Chief of Mission. In 1979 he served as the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Latin American Affairs. This interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy in October 1990.

Q: *After a good, solid four-year assignment in Washington, you went to Bogotá, where you served from '59 to '65. Could you explain what were you doing?*

EATON: Well, yes. Actually, how I went to Bogotá is of some interest. I was assigned, in the normal processes, as consul in Pôrto Alegre, Brazil. But the Economic Bureau personnel people objected to the assignment. They had an economic officer that they wanted assigned an economic job. So they entered the picture and succeeded in changing my assignment from consul in Pôrto Alegre to head of the economic section (we were not called consuls at that point) in Bogotá, which was fine with me. So the Economic Bureau did have some clout at that stage.

Q: *Yes, it did.*

EATON: Initially, in Bogotá, I was head of the economic section. And we had a fairly sizable technical assistance program. But then along came Kennedy. President Kennedy came in, and the Alliance for Progress, and it was clear that we were going to do more in Colombia, and that we were going to move from technical assistance to a loan program.

A team came through, headed by Ted Moscoso, with Bill Bentser on it. It went around Latin America looking at our AID missions, and they stopped in Colombia and they interviewed a lot of us, asked us to give our comments on Colombia and how we were doing. I gave them a briefing on the Colombian economic situation, and at the end, I told them I thought they were on

the wrong track if they felt that bringing in people from business to head AID missions was going to do the job. I said they'd get second-rate people from business, whose career was on a plateau or at a dead end, who didn't know anything about aid, and they'd be in trouble.

Q: Was this one of the options that was being considered at that time?

EATON: That's right. There was an idea of bringing in business tycoons on AID missions. Well, to my surprise, a month or two later, they suggested that I be deputy director of the AID mission. They needed somebody with a macroeconomic background. The director of the mission was experienced in technical assistance, but he didn't have that type of background. They were moving into a loan program, so they needed somebody with that type of background. And in due course, I was appointed. So for the latter part of my assignment, I had the dual function of deputy director of the AID mission and head of the economic section.

And something occurred in that period of time that I'd like to describe, because I think it relates to a lot that's happened in Latin America since then and is still going on.

We did a lot of innovative things in this early Alliance for Progress period, particularly in Bogotá, which was sort of singled out as a country where one could do things. Things that lasted and were quite good: an educational TV program; a large, low-cost housing program in an area where there had been an airport outside of Bogotá, which became called Ciudad Kennedy (Kennedy City); loans to small industry from counterpart program loans. Things that were new conceptually and I think quite effective.

But the center of our program was what was called program loans. And this was a new concept. The idea was that you would do a five-year plan, and that plan would have a lot of detail in it over peripheral programs, but the centerpiece of it would be where the economy of X developing country should go, and what macroeconomic policies would be necessary to lead it in that direction, and then you would negotiate those policies with the country on the basis of a loan that would be large enough to effect policy.

And we did that in Colombia that year [1959]. We produced a five-year plan in the mission and we negotiated with the government. I directed the production of the plan and I did most of the negotiating. The plan, I think, was fundamentally a sound one, and people, both on the Colombian side and our side, years afterward, said they were still following the direction we set out at that time.

The reason I mention this is because I found that in the AID business we did more long-term planning certainly than we did on the State Department side. We did annual policy papers and so forth, but they were really not planning papers on the State side, except for a period of time in the Latin America field. I'm sure it wasn't done to the same extent in the European field.

Q: No, I'm sure it wasn't. Who were the ambassadors when you were there?

EATON: Well, there were a number over the six-year period. We started out with a political appointee, Dempster McIntosh, who was, of course, completely ineffective.

Q: Was he just inexperienced?

EATON: Oh, he'd been ambassador in three posts, he had that experience, but he had little idea of what he was supposed to be doing or how to accomplish it, which is, of course, one of our pet peeves. He was a nice person, I liked him personally and all of that, but he was ineffective as ambassador. I went with him to see the president of Colombia once, I don't know, for some reason, on some economic issue, Alberto Lleras, who was an extraordinary man, and the ambassador was so nervous at that meeting that he scarcely lasted through the meeting.

The subsequent ambassadors were Fulton Freeman, Tony Freeman, who, of course, was tremendously effective. Covey Oliver, another type of political appointee, he was a very able man with a legal background. But those were the three ambassadors.

Q: With AID and the economic section, did you find that you were inhibited, or could you pretty well go ahead and do what you felt you should do within the embassy?

EATON: Well, I was the deputy director of AID and I was in charge of the economic section, but as it worked out, AID occupied most of my time. So my deputy in the economic section really had to run the economic section, which was mainly a reporting function, although the commercial area was involved, too. The main problem there was having a person who felt confident in running the economic section without having to come back to me too much. And this was difficult at times because some of the younger AID officers were very bright and they worked more directly with me, because for the AID program, we needed to have financial analysis, and they did the financial analysis. So the interrelation was not all that easy, particularly for my deputy in the economic section, I think.

But in terms of the overall direction of the mission, I don't think there was a problem, because the AID issues were the big issues for the time, so the ambassador, particularly, was much involved in the AID issues. What we decided to do had to be approved by the ambassador. However, there was a great deal of independence by the missions. That is, in the case of AID, mission directors were given a lot of leeway on how they dealt with problems and programs. We did a plan which was approved in Washington where funding came from Washington, but how we handled the negotiations and so forth was basically up to us.

I think we had a very successful period, both in setting up broad planning bases for what should be done for a period of a number of years but also in the negotiations themselves. The negotiations were sort of incremental. We would go through a negotiation one year for a loan, we'd make a little progress on economy policy, and then the next year we'd try to make more.

The two fundamental economic policy issues that we dealt with were an exchange rate and fiscal policy. We were trying to get the budget under control.

And I must say I laugh at the problems we have in the United States; they are so minor compared to the problems that a country like Colombia had to deal with to get its budget under control. These were minor problems and they'll be resolved eventually, but they should have been

resolved a long time ago in our case.

The exchange rate was a very interesting issue, because the International Monetary Fund had favored fixed rates and had not yet moved to the idea that you should have flexible rates to move and to reflect the market. However, in the period of our negotiations with Colombia (and we negotiated in tandem with the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank to a great degree; they had missions coming down, we discussed things with them, and we tried to take the same line), but one of the things that happened was that we moved off this fixation on the fixed rate. And we moved, I think for the first time, to the idea of what was called a crawling pegged rate that would move as relative rates of inflation moved, so that the country could be competitive with respect to exports. That occurred, I think, first in Colombia and later in Brazil.

In any event, the result... [TAPE ENDED] ...when it was clear that the stand we were taking in the negotiations might lead to the fall of the government and it might lead to a coup against the government.

Q: Because your controls were getting tight?

EATON: We were asking them to do something with respect to the exchange rate that they felt might lead to the fall of the government and that they were unwilling to do. But we were convinced if it wasn't done, that the economy of Colombia could never prosper, that the government would fall sooner or later or something would happen, and it would be equally bad in any event. So we made the conscious decision that we were going to stick with this. We were not going to provide a new program and funding unless there was this basic reform with respect to an exchange rate policy, also a fiscal policy but basically an exchange rate policy, even if the government fell over that.

Well, by that time I was back in Washington as deputy director of the Office of North Coast Affairs, which included Colombia, Venezuela, and then-British Guyana. And one day we received a message saying that a group of businessmen and political people had met with the Colombian president, and they had told him that he had to change the minister of finance and, thus, economic policy. A new minister of finance came in with the commitment to adopt the economic policy reforms that we had been advocating. So I wrote a note to Covey Oliver, as ambassador, and I said, "A coup has occurred. It's the one wanted, not the one we feared."

And it had. That had been a sea change in funding economy policy. This was 1965. They adopted the principle of a moving peg at the exchange rate. They had been in and out of austere fiscal policies, they adopted responsible fiscal policies.

And I am convinced that because of our efforts in this period of time and because of our firmness in negotiations, Colombia over the last twenty-five years has avoided the type of experience that Brazil and Argentina have had, and Peru and Bolivia and even Mexico, of periods of hyperinflation, with all of its political and social consequences, and of the accumulation of extraordinary debt. Colombia is a low-debt country because of this I am sure. So I think we made the major contribution.

And I think the Alliance for Progress, which is often denigrated as not having been effective, was very effective in Colombia. Colombia has very serious problems with the drug traffic, but that's a different issue. And Colombia, from their backsliding on economic policy from time to time, has not been perfect, but in general their economic policy line has been a very good one and their economy has done well. And I think we can say that we played a part in it.

Q: Again, moving from sort of the megapicture to a minor picture, I'm also interested in some of the relations within the embassy, particularly because of your two hats. There was a period of time when AID employees were living on a different set of allowances and all. I never served in one of these countries at the time it happened, but there was a lot of unhappiness in that AID was living higher off the hog than the rest of the embassy. Was this happening in Colombia?

EATON: No question about it, I lived much, much better. The AID people gave me their perks. I had a chauffeur, I had a better house, better furnishings. They provided the furnishings, which I wasn't provided. I wasn't provided two salaries, though.

Q: How did this play within the embassy and with the ambassadors and the rest of the mission?

EATON: Well, our accommodations weren't at a level to compete with the ambassador, and I didn't note any recriminations from anybody else in the embassy. I suppose my accommodations and perquisites were close to those of the DCM but perhaps not quite those of his.

Q: What about staffing of AID? You'd been in and out of AID a number of times, how did you find recruitment for people for AID at this particular time?

EATON: I was very impressed by the AID people. This was a period of high morale and the early Alliance for Progress period. Very good people came in from legal careers and other careers who felt that this was something that was important to do.

Q: This was sort of a reflection of the Kennedy era.

EATON: Yes, for instance, our housing man was a person who had made a fortune in housing. Not that he was a man who enjoyed conspicuous consumption, he was not, but he had made a fortune and was independently wealthy. But he wanted to do something that made a contribution, and so he joined AID. He was a great person. He did a marvelous job in the housing field for us. We had a couple of young lawyers, one of whom eventually replaced me as deputy director, who could have commanded much higher salaries in the legal profession, but they decided they wanted to do this. They went on to command much higher salaries later. We had very good people, very good people in AID. I was very impressed.

You had the feeling that you were actually doing something -- and you were. Things happened, you affected events. It was a period in history when you could, in countries like this.

Q: You then left Bogotá and went to ARA to be the deputy director of North Coast Affairs. Besides the Colombian thing, was there anything else we should touch on there?

EATON: I don't think so. That was rather brief, because there was the idea of having a summit between President Johnson and the Latin American presidents. This was Walt Rostow's idea. There was a feeling that, after Kennedy, who had some progress, AID lost some of its bloom and there could be a renewal through a summit meeting. So after a year as deputy director of North Coasts Affairs, I became sort of the chief of staff person for preparations for the summit meeting.

That was an interesting exercise, and I went all over Latin America with Sol Linowitz, who came in at that period of time as ambassador to the OAS to make sure the summit was well organized and had a reasonable purpose and was successful. It was an interesting year.

The summit...well, times changed. The summit was successful in a limited sense. It occurred. The presidents met, which was unusual. An American president usually didn't spend that much time with Latin Americans at that time (George Bush is an exception). And that was appreciated. But nothing really came from it that affected the future very much.

Q: With the Alliance for Progress, did you have the feeling that the impetus was going down?

EATON: Oh, yes. Yes. Well, I always believed that it should be temporary. I did not think we should be that deeply involved in the affairs of the countries of Latin America for very long. In the case of Colombia, I thought we could be involved for four or five years, but then we should really get out.

As a matter of fact, that was part of the argument when I came back to Washington. I argued that it was time to reduce our presence in Colombia, after the success of that negotiation, and turn it more over to the Fund and the Bank. And Lincoln Gordon didn't agree with me. But eventually one of the Colombian presidents decided on his own that it was time for us to reduce our presence. We could have done it more gracefully if we had withdrawn a bit earlier, but he decided it for us, and he was right I think.

Q: Well, you came back for a tour in Latin American Affairs again. What were you doing?

EATON: I was deputy assistant secretary for Latin American Affairs and my responsibilities were the South American countries. And since most of the focus was on Central America in that period, I had more of a free hand.

There are two things in that period of time that I think are of particular interest, that stand out in my mind. And then comes the end of my career.

One was the hostage-taking in Bogotá, Diego Agencio and the other ambassadors taken hostage by the M-19 terrorist group at the Dominican Republic Embassy.

I think the handling of that case should be studied as an example of how hostage issues should be dealt with. Every one is a bit different, I guess, but I think, generally speaking, time is on the side of the hostages, not the people who take them hostage, unless they're an irrational, violent group. And this is perhaps not appreciated. We're an impatient people and we want to do things right away, but it's difficult to do.

In this case, well, Diego, of course, was the greatest possible hostage.

Q: *Yes, you couldn't pick a better person.*

EATON: He handled himself marvelously.

Q: *He, by the way, wrote a book called Our Man Inside.*

EATON: Yes, I know. I haven't read it, but I know he did that.

In Washington, the people who had the responsibility for our day-to-day response to this were myself and Tony Quainton. Tony Quainton was director of the office of anti-terrorism at that time, and I was deputy assistant secretary. Tony ran the task force that responded, and Tony and I were in contact all the time on their actions.

And the man who handled the response in Colombia was the president of Colombia, Turbay, who handled it personally. We had contact with Turbay through two methods. One was through a chargé, Frank Crigler, who was very, very good. And the other was through the Colombian ambassador here in Washington, Virgil Barco, who later, of course, became president of Colombia and has just left the presidency, and who was also a liberal politician whom I had known since my AID times in Colombia when he had been minister of agriculture. But I could call Barco at any time, and Barco would call Turbay if the contact through our chargé, Crigler, was for one reason or another not appropriate or... So we had instant contact, almost, with the president of the Colombian government on this.

The Colombian government correctly took the point of view that, while they surrounded the Dominican Embassy residence with police and troops, they were not going to move in unless they felt the hostages were in physical danger. And they told the guerrilla group that was the policy.

And we approved that policy, we agreed with that. We took the position, of course, that we were not going to try to negotiate with those who had taken the hostages, that our basic policy was that you don't do that, that you're not going to pay them off, because that merely encourages future such incidents.

Some of the other countries were less than firm on that; they were prepared to pay off.

The Colombian government took that position also. However, they established a negotiating process. They appointed negotiators who met, in a van outside the residence, with the representative of the guerilla group, a young woman whom Diego and the Mexican ambassador became friends with and whom they would sort of counsel, actually.

In any event, all of this went like that, with established policy, and good contacts with the Colombian government, and daily reporting to the top on what was going on, to the secretary and to the president.

Everything was going fine, but time passed. And as time passed, the families got more and more upset, and the pressures grew on the top to do something. And so the president decided he should have a review of the situation, and there was a National Security Council staff meeting. Brzezinski was out of town, his deputy was out of town, so Dave Newsom, curiously, chaired them, and Tony Quainton and I wound up as the staff people.

At that meeting, a military aide in the White House presented the case for the use of a SWAT team. He described how it was done and he said, "We can do this in a few minutes, with no casualties." He said, "We know we can do it. We've studied it and we know we can do it."

Graham Crater, who was deputy secretary of defense, said, "Let's go. Let's do it. This is what we should do. We should have done it a long time ago." The Latin Americanist on the National Security staff argued for it. I don't know whether he was doing this just to be a devil's advocate or whether he really believed it. Tony Quainton was equivocal, and I think he crippled his position. But I argued as strongly as I could against it. I said, "There's no guarantee that you won't have any casualties. The first casualty will be our ambassador. Moreover, I think our policy will work. Give it time."

And I was supported by the head of CIA, Admiral [Turner?]. He, of course, was much more effective than I was, because he was in a much higher position, and told them, "You don't know whether this will work or not, and it's a big risk."

Well, we left that meeting and drove back to the department with Dave Newsom. And I said, "Dave, I'm really uncomfortable about this. It would be an absolute disaster if the president checks the wrong box of his night reading. I want to be assured that we'll have the right of appeal if he makes the wrong decision."

So Dave said, "Well, we're going to have a chance to look at the recommendations that go to him."

And so we did and put in what we could. Fortunately, he made the right decision and came back saying we should have a SWAT team in readiness but we should not act.

Later I told Diego about this and Diego said, "You were absolutely right. I would have been the first to go. I would have been dead."

And the Colombians handled it beautifully. There were three issues. One was release of the so-called political prisoners, the M-19 terrorist prisoners, from jail. The second was free passage of the terrorist group who had done the hostage-taking, out of the country. And the third was to give them some money.

Well, the Colombians finessed the principal issue in a very brilliant way. They invited the Inter-American Human Rights Commission to send observers to the trials of the M-19 prisoners. Prior to that, somebody from the Inter-American Human Rights Commission had had contact with the M-19 and gained their confidence. So the M-19 eventually agreed that, rather than having a

release of their colleagues from prison, they would have trials observed by the Inter-American Human Rights Commission.

Then the Colombians, without our saying yea or nay, agreed to safe passage of both the hostage-takers and the hostages out of the country.

I don't know who paid the money. We did not. We did not agree to that. But somebody paid some money. I think it was the Venezuelans.

So, I don't know how long it was after it happened, but it was resolved and Diego and the rest of them came out all right.

Q: It was at least a month, I think, wasn't it?

EATON: It was at least a month and it probably was longer. But it could have ended in disaster . . . at that time?

Q: This often is the case, where the military assures things that they can't assure. It's part of their training.

EATON: Some military. Some military are very conservative, and I would guess that if this issue had been debated further within the military, this young man might have...well, I don't know -- Graham Crater, after all, was the under secretary of defense.

Q: You were mentioning one other thing that you were dealing with.

EATON: Well, the other thing is one of the basic issues of the Carter administration, and that was support for democracy, which became a basic tenet of the Reagan administration later, and also the Carter administration, greater emphasis on human rights.

JAMES L. TULL

Vice Consul

Cali (1960)

James L. Tull was born in Iowa. After serving in the US Navy from 1951-1955 he received his bachelor's degree and his master's degree at the University of Colorado. His career included positions in Colombia, England, Uruguay, Dominican Republic, Cyprus, and Costa Rica. Mr. Tull was interviewed by Raymond Ewing in May 2001.

Q: Then you went off to our small consulate in Cali, Columbia as a vice consul.

TULL: Yes, three officers, one American secretary, and seven Colombian staff. It was an excellent little post in a beautiful city. Years later when I was DCM (Deputy Chief of

Mission) in Bogota, we wanted to go back to Cali to visit friends, but unfortunately because of the drug-related security problems in that area, our RSO (Regional Security Officer) simply would not permit it.

Q: The consulate in Cali was closed at some point.

TULL: Yes, both Cali and Medellin were closed in the 1970s and still have not reopened because of the narco-guerilla security problem.

Q: But at the time you were there in the early 1960s, you probably did both consular and administrative work.

TULL: Yes, and quite a bit of commercial work too. The all-around nature of the work was nearly ideal for a new officer at his first post. Jack Ohmans was our consul and officer in charge; Harrison Sherwood was the other vice consul during my tour. We had a good sized AID (Agency for International Development) program headquartered in Cali which ran our education effort for the whole country, and a small USIS (United States Information Service) operation, too.

Q: Shortly after you arrived in Colombia, John F. Kennedy was elected president. He placed a lot of emphasis on Latin America.

TULL: He visited Colombia about midway through my tour and I was fortunate enough to get called up to Bogota to work for our DCM, Henry Dearborn, who was control officer for the visit. I worked for Henry for about a month prior.

Q: A presidential visit at any time can be both exciting and demanding. Did you stay through the visit?

TULL: Yes, until wheels up and for a couple more days of dismantling things. You're right, it was really demanding on all the staff, but heady too. It was my first glimpse at the effect of presidential power on any event and it was well beyond impressive. We were never short of anything we needed and there was usually six of everything instead of just one.

Q: The announcement of the "Alliance for Progress" was actually made in Bogota?

TULL: My memory might be faulty, but I recall he announced it during a speech at a new workers suburb we were building which the Colombians named, "Barrio Kennedy." Of course a number of months earlier, he had announced the formation of the Peace Corps. I think because of his visit, Colombia (and luckily for us) and the Cali area received the first group of volunteers assigned anywhere in Latin America, "Colombia One." A superb but overtrained group of young people who badly wanted work, not more preparation!

Q: In your notes, you reminded me that while you were in Cali, there was something going on called "la violencia." What was that? What, if any, experience did you personally have with it?

TULL: For many years there had been a history of spasmodic violence and bloodshed between the adherents of the Liberal and Conservative Parties in Colombia. Finally, in Bogota in mid-1948, the very popular Liberal leader (and possible president) Jorge Eliecer Gaitán was assassinated. The country simply blew up. Over the next decade and a half, a quarter million or more men, women, and children were slaughtered in waves of violence that touched nearly every family in the country. This went on until both the Liberals and Conservatives agreed to rotate the presidency of the country between the two parties for a fifteen-year cooling off period. The first president appointed under this scheme was a Liberal newspaperman, Dr. Alberto Lleras Camargo, who was also a very wise and wily politician. He really held the country together and was finishing his term when I arrived. By that time the political violence was dying out but being replaced by an equally bloody siege of banditry and murder particularly in the rural countryside. Many of the best known bandits had nicknames, such as “La Mosca” (The Fly) and “Sangre Negra” (Black Blood.)

When we got to Bogota years later, the GOC (Government of Colombia) was heavily engaged in battles against several terrorist groups, of which the largest was the FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia.) Its senior leader was one Manuel Marulanda whose name struck a distant but familiar note to me. It took me several months to remember that during my Cali tour, he had been just another bloodthirsty bandit named, “Tiro Fijo” (Sure Shot) sneaking about the countryside, stealing coffee and murdering peasants. But now he was Don Manuel Marulanda, a very respected guerilla leader. Time flies.

Q: So the violence was subsiding during the time you were there.

TULL: Yes, but it was still dangerous in the countryside after dark and possibly fatal if you were accidentally caught in it.

Q: But in the city of Cali, day-to-day, normal activity was friendly.

TULL: Absolutely. Cali was a lovely city of about 700,000, 3,000 feet up in the Cauca Valley not far off the equator. It had a dry and temperate climate, almost spring-like all year around. It was one of the nicest climates we’ve ever experienced.

KEITH EARL ADAMSON
Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Bogota (1961-1963)

Keith Earl Adamson was born in Kansas in 1917. He began working for the Department of State in 1942 in the motion picture section of the Cultural Relations Division. He later became part of USIA when it was formed. His posts included Egypt, Turkey, Colombia, Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand. This interview was conducted in 1988 by Earl Wilson.

ADAMSON: In 1961 I was assigned to Bogota. PAO Bogota, Colombia, at last. Latin America was my academic area of specialization.

Q: Tell us about that assignment.

ADAMSON: Just before I went, I had my orders. Ed Murrow became Director of the Agency, and he called me in and asked if I would like to be his -- what did they call them in those days -- special assistant -- his "gofer." And I was very tempted because of my admiration for Ed, but I finally got up the nerve to say, "I've been trying to get to Latin America for a great many years, and this was my first opportunity."

Q: What year was that again?

ADAMSON: 1961. I said I had a feeling that he would be able to find a good number of people who know their way through the bureaucratic jungle to help avoid the pitfalls and traps, but who aren't interested in going overseas, and who do not know the language already and have to go through training to get there.

So he said, "Fine," and I went. It was my first country PAO assignment, and my ambassador, Fulton Freeman, who had been political officer in Rome, political officer in Belgium, and chargé for a period, was at his first post as ambassador. We were doing a good job of learning together.

Of course, he had learned some Italian while he was in Italy; he'd learned French from a lot of different places along the line, and his academic area was China, and he spoke Chinese. But he worked very hard on his Spanish, and before very long he was delivering speeches in Spanish. As we would ride along home, I would say, "Everything was perfect except . . ." and I would point out some of the things that he had made mistakes in. He never made them again. That was a very pleasant tour, where you can have that kind of communication with your chief.

Q: I understand that people who live in Bogota feel that they speak better Spanish than anywhere else in Latin America, and also that it's sort of the cultural heartland of Latin America. Is that so?

ADAMSON: It may have been. People don't think of Bogota and Colombia, in general, in those terms these days, with all the news about drug tycoons and the murders of those who try to make the wheels of justice run. All over Latin America, they would say, "Where did you learn your good Spanish?"

I'd say, "I learned it here and there and so on. I lived in Bogota for two years."

"Oh, yes. You lived in Bogota. That's where you get the best Spanish." So it's not just the Colombians who say that. It's the reputation that they have all over.

Nonetheless, it's a high altitude place (9,000 feet), and a lot of people prefer not to live at that high an altitude. For the first year, I was just exhilarated by it, then after a while, I got to the

point where I would be delighted to take a Sunday off and drive down the mountain to get to a tropical climate for a few hours.

Colombia was a fascinating place. I think I mentioned earlier that when I got to Colombia, Stan Swinton, who was at that time Vice President of AP for international operations, came in, in preparation for John F. Kennedy's visit. He and I had been in Cairo together. He was asking me about what I thought of the Colombians and all this, and I was comparing my experience in Cairo, my experience in Turkey, with my experience there. I said, "You know, in Cairo, in the monarchy days, most people had no hope for the future, and they were probably right until the revolution and the monarchy ended. In Turkey, they had all the confidence in the world, and it was exaggerated. They didn't deserve to be quite that confident in their ability to solve all their problems, but it was fascinating. Whereas in Colombia, I found that they didn't have any confidence, and they had all the reason in the world to have confidence. They had resources, they had a well-educated middle class. The only problem was they had a fairly large oligarchy that had somewhat the same role and power that the monarchy had, and so they felt restricted, they felt constrained. They didn't think they would have that chance to use whatever talents they had."

Q: Was there an insurrection going on at the time?

ADAMSON: By the time I got there, they had already agreed on "alternation" where the two major political parties would take turns with the presidency. Alberto Lleras Camargo was president then. He was a wonderful man, a professor. They had an election while I was there, and Luis Guillermo Valencia from Pompayan was elected. He had a reputation as a great extemporaneous speaker and poet. No, his father was the poet. But he was also the brunt of a lot of jokes, particularly amongst the press. I can't put any of the kind that they told on tape. I'll tell you later.

However, there was a great deal of violence in the countryside. The Army and the police were constantly battling with the guerrillas. One of the main reasons was the guerrillas were preying upon plantation owners and farmers and villages to support themselves. They had to have money and they had to have food. So that was mostly why they were running into these gun battles with the forces of law and order. It was a way of life. It was no longer political.

Q: Wasn't there a president of Colombia who made quite a reputation for building democracy in that country?

ADAMSON: Of course, the great hero -- oh, man, this is a horrible thing this morning; my memory has faded on me.

Q: Never mind. It will come back. This was the beginning, with President Kennedy, of the campaign for -- what was it called?

ADAMSON: Alianza para el Progreso.

Q: The Alliance for Progress. Right. And I suppose the program was putting a lot of emphasis on that.

ADAMSON: Definitely, because that was the President's principal thrust in Latin America. The Agency for International Development practically changed its name to Alliance for Progress. Everything else that was going on, the CARE programs were doing their best to contribute to some of the same kinds of projects. The Peace Corps volunteers who arrived while I was there, were trying to do the same kind of thing as the Alliance for Progress; they were trying to carry out the spirit of working together. It got a good reception in Latin America.

Q: How did you find the Peace Corps people?

ADAMSON: Almost 99.9% pure. They were likable, hard working, dedicated young people. I was really impressed by them. One of the joys was, when you had a visitor, to be able to jump in the car and go out to one of the villages where they were working, and they were delighted to show off what the people of the community had done in building a new school or a new water supply or something of that sort. It was really great.

Q: You were in Bogota for two years.

ADAMSON: Two years, with every intention of going back. One of the things I had gotten the ambassador, the head of the political section, the head of the economic section, the head of AID, to agree to was that they would work with me on a card file, by name, of all of the leaders in the government and business and professions and the media, and that we would record what they thought about certain issues that affected the United States-Colombia relations.

Q: That is another very, very important development that could have been used all over the world.

ADAMSON: Not that we would stop doing our general efforts to increase understanding of the United States and its policies and its culture and so on, but that we would be much more targeted with respect to the leaders and the opinion makers. And they all agreed, and we were going to keep on those cards very brief reports of conversations on any one of those issues, and whether or not they were able to provide them information that would change their mind if they happened to be negative.

That was pending when I got back on home leave. I was one of the first to enjoy the Airstream trailer. I got a car and a trailer and took the family and we traveled... and back to Washington, D.C. just in time to start the counterinsurgency course at the Foreign Service Institute.

Q: The counterinsurgency, that was a very interesting and important development. Can you comment on that, how it started, what it was, what you thought of it?

ADAMSON: It was an interesting series of lectures and discussions running all the way from Mao Zedong's writings, about the guerrillas and the indirect support for revolution (the fish that swim in the sea of the population of public opinion), as well as examining some of the very specific insurgencies that were taking place, namely where I was, in Bogota, in Colombia, and in the Middle East and in Vietnam and so on. I must say that I felt it lasted longer than it should

have. In other words, here I was on leave, anxious to get back to my post, and I felt they could have done it in half the time, at least, and covered all the same materials.

Q: *And it was a requirement.*

ADAMSON: It was a requirement.

Q: *That was Bobby Kennedy's brainchild.*

ADAMSON: That's right. That was Bobby Kennedy's brainchild. Of course, we'd already gotten into the whole subject of limited warfare at the War College, and it was touched on in this one. But again, I say, I'm glad I took it, but I felt I had already been through a great deal of what was being presented, and it would have been done in a shorter period of time.

Q: *You did not return to Bogota, is that right?*

ADAMSON: That is right. I got a telephone call. Well, I was having lunch with Hugh Ryan, who was the area director at the time, over at -- what's that place in Georgetown -- Sans Souci. I was having lunch with him, and over at the next table were Henry Loomis and Ed Murrow. So we finished up before they did, and they invited us to stop at their table. At that point, Ed Murrow said, "Keith, I want you to not go back to Bogota. I want you to go over to the Voice of America and be Henry's deputy."

Q: *Did you know Henry at that time?*

ADAMSON: I'd met him, yes. Working as program officer in the area, I dealt with all the media programs.

Q: *But you didn't particularly know him well?*

ADAMSON: I didn't know him well.

Q: *This came as quite a surprise, then?*

ADAMSON: Oh, yes, absolutely. Out of the blue.

Q: *Quite a compliment, too, since Murrow, with his background, and Loomis with his.*

ADAMSON: I had known Ed Murrow. I don't know who it was -- one person I know who had recommended me highly to Ed Murrow was Tom Sorensen. Tom and I had worked very closely together for a long time, and Ed Murrow was listening to the Sorensen brothers in those days. Well, the President was listening to one, and Ed was listening to the other one.

Q: *Right.*

ADAMSON: But it was interesting, because then the argument started going back and forth

between Henry Loomis and Hugh Ryan as to where I should go, while Ed and I listened. But nonetheless, I explained this project I had mentioned a moment ago, about trying to target our information and persuasion to very specific leaders, and that I wanted to get back and keep that going. Ed finally made the decision. He said, "Well, Keith, one thing is you can always believe that that was going to be the most successful project that you ever had in your life while you are there at the Voice of America, helping Henry." And that ended it.

So then I started my arguments with Lionel Mosley, who was head of personnel. I said, "Mose, I've got to get back to Bogota."

And he said, "No, no, you've got your new orders already cut to go to Voice of America."

I said, "I've got to go back to Bogota." The reason was my family had traveled already back to Bogota, because I'd gone to the counterinsurgency course, and the boys had to get back to go to school. I knew the regulations, that I would have to pay for all of that travel out of my own pocket if I didn't have orders back to Bogota.

So Mose called me one day and said, "Keith, you've got to go back to Bogota."

I said, "That's what I've been trying to tell you." .

So I went back. I was there about three weeks and settled up my affairs, and then headed back in October.

Q: Just in observation, it seems to me that in those days, personnel was not very geared to the needs of families like today, I understand.

ADAMSON: That's a big change. They were just beginning to permit wives to go to language class, and they were beginning to invite wives to orientation for duty in a country, as beginners, but nothing like what they're doing today.

ROBERT F. WOODWARD
Assistant Secretary for Latin American Affairs
Washington, DC (1961-1962)

Robert F. Woodward was born and raised in Minneapolis, Minnesota. He entered the Foreign Service in 1932. His career included several Deputy Chief of Mission posts: Bolivia, Guatemala, Cuba, and Sweden. He was ambassador to Costa Rica, Uruguay, Chile, and Spain. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on two different occasion, once in 1987, and again in 1990.

Q: You were in Washington for about two years, was it, dealing with Latin American affairs?

WOODWARD: You mean during my assignment as Assistant Secretary?

Q: *Yes.*

WOODWARD: No. I reported for duty on the 7th of July, and I think I left in the first week of March. I was only there that relatively short length of time that Bowles had mentioned.

Of course, Bowles, in the meantime, had gone elsewhere. I think he'd gone back to India. He went to the White House for a while, because he was impractical as Under Secretary, too idealistic. He wasn't sufficiently realistic in what could be accomplished. I remember his conviction that we should be able to lift up the state of the economy and the life of Haiti, a small country of about 3 million people. There has seemed to be absolutely no way that the United States could make very much progress in improving the conditions in Haiti. So that was one specific instance of a certain lack of realism on the part of Bowles, but he was a very well-meaning fellow.

When I had been on the job about five months, when, the first of December, I was asked by Rusk whether I wanted to leave. He said that he would be glad to recommend me for the embassy in Argentina, and I said, "That would be a splendid assignment. I'd like to go there." But I said, "I want to do exactly what you want me to do. If you want me to stay here, I'll stay, particularly since there's a meeting coming up in Punta del Este [Uruguay]." We had had the Alliance for Progress meeting in August, and the meeting in Punta del Este, which was the same place we had had the Alliance for Progress meeting, was going to be to try to figure out what could be done about "quarantining" the subversive activities of the Castro Government in the Caribbean countries, in particular. The Cubans were sending little guerrilla forces into Central American countries; and they sent one to Venezuela and were evidently intent on doing this anywhere they saw an opportunity.

The Colombian Government, Lleras Camargo, the president of Colombia, who had been the Secretary General of the OAS, had told my predecessor said that he thought his government could propose some measures that would have the effect of slowing down or stopping this subversive activity on the part of the Castro Government, and that we should go ahead and have a meeting of the Latin American countries to consider such measures.

Before the meeting took place, it had not been possible to agree on any proposals that were going to be presented. It was getting to be a little nip- and-tuck as to what was going to happen at the meeting. When Rusk mentioned to me that I might go to Argentina, if I wished, I said, "I'd like to see you through this meeting, because I think it's going to be very difficult." We had about three conversations on this subject. He said, finally, "I want you to stay."

So I stayed. In the meantime, in the course of this reshuffle -- as a number of people have called it, the "first of December massacre" . . .

Q: *You mean when the Kennedys . . .*

WOODWARD: This was the time when Walter McConaughy, who was head of the Far Eastern division, was sent out to be ambassador to Pakistan, and Harriman was brought to replace him on

the first of December of 1961. A couple of other changes were made, and it was decided that Dick Goodwin, who had been the President's advisor and helped him in his campaign on Latin American affairs, would be sent over to be my deputy, and he would help in getting some kind of draft agreement in advance of the projected meeting. He would travel around to get some agreement on what we were going to accomplish at the meeting which was going to take place about the end of January or the first of February.

Anyhow, as the ensuing weeks went by, Goodwin didn't seem to be getting anywhere with this, and the Colombians didn't seem to be getting anywhere with their ideas. We got down to Punta del Este, and the Secretary of State was closeted with the foreign ministers of the big countries and the Colombians who had proposed the meeting. The Argentines and Brazilians and Chileans were closeted with Secretary Rusk. He had Goodwin at his side, trying to figure out some formula which we could apply to curtail the interventions of the Castro Government.

We were getting close to the end of the scheduled period of the meeting, and nothing had been agreed to. I really had not been privy to the main negotiations; I wasn't with the Secretary during his discussions. Trying to do something useful, I tried to find out why one Caribbean country, Haiti, was not inclined to take action unfriendly to Castro. I made it my business to talk with the Haitian ambassador to the U.S., a decent fellow, who was a principal psychiatrist of Port-au-Prince. He and the Haitian Foreign minister told me that the reason that they were not voting with the U.S. is that they felt they were being unfairly treated under the AID legislation, that they had negotiated a loan for the improvement of the airport at Port au Prince, and that this was being stopped now because of the Hickenlooper Amendment to the aid legislation which provided that if any American firm was being unfairly treated by a foreign government, that government was not eligible for aid. The Haitian Government had run up a debt with one of the American oil companies, buying petroleum, and the allegation was that they weren't paying on this debt. The foreign minister and the ambassador told me that they had made some payments, and they were struggling to get the money together to make additional regular payments and settle the debt, and they thought they were being treated with rather premature drastic action in the suspension of this export-import bank loan.

We had the support of 12 countries for a resolution that all countries should break relations with the Castro Government. A good many of the countries had already done this, but a blanket resolution recommending that every country in the hemisphere break diplomatic relations would be considered a significant hemisphere-wide condemnation. We already had the support of 12 countries, and 14 would make a majority of the then membership. It has to be a two-thirds majority for a measure of this kind, and it would take two more votes. If we could get the Haitian vote, we would need only one more for a two-thirds majority for this measure.

There was a little hand-operated radio that somebody had rigged up for communicating with Washington, like an old-fashioned telephone. I talked with Ted Moscoso, who was head of the Latin American branch of the AID program, and Mike Barall, who was my economic deputy back in Washington. I said, "The Haitians assure me that they're doing their utmost to pay these bills. Can't you get the legal advisor to agree to raising this embargo caused by the Hickenlooper Amendment?"

Well, they did it, and they called me up and said it was done. As a matter of fact, I got the word almost simultaneously from the Haitians that they'd received word from Port au Prince that the embargo had been lifted. They said, "Now we'll vote with you right down the line." [Laughter]

We had only about 48 hours left. It was a Sunday, I remember. Rusk called us together, and Rostow was there and Goodwin and Ed Martin, later Assistant Secretary, and myself. He said, "I want you fellows to start from scratch and draft out a completely new proposal, because we're not getting anywhere with the Colombian proposal. The countries aren't willing to break relations."

So we went off and worked in the wee hours of Sunday night. I went off by myself, and I read carefully all of the Colombian proposal, and I thought it was a good one in all respects. Every essential part of it except for breaking diplomatic relations had been agreed to. There was another resolution which had already agreed upon and which had been proposed, interestingly enough, by the Mexican foreign minister, Tello, who for years had been the ambassador in Washington. This resolution said that, "Communism and the inter-American system are incompatible." Now this coming from the Mexicans was a pretty interesting declaration. This resolution had already been agreed to by the meeting, that communism and the inter-American system are incompatible.

So here we had 13 votes for breaking diplomatic relations. The country that we would have thought would be the fourteenth was, strangely enough, the country to which I had just been appointed to before: Uruguay. The Uruguayans were being sort of influenced by the Argentine attitude, which was, in a sense, pro-Castro, but it was not because the Argentine authorities had any great sympathy for Castro; it was because they knew that their own voters included a lot of people who were enthusiastic about Castro. They were about to have municipal and provincial elections, and they were afraid that the opposition might defeat them if they made any real hostile gestures toward Castro. This was a purely internal Argentine political problem. The same thing was more or less true of the Chileans and the Brazilians, too, whose rationale was similar.

In any event, as I boiled over this, I thought, "There isn't anything particularly wrong with this Colombian resolution. Now that we've got the Haitian vote, maybe we can get the Uruguayans to approve that, and that will give us 14 votes. We'd now got carte blanche from the Haitians, so we already knew we had 13. So I thought, "If we get 14 to vote for the Colombian resolution, then Secretary Rusk ought to be able to persuade some of the other big countries to go along with it, because they will know that this action will be taken despite them." So I suggested this idea to Rusk.

He said, "All right. Let's call the 14 together early tomorrow morning, Monday morning."

We got them together first thing. The Uruguayan foreign minister was sitting right across the table from Rusk, and I was sitting right beside him, and the interpreter was sitting on Rusk's left, because Rusk didn't know much Spanish. We didn't seem to be getting very far in the discussion; the Uruguayan foreign minister said, "We really don't have authority to break relations with the Castro Government."

So the idea occurred to me -- I don't know just at what point this occurred to me, but I said to him, spontaneously, (of course, I knew him very well, because he had been foreign minister during most of my three-year assignment) "Mr. Minister, what about this Mexican resolution which has been approved, saying that the inter-American system and communism are incompatible? Could we say that this incompatibility automatically excludes the Castro Government of Cuba from the Council of the OAS -- not necessarily Cuba, but the Castro Government -- because it's a communist orientated government?"

His political advisor was sitting next to him, a man named Felix Polleri, turned to the minister and said, "Mr. Minister, we could approve that."

The minister looked rather quizzical, and the interpreter interpreted this to Rusk. I had been talking in Spanish. Rusk looked rather quizzical now. I didn't know it, but Rusk had, the night before, called President Kennedy and asked him to call the president of Colombia, to ask him if he would persuade his foreign minister, who was sitting at the same table, to be a little more elastic. The Colombian hadn't wanted to modify anything in his resolution. He was sitting out there in left field, as it were, at the table, when I made my off-the-cuff suggestion. I don't know whether he would have approved this modification of his resolution.

At that moment, a man came in the room and said, "There's a telephone call for the Colombian foreign minister." It was his president. He went off to take the call, and the president was asking him to be more elastic. As I say, I don't know whether he would have approved the new idea without this call.

Anyhow, he came back, perfectly willing to go along with any reasonable changes that were being suggested that would accomplish the desired result.

In the meantime, since we expected that he would be approving this, there were a few other clauses that had been slightly controversial in the Colombian resolution, and the Uruguayans and the Colombians worked those out between themselves while the Colombian foreign minister was out of the room. So we were all ready, when he got back, to find out whether he would approve the fundamental idea of the "incompatibility" excluding the Castro Government.

In the meantime, Rusk wasn't saying much of anything. He went out of the room, too. But before he did, he said, "Is there anything in the charter of the OAS that provides for excluding a government?" He was wondering about it.

That proposed resolution was approved by 14. In other words, we had a two-thirds majority. Then Rusk spent the rest of the day talking with the Argentines and Brazilians and Chileans and Peruvians. It was really the Caribbean countries who were afraid of Castro subversion, because several of them had experienced this. They wanted to get this stopped.

Rusk was not able to get the approval of any other country. He came back and reported the failure of his efforts to increase this bare two-thirds majority of 14. The final plenary session was going to be that night. I said to Rusk, "Maybe when it comes down to the final vote at the plenary session, some of the other countries will come around." We had never wanted to do

anything important in the hemisphere, in the inter-American system, without having support from some of the big countries. They were the countries that were really capable of being U.S. military allies. We wanted to have them working in solidarity with us, which seemed a reasonable objective. But in this case, the danger was greater to the Caribbean countries.

The upshot was that the plenary session took place, and the principal resolution was voted on paragraph by paragraph. Every clause received a larger vote than the one paragraph excluding the Castro Government from the Council of the OAS which received the bare majority of 14. To this day, the Castro Government has been excluded from the OAS Council.

HENRY DEARBORN
Deputy Chief of Mission
Bogota (1961-1967)

Henry Dearborn attended Yale University and later, the War College. He was sent to serve in the Dominican Republic in 1959 during the overthrow of the Trujillo dictatorship. He then served as DCM in Bogota and later in Mexico in 1967. This interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy in April 24 & May 8, 1991.

Q: What was the situation in Colombia when you got there in 1961?

DEARBORN: I would say one of the main problems that Colombia had when I got there was with the violence in the countryside which was ruthless and savage. It wasn't as bad as it had been, it was tapering off somewhat. There was a time when you couldn't travel in the interior without expecting a problem. This was violence between political parties. It had a long tradition, between the Liberals and the Conservatives. There was an old party leader called Laureano Gomez who was President and the hero of the Conservatives. Then there was a short period of dictatorship under General Rojas Pinilla, but he was thrown out eventually.

The man who was most responsible for bringing the government back into constitutionality was Alberto Lleras Camargo who had been director of the Pan-American Union previously. A very able statesman. He worked out a system where they would have alternate Presidencies between the parties -- four years of Conservative, four years of Liberal.

When I arrived he was President. The violence continued in certain parts of the country and some of it was between the parties, but also there was some growing violence among leftists who wanted to overthrow the government and put in a leftist system, a Marxist system. That was another type of violence. This didn't happen too much on the coast, it was mostly in the interior.

The other main problem, I guess, while I was there was the dollar crunch. They were having a difficult time getting dollars. As a result, AID and the Monetary Fund were involved in trying to help Colombia adjust their system to alleviate this problem. Some very sticky balance of payment loans were conducted and caused quite a bit of resentment on the part of the

Colombians because ...

Q: You were saying that there was a monetary problem.

DEARBORN: The USAID and Monetary Fund people who were interested in monetary adjustments were putting too much pressure on them. More than they could stand politically. In fact, I was noticing the other day something I had forgotten. While leafing through an old Colombian file I found a performance report on myself in which one of the favorable comments the ambassador made was that I had assisted considerably in setting the proper perspective in these type of negotiations by emphasizing the political aspects and that certain things were just not possible if we didn't want to overthrow the government.

Q: Just to spell this out a little more. There often is this clash within a country -- the United States telling a country what it should do, etc. But sometimes these things can have tremendous impact on the political situation which can blow it all up. Were you arguing with the financial wizards that deal with this in the State Department?

DEARBORN: We would have discussions in staff meetings. Once I got into a difficult position because President Lleras Restrepo one day called me over to the Presidency, I was Chargé at the time, and talked about this very question. He realized that I understood his political problem and said that he really appreciated my sympathetic attitude. We let up on the pressure as a result of my going back and telling what had happened. It was something you did have to put the brakes on.

Q: What were American interests in Colombia?

DEARBORN: Well, we had oil interests. There were various smaller American businesses. Colombia was a great exporter of flowers. I had one friend who left an oil company and went into exporting flowers. It still is an important export to the U.S.

We had rather an active American-Colombian Chamber of Commerce. The presidency was supposed to alternate between a Colombian and an American. Once we got into the situation where an Argentine was president because he represented Braniff Airways. We had airlines coming in there. There were several small businesses. Petroleum was the biggest.

Q: How heavy did you find the hand of the American business side on the Embassy and all?

DEARBORN: Not very. One thing that Ambassador Freeman did, both in Colombia and later in Mexico, that was very helpful for us to keep tabs on American businessmen, was to have a meeting once a month with certain selected members of the American business community. It was a good source for us and he would tell them what we were up to that wasn't secret.

The petroleum companies were of course very important and I suppose in their own relations with the government they probably exercised an influence. But I would not say that American business was driving our relationships with Colombia. Our relations with Colombia must have been among the better relations of all countries. I remember with our CIA operations. We had a

big CIA operation in Colombia. Sometimes they wanted to do rather extreme things and I had to remind them that Colombia was a friendly country and they didn't have to bug offices. They voted with us in the UN practically all the time; they were very cooperative. The only sticky problem we had were these aid negotiations and that was a matter of political consideration.

Q: Did you feel that this was just a matter that the CIA was there and as long as they were there they had to keep active?

DEARBORN: Well, you know, we were trying to keep tabs on what Castro was doing. There was a strong leftist movement in Colombia off in the mountains trying to do what Castro did -- and still is. But they went into decline after the Bay of Pigs. When it became evident that Castro had tried to build up a nuclear capacity...

Q: You mean after the Cuban missile crisis?

DEARBORN: That is what I mean.

Q: This was October 6, 1962.

DEARBORN: I know the exact day it was because I was in New Hampshire. My father died on October 20 and I called the Department to ask for permission to fly up to New Hampshire. I would turn things over to the counselor for political affairs, be gone a week and then come back. I had a phone call back from ARA saying, "Look, we have your message and we are thinking about it. We will look into it." I thought that was pretty strange. I thought granting my request would be automatic. I was Chargé which was the problem. The Ambassador was on home leave in the States. Finally they called back and said, "We have finally arranged things so that you can do it. But you leave on Saturday. The Ambassador will arrive a few hours after you leave and will be there all the time that you are in the States. You go back next Sunday and the Ambassador will return to the States to complete his home leave." I wondered what was going on here, the Ambassador interrupting his home-leave to come back? Well, what had happened was that the White House had already issued instructions that all ambassadors were to be at their posts and they knew what was coming up. So I was in New Hampshire for a week and came back passing the Ambassador in a plane.

Q: When you came back, what was the reaction that you were getting from your Colombian contacts to the whole Cuban missile crisis?

DEARBORN: I suspect it was the same in most of Latin America, but in Colombia they did a double take. They thought more carefully about the dangers of Cuba. The question of quarantine came up. I have forgotten the date now, but Averell Harriman was sent on a special mission around Latin America to tell the Presidents about actions against Cuba. I wish I could remember better about this... Covey Oliver was Ambassador at that time, so it must have been quite a bit later. The Harriman thing had to do with Cuba I am sure, but I can't remember exactly in what way.

Q: Well, we were tightening the screws on Cuba all the time. This was probably a bolt in the

OAS to keep Cuba out or something of this nature.

DEARBORN: I wish I could remember more to put it in perspective. One incident in connection with that Harriman visit was interesting. Valencia was President and he used to become ill with some frequency. Some people said he drank too much and other people said that it was a health problem. Harriman had a prearranged appointment to call on Valencia at a certain time. I went with him and Ambassador Oliver to the Palace, got out of the car and the Secretary General of the Presidency came to the Palace door and said, "You know, I am terribly sorry but President Valencia is not going to be able to receive Mr. Harriman, he is very ill."

Of course, the first thing that went through my mind was, "Was he really ill or what?" Then he continued to say, "If the President is feeling better by evening he will come out to the Embassy to see Mr. Harriman." Sure enough about 8:00 at night the President drove out to the Embassy and we sat there and discussed hemisphere security matters. I can't remember the details.

About two days later I had a call from the Secretary General of the Presidency saying, "Look, when you came over with Mr. Harriman didn't you have a member of your USIA people taking pictures?" I said, "Yes, as a matter of fact we did. We had a picture of the Secretary General, Harriman, the Ambassador and myself talking at the front door of the Palace." He said, "Well, I want a copy of that." The reason was that Alfonso Lopez, the leader of the opposition party, had come out in public and said that it was absolutely undignified and unfitting that the President of Colombia had gone to the American Embassy instead of having Mr. Harriman come to see him. So with this picture they could prove that we had gone to the Palace first.

Q: I take it was fairly easy for you and members of the Embassy to deal with the Colombian government.

DEARBORN: Yes, they were cooperative on substance and friendly personally. Not only that they were a very democratic country. You didn't have to worry who you talked to. You didn't have to fear being seen talking to someone. Anybody would talk to us. It was a great place for political reporting.

Q: Well, what is it with this sort of openness of the society? What causes this reputation and the one of violence. Even today Colombians are considered to be a pretty dangerous group who immigrated to the States.

DEARBORN: It is rooted in history and I don't know how to say it. I do remember the local newspaper, El Espectador, which was the second largest paper, actually conducted an inquiry among the readers. This wasn't on violence but was related. The question was "Why are Colombians so irritable?" Over a two week period people called and wrote in and then the paper reported on the replies. There wasn't one single person who wrote or called in who denied that they were irritable. But there were all kinds of explanations. Some said the altitude; some said the racial mixture. They all had some notion as to what the problem was.

But it is related because irritations caused the violence. The organized violence, as I say, goes back in history between parties. But then the savageness of the violence...shooting a bus load of

people who happened to go into the wrong zone, or giving somebody the necktie cut as they called it where they cut your throat and pull your tongue through the opening, cut off your head and stick it in your stomach...all this absolutely outrageous behavior. I don't know.

When I was in Colombia (Barranquilla) the first time back in the early 40s, the coast was very pacific. Nothing like this would ever happen. We all talked about the violence in the interior.

Q: How about the drug problem, which now, of course, dominates?

DEARBORN: We had no drug problem. I never heard the word narcotics while I was in Colombia.

Q: What was the role of our military attaché then?

DEARBORN: The attachés were doing what they do everywhere. But the military missions were the ones that exercised the influence. We had an Army mission, a Naval mission, an Air Force mission in addition to the respective attachés.

Q: There you were running the Embassy from time to time or at least supervising its general management, did you find that the military missions sort of went off on their own?

DEARBORN: No, we had good relations with the military missions. I can't really remember any problems with them. Of course, the attachés were engaged in intelligence work. They were all good people. They tended to be officers who were at the end of their career. The missions, of course, were under General O'Mara in Panama -- the Cinc...

Q: Southern Command it was called, or something like that, wasn't it?

DEARBORN: Yes. In fact, my relations with him were great. He invited me up to Panama to go through his whole operation. He took me into the leaded room.... And he came to Bogota on occasion. He was rather "an enfant terrible" as far as the missions were concerned. They were all scared to death of him. But he was very nice to me. That was a time when I was the Chargé.

Q: I can't remember the dates, but you must have been there during the time we had to send troops into the Dominican Republic? Johnson sent troops in there.

DEARBORN: Yes, I was.

Q: How did that play in Colombia?

DEARBORN: Oh, nobody liked it. We had a Foreign Minister called Caicedo Castillo who used to drive Tony Freeman crazy because he was so slow about doing anything. I remember Tony asked me once to go over and talk to Caicedo about the Dominican Republic. I suppose it was that time.

There was nobody in Latin America who liked that. We had a solid international commitment on

nonintervention. I am sure Bob Woodward, when you talked to him, probably told you about his experience with Dean Rusk. Bob, I think was the Assistant Secretary at the time and thought that he should remind somebody about the commitment. He went up and tried to tell Dean Rusk about these commitments. Rusk listened and then pulled out his maps and said something like, "Now where would be the best place to land?" As far as Lyndon Johnson was concerned, he apparently gave very little notice to this commitment.

Q: How about our various aid programs, particularly the Alliance for Progress, how did this work out?

DEARBORN: I think very well, except for the negotiations on finances which got sticky everything was very smooth. You had people in so many branches of things, agricultural, education, housing, etc. When I got there they had these agricultural services. Agriculture, of course, is the big thing in Colombia and, of course coffee exports to the US were an important aspect of our relations. All the people who were working with the Colombians in the AID mission seemed to be delighted with the Colombians and with their work. I really can't think of any real difficulties, except in balance of payments negotiations.

Q: I was told that at one point the Colombians sort of surprised everybody in the AID mission by saying, "Okay, we think we can do it alone now, we don't need your experts anymore."

DEARBORN: That was a fraud. I know exactly who that was. It was Sanz de Santa Maria. During these negotiations he got mad and blew up one day and said in so many words, "The hell with you, we will go it on our own." But he didn't mean that. He was a very dramatic fellow and you have to take that into account. Was it Sam Eaton who told you that?

Q: No, it was a man who is trying to work up an oral history account from the Latin American side of the Alliance for Progress. I want to say Messner, or something like that.

DEARBORN: Was he in Colombia?

Q: I don't know, but he was telling me about it. He said to ask this question.

DEARBORN: I guess it is the same thing. He might have run across some memo or telegram, but Sanz de Santa Maria in my opinion was just putting the pressure on us by purposely throwing a fit.

Q: But this was drama and no real change in the situation?

DEARBORN: None at all.

Q: Was there anything else you wanted to say about your time in Colombia?

DEARBORN: We had a very large Peace Corps. Colombia was one of the first countries to receive the Peace Corps.

Q: I was going to say that I really think it was the first.

DEARBORN: The Peace Corps and I arrived in Colombia the same month, September, 1961. It got to be over a thousand. I remember the Ambassador had a staff meeting the focus of which was to study how big we should let this get. It might get to be counterproductive if it got too large. It was mostly in community development. But it also got into educational television.

Q: Was there concern about them getting mixed up with the violence?

DEARBORN: They never did. We thought about it, but they never did. We left them completely alone. We never sought them out, they didn't want to be connected with the Embassy. We always kept our connection with the head of the Peace Corps. Aside from that, unless some of the boys and girls came looking for us, we didn't bother them. But I used to go off at least once a year inspecting our consulates in Colombia and would see some of them then. They would take me out to see their projects. President Lleras Camargo was delighted with the Peace Corps. He said it was wonderful.

I am trying to think of the things that stand out most during my stay in Colombia. One was the Kennedy visit to Colombia and I was the officer in charge of the visit. It was a tremendous success. They all felt that they knew him personally and when he died the whole country went into mourning. It was a tremendously impressive thing.

Once I went out with the only person who could have done it, to visit some Indians called the Mutilonis who live in a hunting, fishing stage of civilization. Nobody could go into the area because they had bows and arrows and would shoot strangers. They did this at the time a pipeline was being built across Colombia to the coast. The builders had a running war with these Indians because the pipeline went through their territory. The Mutilonis shot a number of the oil workers. They had arrows with reverse notches which you couldn't pull out. You had to take them out in the direction they were going. But this fellow I knew, Bruce Olson, had lived with them for some time and he asked me if I would like to visit them, and I did. It was something never to be forgotten.

Traveling to places like Leticia, down on the Amazon in the southern most corner of Colombia was a great experience. It is another world buried in the Amazon jungle. You can practically walk to Brazil from Leticia. There were more big cities in Colombia than in most Latin countries. Most Latin countries have one or two big cities whereas Colombia has 8 or 10. But the cities weren't always the most interesting as the hinterland was often fascinating and the roads for seeing it was fairly good.

Q: All right, you then went to Mexico City as DCM in 1967. Did you go directly from Colombia? How long did you serve there?

DEARBORN: It was a completely different relationship with the government. In Colombia the Ambassador or I, if I was Chargé, could see the President anytime we wanted to. But that didn't happen in Mexico.

JOHN A. BUSHNELL
Economic Officer
Bogota (1962-1964)

Mr. Bushnell was born in New York State and educated at Yale University and McMurray College. An Economic Specialist, he served primarily in senior level positions at Latin American posts, including Bogota, Santo Domingo, San Jose and Buenos Aires, dealing primarily with Economic and International Trade issues. An assignment to the Staff of the National Security Council was followed by tours as Deputy Chief of Mission at Buenos Aires, Chargé d'Affaires at Panama City, and subsequently as Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs. Mr. Bushnell was the recipient of several awards for outstanding service. Mr. Bushnell was interviewed by John Harter in 1997

Q: How long before you were married?

BUSHNELL: We met in the summer of 1961. We were married in September of 1962. Then we were assigned to the Embassy in Bogota, [Colombia], arriving about Thanksgiving [November, 1962].

Q: Incidentally, I understand that the American Foreign Service Oral History program has interviewed your wife, Ann. I asked if I could look at the transcript of that interview. They said: "Fine, as soon as she signs off on it."

BUSHNELL: We've been in Costa Rica for the last 10 days, and I don't think she has started to review the transcript as yet.

Q: I assume that neither of you will object to my taking a look at the transcript. This might have some details about your experiences.

BUSHNELL: Fine. No one had a more negative introduction to the Foreign Service than Ann. Normally, my tour in INR would have been about two years slightly before I was assigned overseas, but it was extended because I was assigned to work for Walt Rostow. This assignment to Rostow was due to be concluded in the fall of 1962. Meanwhile, I had filled out the normal "wish list" regarding future assignments. The Department subsequently told me that I was being assigned to.

Q: So what was the first assignment you asked for?

BUSHNELL: I put down Australia as my first wish together with several Latin American posts.

Q: I thought that you had "been there and done that."

BUSHNELL: Maybe Australia was my second choice. I thought Australia was a place where I

had experience. I knew something about it, and I knew lot's of people there. I put down Latin American posts in second place. I can't remember what posts were high on the list, but Buenos Aires was not. Two and a half years working on Argentina was enough for awhile.

During the spring of 1962 I was assigned as the junior officer at the two-man Consulate in Perth [Western Australia]. I thought this was one of the few times the State Department really had acted smart. I already knew the editor of the leading newspaper in Perth; I had been to Perth twice in my life. How many other junior Foreign Service Officers had that background?

Q: And you had a girl friend there.

BUSHNELL: I was assigned to the American Consulate in Perth and was due to go there before the end of 1962 when I proposed to Ann Morel and she accepted, expecting to go to Perth. People in ARA [Bureau of American Republic Affairs] then intervened. I think, as much as anybody, it was Ed Martin [Assistant Secretary of ARA], as well as others in ARA who had the idea that they needed better economic analysis to get the Alliance for Progress [program proposed by President Kennedy] to work. One of the key places where they wanted to accelerate this program was Colombia. The Department decided to switch my assignment from the Consulate in Perth to the Embassy in Bogota. I was not given a choice; I was just told in a nice way. I had to tell Ann that, instead of going to the beautiful beaches of Perth, we were going to the violence and altitude of Bogota.

Q: How long before you left for Bogota did you know about the change in your assignment? Was it a couple of weeks?

BUSHNELL: No, we knew about this change well before we were married in September, 1962. I proposed to her in June, 1962. We heard about the change in my assignment in July, 1962. By the time we were married, the assignment had formally been changed.

Q: What did you think of the change?

BUSHNELL: I had mixed feelings. I didn't think Bogota was as nice a place to take a bride as Perth. On the other hand, the job at the Embassy in Bogota was much more interesting than the one at the Consulate in Perth would have been. Ann didn't know too much about either Bogota or Perth. Bogota was a little bit nearer the U.S. and had some other advantages.

Q: Did you do anything special to prepare for your assignment to Bogota?

BUSHNELL: I did little to prepare for Bogota because I was assigned to complete the remaining portions of this paper for Walt Rostow on Argentina. Meanwhile, there were lots of questions about Cuba, because we went through the Cuban Missile Crisis [September to October, 1962].

Q: And the level of your Spanish was...

BUSHNELL: I achieved the level of S-3, R-3 [Speaking - Useful; Reading - Useful] when I completed my 16 weeks of language study in 1960. The only time I used my Spanish on a

regular basis was when I went to Argentina. I didn't go back to studying Spanish, but I took the Consular Course at FSI [Foreign Service Institute]. All junior officers assigned overseas had to take the Consular Course, which lasted four weeks. During the Consular Course one learned how to issue visas. I learned the visa law, although I guess I am one of the few Foreign Service Officers who has never actually issued a visa.

Q: Did you think that you were going to be a Consular Officer?

BUSHNELL: No, I knew and the Department knew I wasn't going to be a Consular Officer. I was assigned to the Economic Section at the Embassy in Bogota. However, the rule was that any FSO assigned overseas on a first or second tour had to take this Consular Course. Most junior FSOs newly assigned overseas actually had to spend much of their time in the Consular Section.

Q: Colombia is an awfully interesting country, and particularly at that time, which was quite a fascinating period.

BUSHNELL: It was very interesting. Of course, as it turned out...

Q: Let me interrupt you for a moment. As I read up on your career, I found that the period before 1949 in Colombia was particularly interesting. In 1948 Jorge Gaitan [Colombian Presidential candidate of the Liberal Party] was assassinated. The assassination led to the "Bogotazo," a riot which covered several days and took place in Bogota in November, 1948, during the founding session of the OAS [Organization of American States]. This led to a 10-year period of insecurity, dictators, and ultimately a settlement which provided for 16 years of alternating Liberal and Conservative presidential administrations in Colombia. Colombia was becoming more or less stabilized by the time you arrived in Bogota.

BUSHNELL: Colombia had been and still is one of the most violent countries in the world. That problem has never been resolved.

Q: There was still quite a bit of trouble in Colombia, especially in the rural areas but also in the urban areas, by the time you arrived there.

BUSHNELL: When we were there, yes. There were no Rebel armies running around in the rural areas, but there was still considerable violence. There was less organized resistance to the government than there is now when we were in Colombia [1962-1964]. The main threat or concern then was Leftist urban guerrillas. These urban guerrillas would bomb cars and buildings. However, this kind of activity was not a major problem. Kidnapping people for money was common in rural areas, but it was not a major political issue. By the standards of other countries Colombia was not particularly calm, but it was calm by Colombian standards while we were there. The interesting thing for me was my work in the Economic Section. Colombia, together with Brazil, was where we tried to reorient our assistance programs under the Alliance for Progress to focus on national economic policies instead of just on particular development projects.

Until 1963 the Alliance for Progress had made large loans to finance such projects as land

reform, schools, and low cost housing. What I had argued with Walt Rostow and with Assistant Secretary of ARA, Ed Martin, was that one could build the nicest possible deck chair for the SS TITANIC but the chair will still go down with the ship. Thus you can build good school buildings, but, if the government does not establish and enforce a tax system to pay for teachers, supplies, and upkeep, the buildings will not accomplish their development purpose. The problem facing the Alliance for Progress was that many, if not most, Latin American countries had a set of economic policies that not only were not directed to economic development but that positively worked against it. We could build a certain amount of low cost housing, and we could improve sewage systems. However, unless these countries cut back on corruption and organized their own monetary and fiscal policies to raise money to support these programs and to expand them, all we were doing was carrying out some nice, exemplary projects. Such projects might be nice for a few people but didn't really change the economic structure in a permanent way.

That is why we decided to make what we called program loans, in which the justification for the loan was balance of payments support to allow the country to import goods and not have so much inflation while the country improved a wide range of domestic policies. We particularly encouraged changes in monetary and fiscal policies to move toward being able to support the kind of social and economic investment in the public sector that was essential while creating an appropriate atmosphere for the private sector.

My responsibility was to try to define the balance of payments and fiscal situations in Colombia. I worked with technicians and policymakers in various parts of the Colombian government to help them come up with the policy changes that we could support with the Alliance program loans.

Q: Let's go back to define the context here. Fulton Freeman was Ambassador to Colombia when you arrived?

BUSHNELL: Yes, he was much respected in the Foreign Service. I think he was an outstanding, active Ambassador who had extremely good contacts. He supported this program which we were developing although I had the feeling he did not fully understand its concept. He was not an economist. He embraced this concept as a way of building good relations with Colombia.

Q: Do you share the consensus that he was outstanding?

BUSHNELL: Oh, yes. He played a musical instrument. He had wonderful parties during which he entertained the principal figures in Colombian society. He knew many people. He was very good at setting the tone and image that he wanted to project to the public. Henry Dearborn was the DCM [Deputy Chief of Mission].

Q: Was Ambassador Freeman in Colombia when you arrived, or did all of you arrive at about the same time?

BUSHNELL: Freeman was there for a considerable period before I arrived. I left around the time that Ambassador Freeman left. I had to go back to Colombia a few months after I had left, and Ambassador Covey Oliver was there by then.

Q: You didn't really have that much of a picture of Ambassador Oliver.

BUSHNELL: Not really. I was back for a week during the time that Oliver was Ambassador.

Q: Henry Dearborn was DCM all through that period.

BUSHNELL: Yes. He also seemed to have a good grasp of the situation. I think that, in his own, quiet way, Henry Dearborn kept the Embassy on track and moving forward, without interposing himself as much as most DCM's do. He was an ideal DCM.

Q: Did you work closely with Dearborn at times?

BUSHNELL: I didn't work closely with Henry Dearborn, no. We had a large and complex organization in the Embassy in Bogota at the time. This was a time when ARA [Bureau of American Republic Affairs] was integrated with AID [Agency for International Development]. AID and ARA were together.

Q: Sam Eaton was...

BUSHNELL: Sam Eaton was the Deputy AID Director and also the head of the Economic Section.

Q: Pete Vaky was the Political Counselor. So you got to know him then? I gather that you knew him later on as well.

BUSHNELL: Yes.

Q: What did you think of Pete Vaky?

BUSHNELL: Pete is one of the best Political Officers we had in Latin America, in my time anyway. He was a good analyst, very perceptive, able not only to establish but also to use contacts. A lot of people can wine and dine and get to know people but don't really know how to make use of their contacts. He was very good at using his contacts. Chuck Fossum was the AID Director.

Q: Who was your boss? Did you say that Eaton was Deputy AID Director but also chief of the Economic Section of the Embassy?

BUSHNELL: At first Sam Eaton was just the chief of the Economic Section. Later...

Q: By the time you arrived?

BUSHNELL: By the time I arrived, he was also the Deputy AID Director and spent most of his time on AID matters. Gordon Daniels [as acting head] ran the Economic Section on a day to day basis. I was assigned to the Economic Section of the Embassy. I did the monetary and fiscal

reporting for the Economic Section. Then I also worked with the AID Mission, with Sam Eaton and with others in AID on the program lending with this new orientation. I had one foot in the Economic Section to do reports to Washington and one foot in the AID Mission to work on policy changes and negotiate Alliance loans. Gordon Daniels wrote my performance report, and Sam Eaton reviewed it including more on the AID work in the review.

Q: In fact you had two jobs.

BUSHNELL: That's right. In some ways it was tricky because, in theory, the economic reporting of the Embassy was supposed to be completely factual and impartial and not necessarily be supportive of what the AID Mission was doing. However, in fact the reports I was writing for the Economic Section provided the justification for the big expansion of the AID program.

Q: There was a huge AID operation in Colombia at the time.

BUSHNELL: Yes, the AID operation was very large.

Q: In fact, in monetary terms the AID input in Colombia provided about one-third of the Colombian import bill.

BUSHNELL: That's right. As a loan officer in AID, I worked on about \$240 million in loans during the somewhat less than two years I was in Colombia.

Q: How many people were in the Economic Section at that time?

BUSHNELL: We had a big Economic Section, compared with what we have now in Colombia and similar countries. In addition to Eaton and Daniels there were two a middle-grade officers, Charles Kotum and Margaret McCoy, and two junior officers plus two American secretaries. There were another three American officers in the Commercial Section.

Q: Was there a Commercial Attaché when you were there?

BUSHNELL: Yes, George Ellsworth for most of the time I was there. We had a big operation. I wasn't involved in many of the things that the Economic Section was doing in trade promotion, communications, transportation, and all of that side of it. I was fully engaged in keeping up with the economic issues I was following.

Q: Were you involved in fiscal and balance of payments matters? Can you say a few words about Sam Eaton, the Economic Counselor and Deputy AID Director? That was an extraordinary job that he had.

BUSHNELL: Of course, in the Department of State at that time, the process of integration was advanced in ARA [Bureau of American Republic Affairs]. I didn't realize then that most Embassies overseas had not really integrated their Economic Sections and AID Missions. There were many problems within the AID Mission in Colombia which I tried to avoid. Most of the people in the AID Mission were involved in major projects such as building houses and

constructing sewage projects, as well as many technical assistance projects. They were not exactly happy that we were now going to direct large amounts of money in another way, not building things or paying for American experts. There were tensions in relations with those in the AID Mission who wished to continue with the traditional technical assistance focus.

I think there was also resentment in the AID Mission that Sam Eston and I, who came from outside AID, were taking over so much of the program at least as measured in dollars. AID Washington wasn't able to provide AID economists to do the program loan work. They hired some people from universities who came, not knowing how to speak Spanish or the culture. They had trouble making useful contacts in Colombia. The AID Mission was never really able to staff itself to do the job which Washington was asking it to do and which needed to be done.

Q: Was the AID Mission active in the fields of education, public health, agriculture, and housing?

BUSHNELL: Yes, in all those fields and also in the fields of industrial development, public safety, tax administration, and others.

Q: Those areas include activities which AID ought to be involved in.

BUSHNELL: The AID Mission was also involved in trying to start up free trade areas to help the Colombian Government attract foreign industries.

Q: Complicating this, as you have said, was that this was the period when the Alliance for Progress was getting under way. Colombia was reportedly one of the Alliance's success stories.

BUSHNELL: We did persuade the Colombians to change their policies in major ways during the early 1960s. I think the directions of these changes were right. However, I don't think it was possible to institutionalize much of what we got the Colombians to do. It is one thing to change policies. It's another thing to make these policies really work over a long period of time. We didn't realize how rotten Colombia was in terms of the institutions to sustain these needed changes. Thus the long-term effect was much less than what we thought we were going to get. On a hemisphere-wide basis a tremendous bureaucratic structure was set up under Nine Wise Men to supervise this process of improving economic policies and institutions. These men included senior economists from various countries of Latin America. We tried to get Latin Americans involved in pressing for changes in economic policy. We made progress, but we made hardly a dent in the legacy power of public sector institutions in most countries.

Q: Can you define "progress" in this context?

BUSHNELL: Many macroeconomic policies were changed for the better. The Colombians adopted more realistic exchange rates, made some progress in reducing tariff and non-tariff barriers to trade, and established a truly independent Central Bank. There was a lot of improvement in the tax structure and in tax collections. Those were among the accomplishments.

Q: You mentioned improvements in the tax structure and tax collections. Did this include

establishing a basis of equity so that the tax structure was progressive or not regressive?

BUSHNELL: We were able to bring down a whole team of IRS [US Internal Revenue Service] people. Unfortunately, they had a cultural gap in dealing with Colombians. I worked with them quite a bit. Finally they came up with some ideas which were simple and productive. For example, they suggested simply going through the Bogota phone book and noting the names of all the medical doctors and then determining whether they had filed income tax returns. The Colombians found that less than a quarter of the doctors had filed income tax returns. Then the Colombian tax department called all of the doctors who hadn't filed income tax returns. It was surprising how many doctors they found who had sort of forgotten to file income tax returns. Of course such efforts to enforce the income tax make the tax system more progressive.

The Colombian Government did a number of programs like this and actually started collecting a lot of income tax. The Colombian tax structure, as it stood on the books, was theoretically a progressive structure. Taxes just weren't really being paid. Data and analysis on income tax collections was not even available until our program began to bring about changes. They set up a system under which, if a Colombian left the country, he had to produce either his last year's income tax return or evidence that he had paid through the last quarter in order to get through the airport. We helped the Colombian Government to apply the provisions of the tax law on the books. I don't recall that many laws had to be changed. It was a matter of applying the law, both to make it fair and to make it work.

Many Colombian Government officials were hopelessly corrupt. Others were lazy and simply put in their time but made no real effort to provide services to their public. Government salaries were so low that most professional government employees had to hold second and even third jobs to support their families. In a few institutions such as the land reform institute we got a higher salary scale for professionals which was accompanied by requirements to really work a 40 hour week. However, in subsequent years I heard the budget of the land reform institute was greatly curtailed, and what good employees stayed had no transportation or materials to work with.

Many of these problems were duplicated throughout Latin America, as well as elsewhere. What I didn't realize, and I think that none of us realized, was how entrenched the controlling oligarchy was in Colombia. We got some of the wealthier people to pay somewhat higher taxes than they had been paying, but the changes really didn't affect the power of the oligarchy. Colombia had an almost Japanese inter-related power system. The people who controlled the banks and the textile industry, for example, had so many tentacles throughout the economy that it was hard to reduce their power. It was publicly known that most of the benefits of the Colombian economy went to relatively few families. However, in a relatively short period I saw significant progress. I arrived in Colombia in November, 1962, and left in July of 1964, a little less than two years.

Q: I have the impression that there was no extensive narcotics problem in Colombia during those years.

BUSHNELL: That came later. However, the government had virtually no presence or control in vast rural areas; this lack of control allowed the cocaine industry to grow rapidly later.

Q: How about the activities of USIS [United States Information Service] in Bogota? Do you have any particular impressions of it? I understand that USIS worked closely with people involved in the Alliance for Progress. They were involved in publicizing the objectives of the Alliance.

BUSHNELL: Yes, USIS did that.

Q: The PAO [Public Affairs Officer] was named Newman.

BUSHNELL: I recall Keith Adamson as head of USIS. I didn't have much contact with USIS, except with a cultural center officer named Paul Brocchini, who was at the Binational Center in Bogota. He lived across the hall from us. This was a typical Binational Center operation. It mainly taught English. I don't have any particular insight into USIS operations. Public relations responsibilities of AID were set out by law. Congress had written into law numerous provisions to require giving AID credit for what it was doing; thus everything purchased by AID with appropriated funds from the U.S. had to have the well-known AID logo with the clasped hands on it. There had to be signs at the various projects that this activity was financed by AID. I must admit my own view was that some of these requirements were probably counterproductive. After all, no Colombians could voter in the U.S. It probably was not a good idea to make people think the US Government was responsible for their getting a house, rather than their own Government. One could argue whether the requirement for those signs advanced any US interest. Congress thought the American public wanted recognition for the help their taxes provided. However, in the long-run US interests were really advanced by strengthening a democratic government that was interested in improving the welfare of all its people.

To cite one example, we all know where we were when President Kennedy was assassinated [in 1963]. I had been sick. I had some kind of infection, meningitis or something like that. I didn't know what it was, but once I got over the infection, I was very weak. I had gone down from Bogota to a lower altitude to recover for a few days to a rural cabin near Melgar with my wife and our baby. This place is about a mile lower than Bogota in altitude.

Q: Your first child was born in Bogota?

BUSHNELL: Yes. Of course, we had diplomatic license plates. A workman on a bicycle came by and told our maid, whom we had brought from Bogota; she told us, of course, in Spanish: "The President has been shot!" At first I thought she was talking about the President of Colombia. For some time I was trying to figure out what had happened. She said: "No, I mean your President, President Kennedy." She seemed to have a feeling of great loss. You might have thought that Kennedy was the President of Colombia to judge from her attitude. The next day we drove up to Bogota. All along the road black flags were displayed as a sign of mourning for Kennedy. There were other demonstrations of sympathy.

Q: Hadn't President and Mrs. Kennedy made a trip to Colombia while you were there?

BUSHNELL: No, they had visited Colombia before we arrived there.

Q: I think that the death of the Kennedy baby made quite an impression and this may have been one reason why there was such a reaction to this tragedy.

BUSHNELL: There had been a big change in the attitude of the Colombian public toward the United States, perhaps especially toward President Kennedy because he had visited. Colombians saw Kennedy as a leader who cared about the poor Colombians and did things to help them. They thought he cared much more about them than their own politicians did. The U.S. was giving a lot of money to Colombia, really for the first time. All of these AID signs were convincing people who received this aid that it was the President of the United States who had taken care of them, rather than their own President. The fact is the Colombian Government was also doing a lot for the Colombian people. Also they had heard President Kennedy speak during his visit and at other times about changing priorities to favor the poor and the workers. They believed him although, often for good reason, they did not believe their own politicians when they said the same thing.

The reaction to Kennedy's death was remarkable. We opened a condolences book at the Residence for people to sign. I don't remember if we had a book at the Embassy Chancery also. It would have been hard for many people to get to the chancery which was on upper floors of a bank building. I had to go to the Residence for some reason. There was a line blocks and blocks long of people waiting to sign the book and so express their condolences. The outpouring of sympathy was quite remarkable, indicating the feeling the Colombian people had for President Kennedy.

Q: Were there any other, major events in Colombia during the time that you were there which stand out in your memory? Were there visitors from outside of Colombia?

BUSHNELL: We had a virtually endless stream of visitors to Colombia, particularly senior people from the State Department and AID because of the emphasis we were placing on Colombia.

Q: The Peace Corps had come to Colombia a few months before you arrived there. I think that the first Peace Corps volunteers were assigned to Colombia in September, 1961. I recall that it was a pretty large contingent of more than 1,000 people. They were working in villages, building schools, and so forth. What was your recollection of the Peace Corps?

BUSHNELL: I was very favorably impressed by the dedicated young men and women in the Peace Corps. The Peace Corps had a great program in Colombia. I was one of the most junior officers in the Embassy when I arrived. As each group of Peace Corps volunteers arrived in Colombia, I would go to their orientation session and talk about the economic problems of the country and answer their questions. From time to time the Peace Corps would also bring into Bogota volunteers assigned to Colombia and have a retraining or motivational session. I don't remember the details, but I spent quite a bit of time talking with the Peace Corps volunteers. They really educated me on how difficult it was to bring about changes which would affect the overwhelming majority of the Colombian people. The volunteers were out there in the countryside, and they could see that just by doing things a little bit differently they could make a world of difference.

However, there were big obstacles to progress. To get anything done within the Colombian Government, there had to be a piece of paper or permit, written down and approved by the authorities. The volunteers often said that Colombia was a disaster because of the delays involved in obtaining a piece of paper from Bogota approving a given course of action. I said to these volunteers: "Can't you just go ahead and do something?" They said: "No, the work won't be approved, unless you get a piece of paper authorizing the work to be done." I would say: "You mean that you can't fix a pothole in a road unless you get a piece of paper authorizing four or five guys to take shovels to go out and fix the road?" They replied that workers would not be paid without an authorization and the workers might even be punished for touching the road without authorization. The same thing applied to getting the sewage system to work. Or to digging a decent well. The local people would say: "You can't get anything done without a piece of paper from Bogota." This experience educated me about the difficulty with the centralized system which the Colombians had, which went back to the old Spanish system. Everything had to be directed from above and in tremendous detail.

We worked on this problem with the Colombian leadership, and we were able to encourage more authority being delegated to the local level. The mayors or the "alcaldes" of the local villages were used to this centralized system. They really didn't want to do anything, so this system gave them an excuse to do as little as possible. Finally we managed to get the central government to tell them that, if they wanted to do something, they should do it on their own. They still didn't do much because they were accustomed to depending on the authorization from higher authorities. It was very hard to bring about change, but the Peace Corps and the Peace Corps approach did a lot to promote change. It did a lot to change people's attitude toward the United States. Despite the fact that Colombia is a very violent society, I don't recall that we had any serious incidents with the Peace Corps volunteers. There were one or two incidents where Peace Corps volunteers were kidnapped, but they were soon released. Even though the Peace Corps volunteers were out in difficult areas, they had no great problems.

Q: What about the CIA [Central Intelligence Agency]?

BUSHNELL: First, let me tell one frustrating story about me and the Peace Corps. Halfway through my tour of duty in Bogota, a telegram or airgram came from the Department of State asking for Foreign Service Officers to volunteer to be Deputy Country Directors or Country Directors of the Peace Corps. The challenges of such assignments seemed to be many, and I thought it would be great to work for a few years with the Peace Corp and my Colombia experience would equip me for such an assignment. I volunteered in January 1964. At the end of March I got back an official informal letter from Mr. O. A. Bartley of career management and assignments which stated, "We regret that your previous assignment in the Department as an Intelligence and Research Specialist precludes an assignment to the Peace Corps. Although intelligence in your case actually means research, the fact that the title of your position in INR is listed in the Biographic Register, and is thus public knowledge, might embarrass the Peace Corps in view of the propaganda charges that the Corps is actually an intelligence organization." I still have the letter. Apparently, Sargent Shriver [then Director of the Peace Corps] was opposed to having Foreign Service Officers with previous assignments in INR assigned to the Peace Corps. I was disappointed at the time, but I probably would not have had such an interesting career if I

had diverted from economic work so early.

Q: I think that you were probably lucky that you were turned down. I worked closely with the Peace Corps in 1961, and it was chaos. They had a lot of lawyers assigned to the Peace Corps.

BUSHNELL: The Peace Corps appeared to me to be well organized in Colombia. However, the Peace Corps was not an efficient development organization. Indeed, in my view the Peace Corps was the opposite extreme of efficiency, considering the way it worked in Colombia. When a Peace Corps volunteer went out to some place in Colombia, he wasn't going to get a piece of paper from Bogota, or guidance of any kind. He was on his own. If he or she required direction, nothing happened. However, a majority of the Peace Corps volunteers went out and looked for things to do and tried to get them done without being told what to do or how to do it. At that time, the Peace Corp felt that Colombia didn't need specialists, particularly for volunteers who went into an agricultural setting. Many volunteers had never been on a farm in their whole lives. They didn't know how to raise chickens or anything else. If they needed help in raising chickens, they had to get a publication from somewhere and read what they were supposed to do.

Nevertheless, the Peace Corp worked surprisingly well in a great many cases. What I learned is that in many such situations the local people actually know how to do things better on their own. It was a problem of their own internal organization. Sometimes, when outsiders came in, it brought out the best in them. They could be a lot better than what they had previously been, even though that outsider, except as a catalyst, had very little to contribute.

On the whole, this assignment to Bogota was an exciting time for me. It was not only my first, foreign assignment, but also we were engaged in this new policy-directed program. I attended meetings with the President of the country a couple of times. I met with the Finance Minister regularly, and I was in the Central Bank two or three times a week. We implemented many millions of assistance and helped change many policies.

Q: It would be my guess that you people were essentially operating a "shuttle service" between Bogota and Washington. That would be a very close control of what you were doing.

BUSHNELL: Yes. We had frequent visitors, and I went to Washington a couple of times. However, we were breaking new ground, and Washington was very eager for our input in terms of both economic analysis and suggestions for loan structure and even amounts. Of course, our program lending and the lending programs of the World Bank and the IMF [International Monetary Fund] were all closely related. Much of this coordination we did in Bogota. The World Bank had a Resident Representative, an American named Kerr, and he had a deputy, an Englishman named Ray Frost. I saw Frost much more often than anybody else in the Embassy. I was often in touch with Walter Robichek and other people who came to Colombia from the IMF, despite my periodic fights with them over policy.

One of the things we tried to do was to operate off the same data base. We would get agreement on the basic data on the balance of payments and monetary and fiscal measures which we worked out among the Colombians, the IMF, the World Bank, and ourselves. Generally, Ray Frost, Walter Robichek, another officer from the IMF, and I would struggle with the Central

Bank staff to reconcile our numbers. If there were differences regarding the data, we would try to do more research to work the problems out. We were very successful with this coordination. Don Palmer, who headed the joint State/AID economic policy office in Washington, told me the closeness of our field coordination far surpassed that in any other Latin American country. I received several phone calls and letters from colleagues in Brazil who were trying to do the same thing and had questions about how we coordinated. The World Bank was introducing its version of program lending [loans related to economic policies instead of to specific projects] at the same time, and we all felt we were breaking important new ground. Of course, IMF programs had long been based on economic policy changes.

There was a tremendous amount of money at stake for the Colombians. This made a big difference in their ability to change policies even when special interests were disadvantaged. Of course, the large dollar amounts greatly facilitated my access to all levels of the Colombian government.

Q: Could you say what the CIA involvement in your programs was? I would suppose that there was a fairly large CIA group in Colombia.

BUSHNELL: I didn't really have much contact with people in the CIA Station in the Embassy.

Q: I would say that, as I read through the transcripts of these interviews, we know most of the CIA people in our Embassies. We exchange dinner invitations with them, and that sort of thing. However, by and large, most Foreign Service Officers don't know much about what the CIA people are doing. That is, except in some, conspicuous cases. Charles Stuart Kennedy himself [Director of the Foreign Service Oral History Program] was in Greece at the time that the "Greek Army Colonels" controlled the Greek Government. He was terribly concerned about what he saw there in terms of CIA activity.

BUSHNELL: I really had no feel for CIA's role, if any, in Colombia. The CIA people didn't do anything on economic issues. I recall one time CIA/Washington sent out a report with Colombian economic data, and I sent back a comment that the figures were a couple of months' old and not accurate in several ways. There was no need for CIA to be involved in economic affairs. I saw the basic data on the economy at the Central Bank and in the Colombian Ministry of Finance. The Colombians weren't trying to hide anything from us. The data they had was often of poor quality. They didn't know how to go about collecting data in many areas and were not computerized.. We often had to make estimates. There were lots of real problems, but they weren't problems where the Colombians were trying to hide information from us.

I didn't have much contact with the CIA people. There was one officer who lived up the hill from me, and I could often get a ride home with him. I found it somewhat annoying that he had a government-supplied car, which, of course, I didn't have, and he was not number one or two in the CIA office. Most of the time I took the bus back and forth to work. Colombian buses at rush hours were more like cattle-cars. Sometimes I could not even find a place to hang on with both hands while leaning out the side, and my rule of caution, unlike most Colombian males, was not to hang on with just one hand as the bus lurched frequently and other hangers banged against you. We had a car, but I left it for my wife to come to the Embassy for her daily Spanish lesson

and other errands.

Q: They also had attractive housing, too.

BUSHNELL: Yes, they may have had more attractive housing than we had, although we had quite decent housing too. One of the pluses of being a junior officer in a large Economic Section, and I probably was the most junior person in AID [Agency for International Development] as well, was that I didn't have to go to most of the coordination and Country Team meetings. In fact, I went to few meetings in Bogota beyond those concerning what I was directly working on. Although I was invited to attend the Country Team meeting, which was held once a week, most of the time I didn't attend because I had something else to do. I was always pressed between my contacts with the Colombians and getting reporting and loan papers prepared, cleared and off to Washington.

Q: Did Sam Eaton attend most of those meetings?

BUSHNELL: I think he did. He would attend the Ambassador's senior staff meetings the first thing most mornings, which most Ambassadors have. However, I didn't attend meetings like these; based on my experience in later assignments, I now realize what a great time saver it was that I did not have to be involved in the intra-embassy coordination.

Q: John, you mentioned the political "turbulence" which was going on when you arrived in Bogota. I am referring to the communist activity in the countryside. To what degree do you think that kind of "guerrilla" or "insurrectionary" activity, or whatever it was, really was orchestrated by Moscow? In a society like that of Colombia, with a "two class" society, the very poor and the very rich, were the poor people very susceptible to various kinds of communist activity?

BUSHNELL: My experience in Colombia and later was that there wasn't much communist activity among the poor. The very poor are among the most conservative people in the world. Occasionally, especially if they can get into positions with considerable power, the communists use the poor if they can. However, the Marxists, who had some connection with Havana or Moscow, tend to be frustrated, middle-class people. These are people who have had a significant amount of education and feel dissatisfied with the situation as it is, especially their lack of economic and/or political opportunities. Because they hear some professor speak or read something or are just looking for an alternative, they may seize on Marxism. For a long time, there was just the capitalist system and the Marxist system. It was one or the other. There wasn't anything else around.

Q: Do you think that there were many Marxists in Colombia at the time you were there?

BUSHNELL: In the places I have served in Latin America, I felt that there was too much reference to the communists. Let me put it this way. I think at the time I was in Colombia in the early 1960s, if you took the students at the universities - many of whom were in their late 20s or 30s, because students attended universities on a part time basis - and they had to say whether they were Marxists or capitalists, one or the other, much more than half would say that they were

Marxists. If you asked them a different question, such as: "Would you rather Colombia be more like Russia or the United States?" they would say, overwhelmingly: "Like the United States." But they feel that there are things wrong in the United States. Of course they feel there are even more things wrong in Russia.

Q: If you asked them whether they believed in democracy or in a regimented system where you have an overall, planned society which tries to control all aspects of activity, I think that the answer would be different. I think that we use too many "loaded questions."

BUSHNELL: People that I would put into the Marxist category, or who would put themselves into that category, would not be supporters of free and open democracy, as we would define the term. That doesn't mean necessarily that they would support a society run by an elite that calls itself Marxist. However, they would argue that the poor people in the countryside needed to be led and guided when they go to the ballot box. Probably, they would argue in terms of economic distinctions, because that is where most of the injustices were, rather than on the political side. Then, among these people with a vaguely Marxist orientation, you might find a number who are willing to go beyond a sort of intellectual belief in Marxism and a lot of argumentation over the dinner table. They might be prepared to go as far as setting off bombs. However, there would only be a small number of those people.

Q: They might be the more dangerous.

BUSHNELL: Yes, because of what they are prepared to do. However,...

Q: Wouldn't these people be more or less clearly identified with Moscow or Havana, or would they just be "crazies" of one kind or another?

BUSHNELL: If we are talking about Colombia, I don't really know much about people like this. This is not an area that I worked on, so I wouldn't be prepared to say.

Q: I am speaking not only of Colombia, where you served. We'll get into this a lot more later on. However, when we speak about the so-called "radicals" throughout Latin America and elsewhere in the world, during the Cold War period, I've always felt that since we endowed the whole CIA apparatus with such lavish numbers of people and resources, whose job was to find the communists, that helped to create a distorted perception of what this was all about.

BUSHNELL: There were always elements of McCarthyism in our government, but it is not possible to put people into such simple categories as communist or communist sympathizer. There are a lot of people who are idealist Marxists, especially during their university years before they have much practical experience. Many professors in Latin America were greatly influenced by Marxism, including many who had little use for the way it was distorted in Russia or even Cuba.. Often these idealistic young were manipulated by people who were pretty much out for themselves and who used whatever propaganda or foreign example helped them gain power. The place where I had the most experience was Argentina. There were Argentines who were terribly violent. Of course the Argentine military saw the people they were fighting as communists, and there were indeed some communists among these people. No question about that. But many were

idealistic young who were in effect being used as cannon fodder by the so-called leftist leaders who were as interested in raising money by kidnapping and extortion as in real political change.

Q: We'll go further into that later on. How about the US military attachés in Bogota? Did the Army, Navy, and Air Force have their attachés? First, you might just tell me what kind of people we had available there.

BUSHNELL: We had attachés from all three services and also substantial military assistance missions for each service, but I didn't have much to do with them.

Q: I know that there are some complaints that our military attachés, especially in Latin America, tended to be officers who were practically ready for retirement. Few of them were really struggling to make a name for themselves. However, they also fed into this practice of working closely with local, military governments. Because of their reports, they helped to create pressure on Washington to support the creation of a strong, local military and police presence there.

BUSHNELL: This is an issue that I have thought a lot about and worked on later in my career.. We can discuss other assignments where this has been a contentious issue. At the time I was in Bogota, I had too little experience with military and intelligence to comment usefully. I can remember thinking, because occasionally bombs went off in front of Embassy houses, particularly the military officers, that we were better off not going to parties and social events given by our military people. If someone was going to throw a bomb, the target would probably be one of our military people. I can't remember the name of any US military person who was in Bogota when I was there. Of course, we went to some of the parties given by our military. I don't really have any views on our military people in Colombia.

Q: Do you have any further thoughts about that period of time in Bogota?

BUSHNELL: Of military people in Bogota the person whom I knew best was a Colombian officer, a lieutenant colonel who lived across the street from us. I would occasionally meet him when he was walking his dog, which not many Colombians did. Most Colombians in our neighborhood never went outside their houses except to go some place by car. They were accustomed to staying at home and inside the house. However, my wife and I would go for walks in the neighborhood. We had to pay a "vigilante," who watched the immediate area after dark. Each "vigilante" or guard - usually retired military - only covered a block or two. We would go for a walk and would hear one vigilante signaling to another. It took us some time before we realized that one vigilante passed us over to another, as we moved along. They were passing the word that we were alright and were among those that paid monthly dues to the guard company. There were a couple of nights when our "vigilante" advised us not to take a walk or at least not to go in a certain direction.

Anyway, I met this Colombian lieutenant colonel and later invited him to come to my apartment for a drink. He was the first Colombian military officer I ever knew. He had a very interesting view of the world, unlike the view of other Colombians I knew such as staff of the Central Bank and from the Ministry of Finance. Briefly, he regarded Colombian society as composed of people who were virtually all at each others' throats. If you're in a society like Colombia where so many

are being killed by other Colombians, you get very suspicious of other Colombians. That was his view. He felt that, if a person didn't wear a military uniform, you shouldn't turn your back to him or her. In short, he saw the world as composed of the military and, then, everybody else.

One of my friends with whom I had gone through elementary and high school visited us in Colombia.. [There were three of us who had grown up in Winsted together, in the same class. David Halberstam, who later wrote "The Best and the Brightest" and about 15 other books, had gone to Harvard. Ralph Nader, the consumer advocate, had gone to Princeton, and I went to Yale.] Ralph came to Bogota in early 1964. He stayed with us for a week or ten days. He was writing a series of articles on Latin America for "Atlantic Monthly" [quarterly publication]. He set up most of his own interviews, and I set up some interviews for him. I introduced him to this Colombian lieutenant colonel who lived across the street. I thought this meeting would be a good learning experience for Ralph. I got someone to interpret for him, because he didn't speak Spanish. I later asked him his impression. Ralph asked if he was a typical Colombian military man. I said that I thought so. He said: "My God, then this country is really in trouble!" I said: "Well, there's no doubt this country is in trouble." The colonel had explained to Ralph how the military had to defend the society from most of the civilians in it. This lieutenant colonel really had a big impact on Ralph, who also met some Colombian generals as well as many politicians and intellectuals. From what Ralph said, the generals he talked with had known they were meeting with an American journalist and gave him the government line. On the other hand this lieutenant colonel from across the street thought Ralph was just a young tourist American visiting Colombia.

Q: I intended to ask you earlier whether you had any interesting comments on some of the prominent, political figures in Bogota. One of the most prominent ones was Lleras Camargo. Did you know him?

BUSHNELL: No, I didn't know him.

Q: Lleras Camargo was reportedly a remarkable person. He was the first Secretary General of the OAS [Organization of American States].

BUSHNELL: Yes, he was quite remarkable. He had a very broad view of the world. He had spent a lot of time outside of Colombia. The only reason that we were able to bring about some changes in Colombia is that people like him wanted to do it. They saw that Colombia needed to change, and they wanted it to change. There was another man, maybe a year or two younger than I, who was in charge of agrarian reform, Enrique Penalosa. He is now a candidate in the forthcoming elections for Mayor of Bogota. Over the years he has held a number of prominent positions. He is typical of a generation of Latin Americans who attended US universities and who then returned home to remold Latin America. I forget which university he attended. I believe it was one of the land grant colleges, where he studied agriculture. He came back to Colombia, very Americanized. He came back very much wanting to change things and seeing what was wrong with Colombia.

I worked with Penalosa, and we had many arguments with the AID technicians. AID's concept was that the way to handle land reform was to divide up bigger properties into small family plots

and then hand them over to the “campesinos” [peasants]. It struck me that we had no business doing this. I had learned from the Peace Corps that you couldn’t just take a piece of land and plant coffee bushes, or bananas, or some such thing and then turn it over to the poor. In fact, there’s a lot more that needs to be done in the areas of education, financing, and marketing. New farmers need assistance from people who know how to manage the land and the inputs needed for high productivity. I worked a lot with Enrique Penalosa, trying to develop a workable program of land reform. I also had to work within the AID Mission, trying to convince the technicians to rethink their positions. Enrique was trying to do the same thing with his people. We made some progress and eventually got quite a large land reform loan on the basis of a loan paper I wrote much of, but I understand neither AID nor the Colombians followed through very well and most of the poor settlers initially benefiting from this loan ended up losing the land. A lot of the land reform programs in those early days of the Alliance turned out quite poorly because they mainly involved dividing up the land. After a few years the majority of the farmers lost their farms, and the banks and traditional oligarchy took them over. Eventually the concept of a more integrated and comprehensive approach has been adopted in some countries.

Q: It’s now nearly 5:00 PM, and we’ve nearly filled up this cassette. I suggest that we break here. During the next session we could make some concluding comments on Colombia, before we go on to your time in Santo Domingo, in the Dominican Republic.

This is Tuesday, January 13. When you were in Colombia, it was something of a showcase for the Alliance for Progress. At the same time, there was a counterinsurgency program going on in Latin America. Some people say that the counterinsurgency programs were the dark side of the Alliance for Progress. What do you think of comments like this?

BUSHNELL: The counterinsurgency program was a complement of the Alliance for Progress, or perhaps it was just that the two programs took place at the same time. The Alliance for Progress was an initiative of President Kennedy. It was directed at improving social and economic conditions in Latin America on a sustainable basis. While Walt Rostow fully supported the Alliance, he thought it was not enough. It was necessary to break the strangle-hold of the small power group which had developed in more or less a direct line from the early Spanish rulers. In most countries the military was the key tool of the vested interests. Thus Rostow believed that we should try to wean the military away from the vested interests and get them more involved with the poor people, for example by using the military to build rural roads, schools and health centers. At the same time Cuba was reaching into many Latin American countries to support small rural insurgencies. In general the Latin militaries liked urban centers, modern equipment, and more parades than rural patrols. Thus we mounted a major campaign through our military to teach the Latin militaries anti-insurgency techniques. In other words the strategy was to win the battle for rural minds while crushing rural guerrillas at an early stage. The situation in Colombia was not much like that in Cuba; in some parts of Colombia there was a large rural middle-class based on family size coffee farms. However, there were also numerous rural bands which lived by the gun, generally not in the coffee areas. By providing training and equipment and melding in some politicalized youth from the universities the Cubans began to gain increasing influence in these bands. The bands with Cuban help expanded fastest. At least in the early stages the Cubans probably thought that the situation in Colombia was similar to Cuba before Castro. However, this process was just in its initial stage when I was in Colombia. Few Colombians

seemed to be aware of or concerned with what happened in the more remote rural areas.

This major effort was started in 1961 to improve the counter insurgency capabilities of Latin American military establishments. Military equipment and training were involved. The US military leadership saw that it was important to get the Latin American military closer to the people, so that the people would see the military as their friends. It was also important to get the Latin American military to be active throughout their respective countries so there would not be vast areas where the military could not operate. The programs in which we thought the Latin American military should be involved had to do with things like building roads. The roads would make it possible for the military to reach out to areas which otherwise they would not be able to reach. It was also important for the military to build schools and health centers. There was a great effort made on these Latin American programs in Washington in 1961 and 1962, before we became so deeply involved in Vietnam. We seemed to feel that we knew how to carry out counter insurgency programs and to teach the Latin American military how to do it.

Q: This presumably was a program in which Bobby Kennedy was deeply interested...

BUSHNELL: Bobby Kennedy felt strongly about this issue, and there were a lot of other people interested in it. Actually, I don't recall anybody, including people in the State Department, who was opposed to such involvement. However, there was no great, visible, short-term benefit from supporting these military rural programs, and the amount of US money to be invested was somewhat of an issue. The relationships between civic action conducted by the military and economic development supported by AID were never resolved in any sort of way, as far as I know. AID had school building programs, but it generally was not prepared to provide even marginal support for military school-building programs. The American military didn't want American civilians messing around in its territory, and these two programs continued in the same country and in the same area of activity, but separately.

It was like the problem with the Peace Corps. AID was reluctant to use the Peace Corps on its programs. However, some of us in the field, including myself, pushed very hard to use small amounts of AID money to help Peace Corps activities. Both organizations wanted to keep their independence and thought this required keeping their activities completely separate. This was also true of the civic action programs of the military. We had a big Military Mission in Colombia, as we did throughout Latin America at that time. I'm sure that there were more officers in Colombia in the Milgroups [Military Groups] than there were State Department officers in the Embassy. I didn't have much contact with the Milgroups. I was on the AID side of the fence and really didn't know much about what the military people were doing. The main contact I had with the military assistance officers in Colombia was that, and this was almost as a sideline, Penalosa and I were pushing for the use of remote land, not owned by anybody, for a land reform project to settle landless peasants. I was one of the loan officers for this project.

The US military was supporting at least with construction equipment a civic action road building program. Thus I tried to get our military to urge the Colombian military to build roads to provide access to the area where AID would then support a land reform program for landless peasants. Penalosa worked on the Colombian military. However, both AID and the MILGROUP opposed this cooperative idea. I talked with Ambassador Freeman about these problems, and he had a

meeting with the various US players. Security in the area where the roads were to be built was questionable, and the MILGROUP was opposed to getting the Colombian military to build roads in areas where security was not good. I argued the military presence would improve security and help overcome one of AID's objections which was the possible lack of security for the new settlers. Penalosa told me he met a similar problem. He said the Colombian military could not walk and chew gum at the same time, i.e. run a road grader and carry a gun. He said security from the guerillas would not be a concern for the poor peasants. Privately, Ambassador Freeman told me we had a good idea but it was ahead of its bureaucratic time.

Q: Would you care to comment on how counter insurgency worked in Colombia? From what you have said I would gather that it probably did not work out so well.

BUSHNELL: I would not say efforts to get the Colombian military closer to the people and doing useful things were not successful. In effect, in wide areas this was a good strategy. From the topographic point of view, Colombia is a very difficult country to get around. The mountains are very high, and the terrain is not ideal for any sort of nation building and the provision of services. It was hard to reach large parts of the population. The overwhelming majority of people growing coffee, for example, are small land-holders. By and large, coffee is grown on the sides of the mountains. Many of the coffee growers had to transport their coffee a long way to market, and probably still do. Coffee is moved for miles on the backs of donkeys. Coffee growers made good money, so they did fairly well.

The Colombian coffee growers were not of great interest to the Cubans. What was the larger concern, and still is, is the historical insurgency problem. There was the traditional division of Colombia between Liberals and Conservatives. You might as well call them brown and purple as there was not much difference in what the parties stood for. However, people were born into either a Conservative or a Liberal family. This divided society in the urban areas and in the rural areas as well, including quite remote areas. In the rural areas this political tradition tended to involve allegiance to local leaders who presented themselves either as Liberals or Conservatives. For all practical purposes some of these local leaders were just bandits. They were not trying to change the world. Their followers were their people, and they were trying to extract riches from the other side of the political spectrum. Both sides were kidnaping people and demanding extortion taxes. This had gone on for a long time and still continues. It began well before the 1950s and the "Bogotazo" [uprising in 1958 against the conservative led government, following the murder of Liberal presidential candidate Jorge Gaitan]. This small scale local insurrection expanded and continued on a nationwide basis.

By the time we arrived in Colombia, this situation had quieted down, but there were still insurrectionary groups which were occasionally active. It is best to think of such groups as akin to the Ku Klux Klan in the states of the former Confederacy in the United States. Most of the time these people were out there working on their fields, rather than being full time insurgents. Cuban agents in Colombia helped in bandit like activities from time to time, and such violent activities tended to intensify in pre-election periods. Obviously this was a different sort of insurgency problem which did not fit the cookie cutter mold of counter insurgency coming out of Washington which was designed to deal with the Cuban promoted political insurgency.

It was fascinating. It took about 20 years for the Cubans to wake up to the realities in Colombia. It's really only been in the last decade or so that the Cubans have learned to appreciate the differences in the situation and to adjust to it. Now the Colombian insurgents have come to consider themselves as Cuban allies who go to Cuba for training and medical treatment. But it is more because Cuba has changed the nature of its support for the Colombian insurgents, rather than the Colombians fitting into a Che Guevara pattern, although the guerrillas now sometimes operate in fairly large size units. The Cubans did not make much progress in Colombia in the early 1960's. This is not to say that the violence in Colombia went away. I am sure that our counter insurgency programs made some contribution to reducing the violence. However, it was such a big problem that our programs and the Colombian programs were not proportionate.

Q: The criticism has been made that one of the effects of the Alliance for Progress and the counter insurgency programs has been to strengthen the repressive apparatus of the oligarchies and doing many wrongs to the poor people out in the countryside. Your comments don't reflect that point of view, of course. However, how do you answer that?

BUSHNELL: In the first place the Colombian military, like other Latin militaries, knew how to be repressive in a brutal but often not effective way. US military programs were designed to educate the Latin military in winning the hearts and minds of the poor instead of putting a gun to their heads. Of course US programs could be interpreted as strengthening the Latin military. If you give them construction equipment or leadership training, you strengthen the military in some sense. I would argue that our programs were generally too small to have a major effect on the military of most countries. Some units and some leaders embraced our programs, and for these units and leaders repression was reduced or eliminated. But our programs reached only a small proportion of the military, at least in the 1960's, and in many cases the parts not reached continued to be repressive. I think in general, and certainly in Colombia, our military presence was more productive than detrimental. However, it did not directly attack the Colombian oligarchy, which was very strongly entrenched and included civilian as well as military elements.

In various other programs we tried to address the problems caused by the Colombian vested interests. We had questionable success dealing with these very difficult problems in the distribution of power. There was a conceptual issue with which we were grappling. This is one subject on which I wrote papers in INR and when I worked with Walt Rostow. The Alliance for Progress correctly focused on the need for education, developing sources of potable water, carrying out land reform, and raising the income and productivity of the poor people. In this way the poor could increase their contribution to society as well as gaining greater benefits from it. The problem was that we had what might be called a superficial approach. It is one thing to build a school; that's the easy part; then the next part is year after year to find and employ the qualified teachers who will instruct students at the school and find a way to pay salaries and the cost of books and materials. There are two parts, the first of which might be called the capital intensive part of building the school. The other part is staffing the school and providing the proper books and supplies. There was a great tendency on the part of the Alliance for Progress to focus on building the schools. It seemed reasonable to many Americans for the U.S. to fund the construction of schools and other facilities, although they may not have realized that this wasn't going to accomplish much unless somewhere there was a regular flow of funds to pay for teachers, road maintenance, medicines, doctors, and hospital operating costs. Otherwise, the

capital construction part wouldn't accomplish the objective over the long run. What was needed was to maintain a balance in these programs of useful and needed, social capital works and the host country's ability and willingness to raise the taxes to operate the additional facilities. In the long run increased social investment would increase the productivity of the economy and thus the tax base, but in the short run such foreign-financed capital additions added little to national or local government revenue to pay for the ongoing costs of these projects.

In most Latin American countries these considerations put Alliance for Progress policies in conflict with the oligarchies, which were not very willing to pay additional taxes nor to share power with a growing educated middle-class. Colombia was a typical example. The Colombian oligarchy had no problem in using US money to build schools, roads, and hospitals. That was all fine. There were jobs created, and there were contractors who could benefit, usually those associated with the power structure. Members of the oligarchy were in favor of that. However, they had no interest in improving the tax structure, or at least the tax structure that affected them. As the powerful groups already had a good share of the taxable income, there was only so much in taxes that could be collected from people at the bottom income levels. The members of the oligarchy strongly resisted anything which took money from them, either in taxes or in terms of competition which would open up the system to world trade and reduce their profit margins. They wished to retain control of the beer, textile, press, or whatever other markets they had.

This was a difficult problem to address in the Alliance for Progress. There were some people who felt that, if we didn't address this problem adequately, the Alliance really wouldn't work and wouldn't have much of a future. Also, this issue raised the problem of interference in Latin American affairs. It was one thing to help the Latin Americans to do something which they all wanted to do, such as build schools. It was a different matter for the U.S. or other outsiders to devise tax increases or measures to reduce monopolies' power; even if such measures benefited the overwhelming majority, they might not benefit the politically most articulate and thus those in charge of foreign relations.

Keep in mind that in most Latin American countries, including Colombia, the power structure consisted of the major families which controlled most of the economy. These same families also controlled much of the political life of the country. There were, of course, differences among those in the ruling class. In Colombia some families were composed of conservatives and others were liberals. They might fight with each other, but their economic interests were much the same. They usually managed to cooperate to protect their economic interests. Note that Liberals and Conservatives agreed to rotate the Presidency for 16 years, which was, of course, a way to assure that no outsider came to power as well as to reduce the fighting between the two major parties. It was difficult for people who were not part of what one might call the traditional, ruling groups to cooperate with each other. However, these outsiders might have ideas which were much more compatible with what we believed, and, working with them, there might even be real progress. Generally by the time they reached middle age, the more capable of these outsiders were coopted by the ruling group by being given positions in their firms or organizations or socially.

One would identify people who wanted to make changes but were pretty much powerless to do so. It took more than a generation for the political balance to change. When more of such people

came into power, particularly during the 1980s and 1990s, the result has been a real revolution in the economic policies of Latin America. These changes came about finally because people outside the traditional ruling families and from middle class or poor backgrounds have finally obtained access to education and then political power. As a result, the political structure which dominated economic policy changed in one Latin American country after another.

We were nowhere near this point in Colombia when I was there. We did have the advantage of having a President in Colombia, Guillermo Leon Valencia, who wanted to move to modernize the economy. He and his economic ministers insisted, over and over again, on moving in directions which did not please the oligarchs. New macro-economic policies were brought into effect and were integrated with our concept of program lending. The President was able to use this concept to push through a certain number of things. In retrospect, I don't think we achieved a critical mass of change. We didn't make enough fundamental changes to sustain the new policies, although the changes which occurred were in the right direction and were helpful. Subsequent governments in Colombia were not interested in continuing along the same line. Colombia never went through the real economic revolution we have since seen in such places as Chile and Argentina. It was always making less change than what might be termed great or revolutionary, but it continued to grow economically almost every year. More progress was probably made in the early 1960s than in most other, Latin American countries at that time. Had this process continued, it would have been a great thing. However, it did not continue because of political divisions and the resistance of the established power structures. Of course the U.S. also soon lost interest in promoting these changes, and funding for the Alliance fell during the Vietnam era. President Johnson did not have the same interest in basic reform and put his emphasis on expanding trade.

Some argue that the gradual, partial progress we made in Colombia in the 1960's was the enemy of getting a real and permanent fundamental change in the society. By permitting gradual, but insufficient change, the traditional power structure was able to keep most of its power. In some other countries where gradual progress was not allowed there was eventually an explosion and a massive and permanent shift of power occurred. I believe there is much truth to this theory, although there is always the potential for the revolutionary change to be in directions against US interests. However, it would be hard to articulate and defend politically in the U.S. such a policy of doing nothing and waiting for the revolutionary change.

Q: Looking back on this process, do you see a connection between the Colombia you knew in the 1960s and the problems of today, some 30 or 40 years later? Are you suggesting, with the benefit of hind sight, that we should have done some things differently at the time you were in Colombia?

BUSHNELL: It would have been nice to bring about more tax and trade reform and a greater opening of the economy and the political structure in the 1960s than we were able to do. However, there were political realities, and the government of Colombia was only able to do so much in a democratic country. I think, in terms of program lending of the kind we undertook in 1963 and 1964, we probably went about as fast as we could go, bearing in mind political realities. We knew that there was a big question mark about the future. Program lending soon got a bad name in the United States, and we began promoting US exports and trade expansion.

Subsequent Colombian governments were not interested in pursuing many of these reform programs and opening up additional areas.

Q: You were only in Colombia for a couple of years. What led to your transfer to Santo Domingo?

BUSHNELL: I had a reputation in Washington for good work on fiscal and monetary matters and for working with the host government on economic policies. A group of policy officials with hemisphere-wide responsibilities worked closely with me, including Don Palmer....

Q: Who was Don Palmer?

BUSHNELL: Don Palmer was the senior economic officer in the Bureau of Latin American Affairs. He soon became Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Latin American Economic Affairs. He was one of the leading proponents of promoting changes in macro policy instead of just rearranging deck chairs on the SS TITANIC through project loans for roads, schools and other social infrastructure. Working with Palmer was a Deputy Assistant Administrator of AID for Latin America named Ray Sternfeld. There was a small group - a half dozen officials - who were focused on the concept of program lending, with special reference to Colombia and Brazil. To keep in touch with the field, one or more of them would come to Colombia frequently, or I would go to Washington for consultations. After the 1962 elections and the events of 1963 in the Dominican Republic [an military uprising against the government] ...

Q: After the Trujillo assassination in May 1961, there was a period of chaos when the people in power decided to hold on to their positions. Then Bosch was elected President of the Dominican Republic in 1963.

BUSHNELL: He was elected in a landslide in December 1962. Then he was thrown out of office in a bloodless military coup in September 1963. The military set up a civilian triumvirate to run the country, and the situation was rather chaotic. The U.S. withheld aid and deployed the overthrow of democratically-elected Bosch for a few months. As the situation stabilized, the U.S. resumed aid and began working toward new elections and economic progress. Economic policies were a big problem. Priority attention in Washington was focused on getting a handle on the economic situation in the Dominican Republic. State and AID wanted to use program lending in close coordination with the IMF and World Bank in the Dominican Republic. Don Palmer and others wanted to do in the Dominican Republic a version of what we were doing in Colombia.

I was asked if I would accept an immediate direct transfer from the Economic Section at the Embassy in Colombia to the Economic Section of the Embassy in the Dominican Republic. My tour of duty in Bogota was coming to an end in four or five months, anyway. I was still a junior officer in Bogota so I had a two-year tour of duty. I left Bogota in July, 1964. I had been thinking of extending in Bogota to make my tour two and one-half years to May or June 1965 and get back on the summer cycle. I was excited about the program lending, the land reform loan, and other projects, and these programs were really just getting up to full speed. However, when the Department pressed me to go to the Dominican Republic in the summer of 1964, I said that would be fine. I thought that I would take some leave in the U.S. and then go to Santo Domingo,

but the Department said there was no time for leave. We went directly from Bogota to Santo Domingo with only a weekend in Caracas where we had to change planes. It was a pretty miserable weekend as our son who had been born in Bogota was quite sick. We got off the plane in Santo Domingo in late morning, and the Embassy there had already scheduled for me to meet that same afternoon with the IMF mission.

Q: Was this meeting with the IMF mission for lunch with your wife Ann also invited? So you didn't have time to go to the hotel? You went straight to a luncheon?

BUSHNELL: I guess we had time to go to the hotel to drop off the family and change clothes. Then I went straight to this IMF meeting, even before setting foot in the Embassy. For a few weeks after my transfer had been decided, the Embassy in Santo Domingo had been sending me in Bogota information copies of its reporting cables on economic matters, and Washington had been sending me copies of its guidance, so I had some preparation. The transfer was raised with me and then, within a period of three weeks, we were in Santo Domingo.

Q: This was a meeting with whom and for what purpose?

BUSHNELL: There was a meeting scheduled with an IMF Mission visiting Santo Domingo to work out conditions for IMF loans [technically drawings]. The purpose of this meeting was to coordinate with the US program, to go over the details of our support for a program which I found, after I arrived in Santo Domingo, involved AID program loans as well as loans from the World Bank and the IMF [International Monetary Fund]. It was a similar, multilateral approach to the one I had worked on in Bogota. However, the problems in the Dominican Republic were quite different from those in Colombia; the issue was more how to get any government functions working than how to make basic structural changes.

MILTON LEAVITT
Director, Binational Center
Bogota (1962-1964)

Milton Leavitt was born and raised in Worcester, Mass. where he left to join the U.S. Air Force in 1940, being captured by the Japanese in the Philippines and led on the Bataan Death March. After the war, Mr. Leavitt received his Master's Degree from Boston College and joined the IIE (USIA) in 1951. From there he served in the Philippines, Germany, India, Colombia, Peru and Thailand. He also served in various capacities in Washington, DC. This interview was conducted by G. Lewis Schmidt in 1989.

LEAVITT: Then they were looking for people who had Center experience, and they wanted to bring the Binational Center Program in South America into the USIA fold. In other words, we were thinking of making the Binational Centers more information-center oriented. So I went to Bogota, Colombia to set up this kind of a center. We were quite successful. We built a new center in Bogota. We had eight satellite centers throughout the country at the time which I was

instrumental in establishing. From my efforts there and for a successful program of this kind, I was awarded our Superior Honor Award in Colombia for my progress in the program.

Q: Were you the first USIS officer assigned to a Binational Center there as a USIS officer?

LEAVITT: Yes.

Q: Didn't they subsequently give career status to most of the Binational Center people?

LEAVITT: That's right.

Q: As a USIS officer?

LEAVITT: As career officers. USIA had just established career officer status, and we were all FSCRs, I think, at the time. I was the first one to go out on such an assignment.

Q: Was this '61?

LEAVITT: This was in '62-'64 my first run out, yes.

The old Binational Center was bombed as we were building the new one. And, just before our new center opened, we were again the recipient of a bomb and some rock throwing, but we built the new center on Calle 19, Centro Colombo Americano. There was an auditorium, an exhibit hall, a library, we had English teaching, and it was quite successful.

We had centers throughout Colombia, all directed from Bogota. Bob Anderson and Keith Adamson were the PAOs I worked with at the time.

Q: I'm wondering, did you ever have any conflicts with the Board of the Center wanting to do things that were not in accord with the USIA program? You had some of that trouble elsewhere?

LEAVITT: This was not true in Colombia. The Board was very cooperative. Within limits, there was very little that we were not able to do. They went along with us. We wouldn't deliberately go out of our way to antagonize the Board: you knew pretty much what you could do and what you couldn't do. It was a good informational program, cultural program and it was our only instrument outside of the embassy. These were the only outlets for USIS.

Q: You say it was the only outlet?

LEAVITT: I mean, it was the informational library. It was the English teaching program. It was a lecture program. It was a film program. Everything operated in the Center, except when we would take films, which was rare, to the schools from time to time.

Q: So you think it was that it was a highly successful program?

LEAVITT: Oh, yes, I do. And the PAOs did. The ambassador did and the Agency did because

they gave me the Superior Honor Award for it.

RICHARD SMITH
Agricultural Attaché
Bogota (1962-1964)

Richard Smith was born in Cuba in 1935. He received his bachelor's degree from the University of New Hampshire and joined the Foreign Service in 1959. His career included positions in Colombia, El Salvador, Mexico, and Washington D.C. Mr. Smith was interviewed by Thad Smith in 1989.

Q: The next question I have written down here is, did your earlier overseas in Colombia and El Salvador live up to your expectations? And how did your wife take to living overseas and being a diplomat's wife?

SMITH: Well, I enjoyed it. I loved my overseas assignments. I can't say anything else. I was particularly fortunate in Colombia when I went. It was a time when Colombia was picked by the Kennedy Administration to be the key country in the Alliance for Progress Program in Latin America. So there was quite a large embassy contingent and very highly motivated and qualified people there. And I got to be very friendly with many of my State Department colleagues. And agriculture was a very key sector, and I really got to work, not only on the traditional FAS work of market development and so forth, but I was able to really get into the whole policy side of the embassy work. I worked very closely at times with the DCM, economic officer and that type of thing. It was a very interesting and exciting time. So I enjoyed it enormously.

My wife had never been overseas. We didn't have children at the time, so she took it upon herself to go to an intensive course at the University of the Andes in Bogotá to learn Spanish. She became quite fluent. In fact, they asked her back to teach English. So she really got into the language and culture. Once that happened, she was just fine. She really enjoyed it very much, too. We enjoyed all of our overseas assignments.

Q: In general, I'm wondering what the political environment was like and how that affected your day-to-day work. You mentioned that you were able to take part in some of the policy-related work that was going on in the embassy.

SMITH: Well, as I've said, the whole focus of the mission in Colombia at that time was development. There was a huge AID contingent and my challenge was to keep the U.S. ag export interest up front. But I felt in order to do that, it had to be presented in terms of the overall policy of the mission in order to get country team support. I was very fortunate to have some very good people there who were quite interested in agriculture, particularly the ambassador. So I got involved in a lot of assignments while I was in Colombia.

For example, coffee - I ended up doing most of the coffee work across the board, not just

reporting the numbers but actually writing the reports on the impact on development on foreign exchange and the economy. I had the opportunity twice to go with the ambassador to meet with President Lleras just to talk about coffee issues, and I did a lot of reporting on that – that type of thing, which I thought, was rather great for a young guy to be doing those types of things. I got involved in a lot of briefing sessions and things of that sort.

El Salvador was totally different because it was basically a competition post at the time. It was a small country. I also covered Nicaragua. It was even a lot less formal than Colombia. You got to know everybody in the country, all the top officials. In El Salvador, everybody knows everybody else and it was really quite an interesting assignment. And agriculture just about dominated the whole scene at that time. And the ambassador was a guy called Raul Castro, which was a rather interesting name for a U.S. ambassador. He was a former judge out of Arizona who had quite a bit of interest in agriculture, and we got along very well so I just spent enormous amounts of time working with all factions of the embassy.

I guess the point I'm making, I was very fortunate that they were willing to allow me to function as truly the agricultural man rather than just the FAS man. In other words, almost anything that came up with agriculture they would think of me, have me included, most of the times assign it to me and let me coordinate, that type of thing. That made it quite interesting because you got involved in all kinds of things that were a lot broader. So I felt that it was really pretty good training, not only in understanding all of the programs at the Department of Agriculture, but you really got to understand a lot of the other agencies' interests and what they were trying to do with foreign policy, and trade, and economics. I think later that was helpful to me in jobs back here in Washington.

Mexico was a totally different post. Mexico is, in my view, one of the most interesting posts you can have at FAS. I know a lot of people like Europe and they like Japan. But Mexico is a big market, so you have all of the market development aspects. In fact, it is one of our largest importers of agricultural commodities now. It's an enormous competitor. You have all the border issues that are going on daily. In addition, USDA has an enormous non-FAS presence down there, with programs to eradicate screwworm, and to eradicate hoof and mouth disease, all your plant quarantine issues. So it's really, I think, a fascinating place. And I think the potential in a country like Mexico is great. So I just loved Mexico. We really enjoyed that.

My only downside is that they didn't let me stay awhile. I would have liked to stay a lot longer. Kenneth McDaniel retired and David Hume replaced Ray Iones as the administrator. Dave had a vision and that whoever was going to go into job of management had to have had overseas experience. Dave felt that that was essential in order to be able to understand all of the problems that the overseas people had and to be able to adapt the management people to them. And he very persuasively convinced me to come back and take over the job. I probably would have preferred to stay in Mexico. In fact, I probably would have taken a demotion and salary cut to stay there.

But I've got to say that I enormously enjoyed the job after I got into it because I think if there's one way you really want to understand an agency in the U.S. government is to get into management. It's not the most exhilarating job, but it really gets to the heart of U.S.

government, how it operates, how it functions, and I think that it's very useful. When I became administrator, that experience probably helped me more than any other experience I had.

Q: Thinking about El Salvador and Colombia in particular and to a lesser extent Mexico, one of the questions that enters everybody's mind today is security. Was that as much of a factor then as it is now?

SMITH: Oh, no. Colombia was always a problem because Colombia had a history of violence. There were certain parts of Colombia that you couldn't travel to. In Bogota itself, personal security, robberies and that type of thing were always the norm. Kidnappings of children were also a real problem. So Bogota was not very pleasant place necessarily, although it was nothing like today. I mean, you never worried about driving around in a car or doing stuff like that. That was not a problem. You just didn't go to certain areas of the country and you took certain precautions in your house and with your children.

LOWELL FLEISCHER
Vice Consul
Medellin (1963-1965)

Lowell Fleischer was born in Ohio in 1937. He attended Ohio Western University and got a Bachelor's degree with majors in both journalism and political science. He received an M.A. and a Ph.D. from the University of Connecticut. He served in Medellin, Santo Domingo, Maracaibo, and Washington, DC. Mr. Fleischer worked for ACDA, representing the U.S. mission to the OAS and for the Council of the Americas. He was interviewed by Thomas Dunnigan on January 31, 1995.

Q: That is a rather unique circumstance, being led in by your own students, but I think it worked out well. Now you passed the foreign service examinations and came to Washington, had your training and were assigned I see to Medellin in Colombia for your first post. That was in 1963. What did you do in Medellin?

FLEISCHER: Medellin was a very small foreign service post. Just as an aside we'll get back to this comment in a minute, but all of those little posts have been closed by now. In a way I think it's too bad because it was a really good training ground. Colombia geographically is four distinct regions really, with the capital around Bogota, then you got the west of the Andes where we had a consulate in Cali, then you had the north coast where we had a consulate in Barranquilla and then Medellin which was the big coffee producing and textile area of Colombia. So we had a two-man post there. There was the principal officer and one vice consul and maybe half a dozen locals: somebody doing USIS work under the direction of the PAO in Bogota and a couple of consular clerks, and I had a commercial clerk who followed the commercial developments. The interesting thing about those kinds of posts ... Obviously I spent most of my time doing consular work -- we issued a heck of a lot of visas in those days -- but I also did other things. I worked with a local in developing commercial opportunities for US companies and stayed in touch with

the commercial attaché in Bogota. It was an important area of the country so we also did some political reporting. Although back in those days communications were obviously not what they are today. We had no direct communication with Washington from that little post at all. We would send a telex to the Embassy in Bogota and then Bogota would send it on. Or if the Department ever really want to get hold of us, they'd send a commercial telegram either in the clear, or if it was classified, I'd have to use a one-time pad to decipher the thing. The one bad experience I remember about the one-time pad very clearly happened when my boss was away. He was a former desk officer for the Dominican Republic and as things started heating up there in 1964-5, Phil Torrey was called back to Washington and eventually to the DR, so I was left running the post myself. During this time we had some textile negotiations with Colombia. We had a textile agreement with Colombia on the amount of certain kinds of textiles that they could send to the United States and the various duties, etc. So the negotiations were going on in Bogota and the textile delegation from Washington came down to Colombia and they were greeted by the Embassy and then they came down to Medellin to do the actual negotiations. Until I managed to get some other system in place the Department was sending instructions for these textile negotiators by commercial cable all of which had to be deciphered by hand using the one-time pad. There were reams of this stuff coming in. Finally I called the Ambassador, Tony Freeman-- he was later our Ambassador to Mexico -- and I said: "This is just overwhelming us all. We're only an hour's flight away. Can't we get these cables sent to you? They can be deciphered there and sent down here by courier." It was taking me hours to decode these things. So that's what we finally did. Washington finally listened to reason and they sent these instructions for the textile negotiators to Bogota where they were decoded in Bogota and flown down from Bogota to Medellin. So these small posts provided an invaluable learning mechanism for somebody coming into the Foreign Service. I wouldn't have traded places with anybody in Bogota for any amount of money.

Q: As many new officers, you were rotated, but of course that problem never arose in Medellin since there was no one to be rotated with.

FLEISCHER: That's right. We did everything anyway.

Q: But I think you're absolutely right. You got a chance to try your hand at almost everything including running the post which most junior officers never do.

FLEISCHER: Yes, in fact when Phil was away for a good length of time during the Dominican crisis, maybe three or four months, and I was running the post, I got Chargé pay. The difference between my FSO-8 or -7 salary, whatever it was, and his -- he was maybe an FSO-3 or 4 at the time -- during that period of time amounted to maybe a couple of thousand dollars. When you're only making six or seven thousand dollars a year, that is a lot of money. I wasn't married in those days and I took that money when Phil came back to post and blew it on my first trip around Latin America. So that's the first time I had an opportunity then to visit other countries in the region.

Q: Well you probably deserved the extra money for the time you were putting in deciphering messages from Washington. What was the situation as regards violence in those years in Colombia.?

FLEISCHER: Colombia, traditionally, we would have to admit has been a very violent country. I say that as a very good friend of Colombia and somebody who has followed Colombia pretty closely ever since my first exposure to the country some thirty some years ago. There were always pockets of violence, even when I was there traveling around Antioquia. I made a point on a lot of weekends to take the USIS truck and some U.S. movies and go out to villages and show them, usually outdoors on a home-made screen or a white-washed wall. I'd get a chance to meet not only the mayor but lots of other people in those villages. I remember going to one village and being fascinated to find out that everybody there was a member of the liberal party. Colombia, of course, being basically a two-party state divided between liberal and conservative voters. There were no conservative voters in that town at all. This was really an outgrowth of "la violencia," a period in Colombian life which was almost civil war where the political parties were actually fighting each other. From then on some villages in Andes were of all one political persuasion or another. That way, I guess, they decided they really could trust someone. So there was still that kind of violence. Now, in the cities there certainly was nothing akin to the kind of drug violence which Colombia has unfortunately been subjected to in recent years. Things were relatively calm that way. Another little incident I can think of might illustrate the difference in time. There was a departmental police chief, that is for the department of Antioquia. Colombia is divided into departments equivalent to our states. He called one morning and said he'd had reports that an American plane had crashed. He was sending a crew out to investigate and he wondered if I'd be interested in going with them. I jumped at the chance to do that. It was an arduous trip up into the Andes. We flew, we took a helicopter, we rode horses, mules and finally we walked. We found this plane. It was an old C-47, gooney bird, that had crashed. The call letters had been painted out so it was obviously engaged in smuggling. Inside the plane we found some manifests indicating that the plane was bringing American cigarettes into Colombia. We found other manifests saying they were taking coffee out of Colombia. So they were smuggling US cigarettes, which sold very well in Colombia in those days, into the country and smuggling coffee out. That's how innocent the whole thing was in those days. I can imagine that those same smuggling routes were used in later years when the product was cocaine.

Q: Did you feel personally threatened while you were there? Was there antagonism toward you as an American official?

FLEISCHER: Not really. I felt very safe in Medellin. I was a young single person. I had a lot of Colombian friends and I never felt that I was in any danger at all. We did go through one episode brought on by the US intervention in the Dominican Republic. As a lot of people who were there at the time will realize, this energized especially student groups, leftist groups, all over the continent, to protest against the United States. We did have protests in front of the consulate. We were on a main street there in Medellin. Junin was the name of the street, as I recall. We had a lot of protests there because of that and one day, some people from DAS, the Departamento Administrativo de Seguridad, which is the Colombian equivalent of our FBI, came by the office to tell me that they'd had a specific threat on my life. I didn't really believe that, but I guess I had to. So they assigned a couple of guards who went around with me for a while. That was all heady stuff for a Vice Consul. I really couldn't believe what was going on anyway. I guess they probably did that for a week or so. I think it's because they got free beer at my house and they were fed fairly well. Eventually I was walking down the street one day and these two guys were behind me and somebody in the American community saw it and raised the question whether

they were safe if this was happening to me. That kind of led me to think that maybe that wasn't the best thing and it really wasn't needed. And I talked to the DAS people and the whole thing was called off and nothing ever happened. So I don't know whether that was a false report or whether it was a real report ... But that's the only time when things were really unsettled, the time when those students were up in arms over the US decision in the Dominican Republic. But even they were not violent. There would be some rock throwing, they would sing and chant in front of the consulate and sit down. The place wasn't attacked or anything like that. Looking back, it was pretty calm; there was certainly nothing akin to what we went through in Iran, for example,

Q: These were exciting years in our Latin-American policy of course. We had the Alliance for Progress, we had the Peace Corps. Did they impinge on any of your duties in Medellin?

FLEISCHER: Yes, both of them very much as a matter of fact. We had quite a few Peace Corps volunteers in Antioquia. The westernmost part of our consular district was in a really remote area of the country. That particular state or department was called the Choco; the capital was Quibdo. I went down there to visit Peace Corps volunteers who were living there and it took me a couple of days to get down to where they were. So we had a lot of rural Peace Corps volunteers. We also had some Peace Corps volunteers in the city. It was a brand new experience. Some of them, most of them, did very well working in specialties such as public health and a few things like that. Some were supposed to be working in city planning, I remember the mayor called me one day just ranting and raving about how these young kids who didn't know beans about running a city, whether it was an American city or a Latin American city, were telling him how the run things. What were they doing there, what was he supposed to do with them? Well, it took us a little while to get that straightened out. But most of them who were health-care specialists or education graduates for the most part probably did a fairly decent job. The Alliance for Progress was a huge program. Colombia was showcase for the Alliance and an awful lot of money went into that country in those days. For a while both my boss and I were spending almost every weekend participating in the inauguration of some new Alliance project. After President John Kennedy was shot, everything was named Kennedy. I must have personally participated in the inauguration of at least a dozen John Kennedy schools in that part of Colombia, built with the help of the Alliance for Progress. So it was a very large program in Colombia in those days. I remember being totally shocked on a visit to the Embassy to find out the incredible number of AID personnel involved in this Alliance project.

Q: Were AID people in Medellin?

FLEISCHER: We had no AID people in Medellin. All of it was all done out of Bogota. Bogota was only an hour's flight away, so it wasn't a huge undertaking to fly back and forth. So we had no AID people there, but a lot of projects being funded by AID in those days.

Q: Now, as I recall it, there were two ambassadors at the time you served. Tony Freeman and Covey Oliver. Did they come and visit you in Medellin?

FLEISCHER: Yes, both of them came regularly, as did the DCM. Henry Dearborn was the DCM. He, of course, had been in Santo Domingo when Trujillo was shot. As a matter of fact, he was our Chargé there. I guess we didn't have diplomatic relations. Was he the Chargé or the

Consul General? Anyway he was the number one there, but he was the DCM in Bogota. Yes, they both came down. It was my first experience, my first opportunity to contrast a career diplomat ambassador, in the case of Freeman, and a non-career ambassador in the case of Covey Oliver. Oliver was not just some political appointee, however. He was a very talented, a very well educated expert on Latin America. I remember as a young Vice Consul thinking there was not that great a difference. That is, they were both very effective and the fact that one was a career officer and the other one a political appointee, at least in my experience, made absolutely no difference. They were both very talented and effective representatives of the United States.

LAWRENCE P. TAYLOR
Peace Corps Volunteer
Province of Antioquia, Colombia (1963-1965)

Lawrence P. Taylor was born in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1940. He graduated in 1963 from the University of Ohio with a degree in history and economics. He served as a member of the Peace Corps in the province of Antioquia in 1963. In addition to Colombia, he was posted to Yugoslavia, Dominican Republic, Indonesia, Canada, England, and Estonia.

Q: Well, you say you'd sort of pointed yourself towards the Peace Corps.

TAYLOR: I did.

Q: How did you get in, and what happened?

TAYLOR: I guess I got in by mistake or by luck. That depends on how you look at it. But there was an application procedure, and I went through that. I was selected for Peace Corps volunteer training in New Mexico, at the University of New Mexico, and went to that, and after that was accepted as a volunteer and was assigned to Colombia, to a rural community development project in Colombia.

Q: What was your impression of the Peace Corps people you were with at the University of New Mexico?

TAYLOR: Well, the University of New Mexico was the training site. The volunteer trainees were from all over the country, although the greatest numbers were from New York and California, and there was also a disproportionately high number of people who were left-handed, which I remember we all thought - I was not one of them, but we all thought - that this was something important that somebody ought to do a dissertation about. I'll tell you, it was marvelous, because these were the kind of people I liked, and it was so easy to form very close and immediate connections and friendships with almost every one of them, and it was a tremendous experience.

Q: Were you going through sort of midnight questions about asking what the hell can I, as a

history-economics major from the middle of the United States, do down in Colombia?

TAYLOR: No, that comes after we get to Colombia. What can I really do? At the time, most of us had great confidence that we had something to offer, even though we probably couldn't have been very definite about what it was, and remember, this was the beginning of the Peace Corps as well. I think it's riding at that point on enthusiasm, on emotion, on a sense of commitment, but hasn't yet come to grips with connecting all of that with real skills and real needs. That's the connection that still has to be worked with and that we face in practical ways when we're actually down there on the site.

Q: Well, what about Spanish?

TAYLOR: I had had some Spanish in college, and they provided some training at the time. Again, this was a system that was not yet worked out. Language training in the Peace Corps subsequently became much better. It was more or less haphazard. But when you piece together what I'd had in college with what I had in the Peace Corps, it was enough then to learn by doing down there. You weren't starting at all from ground zero.

Q: So where did you go in Colombia?

TAYLOR: It was in the province of Antioquía. It's out in the countryside, a small little community called Betania, and the work was something that was very much in vogue at the time, which is rural community development, and it was based on what we believed, at the time, was the experience in the Philippines a couple of decades earlier, in which, by working at community levels to organize communities to develop the capacity to solve their local problems without waiting for federal governments or churches or outside organizations to do it for them, you could actually instill a sense of participation and democracy from the grassroots up. That was dovetailed, at the time, into President Kennedy's Alliance for Progress and the notion that if there was not social change in Latin America by peaceful means, there would be the inevitable change through revolutionary means, and we believed that we were out there as part of that agent of peaceful social revolution that would build democracy and build participation and prevent the kind of revolution that had occurred in Cuba.

Q: Well, now, can you describe your locale before we get to what you did there?

TAYLOR: Yes, let me tell you first that it was very high up, and I'm a guy who's afraid of heights. It was very high up in the mountains, and these crazy buses going around these absolutely hairpin turns, high up in the Andes Mountains - I certainly remember that very well. It's a nice little town on the Spanish model, with a nice central plaza where people sit out and have a beer or a soft drink or whatever, and that's the social center of the town, and then it's dominated, as most of these little places are, by a very substantial church building and then the municipal buildings, the government, the National Association of Coffee Growers and others have their offices around; and then that's a nodal center then for an agricultural region in which mainly coffee is grown, and the only way you can get out to that agricultural region is by getting on a mule, because a horse will fall off these country trails. And you ride out there on these hairpin turns, instead of on a little one-lane bus road, now you're on a one-track mule road, and

it's beautiful and exciting.

Q: Well, then, how were you received there? You must have been one of the earliest ones.

TAYLOR: Yes, we were one of the earliest ones, although Colombia was even at that time a very big program for the Peace Corps. Now later when it becomes a narco-state, all of that is pulled out, but at the time, this is intended to be a model for the Alliance for Progress, and the Peace Corps is being poured in there. During the time I was there, I think the number of volunteers built up to several hundred. It was extraordinary, and all over the country - not concentrated in Bogotá or the big cities but all over the countryside, consistent with its philosophy of rural community development and grassroots organization empowerment for local communities.

But we were received, I suppose, with a mix of wonder and of courtesy - wonder about who we really are and what the heck are we doing there, and just traditional down-home courtesy that said we're not sure why they're here, but they're nice and we're nice and we're going to welcome them.

Q: Well, you went out there with an eye to doing this rural development. How would you characterize the rural development at the time you went there? What were you going to be working on?

TAYLOR: The philosophy of community development is really a philosophy of creating an empowerment of the community. It is through the community's own empowerment, then, that specific projects happen. Often that intermediate step, that first step of building the empowerment, is forgotten, and people talk about community development being building a water system or a school or a medical center. It's only community development, as opposed to a project, if the community has been brought together and given a sense of empowerment and has itself decided that, as a priority, it wishes to build something like a water system or a school and then proceeds to find a way to do it. The Peace Corps's mission at that point, as we understood it, was to create that sense of empowerment. Now there were organizations that understood this concept locally and that were willing to be partners. One was the National Association of Coffee Growers in Colombia. They did many things in the countryside associated with the coffee industry, but they had many members who understood the importance of community empowerment leading to community improvements through projects. And they were willing to be helpful in trying to organize a community. In the community we were in, there were also three full-time priests. Two of them were old-style conservative priests whose mission in life was what you would expect. One was a very young priest who had a reform mission in mind, who thought that the church had to be more socially minded and had to work to the improvement of the community, and especially of the peasants, in order to bring about peaceful change. And he was very eager to help gather the community and try to develop a sense of empowerment and decision leading to projects. And there were some teachers in the area who understood that concept and believed in it. So you start by finding who your natural allies who have credibility, who have reach, who have some power in the community might be and organize them into a nucleus that then reaches further and tries to draw in wider sections of the community to the process.

Q: But when you look to your natural supporters, you must have natural - not enemies but - opponents, because you must be breaking the rice bowl of the local chiefs, the caïds, what do they call them?

TAYLOR: *Caudillos?*

Q: I don't know, but I mean I would think that you would be stirring up the pot?

TAYLOR: Well, if you got too successful you might, but when you're just out there trying to plant an acorn, probably they're not worried it's going to grow into an oak tress. They probably think you don't know what an acorn is anyhow, much less can grow it successfully. One of the interesting things about the Peace Corps, though, was that to some extent it coopted the natural opposition. The natural opposition is the vested established power structure in some cases, but the Peace Corps came with an on-high blessing. President Kennedy had a magical image in Latin America at the time and in Colombia at the time, and the government of Colombia, starting with the president but ending down through the structure down to the local level, know that the Peace Corps was President Kennedy's personal program, and doors that would not be open to others would be open to Peace Corps volunteers. You had to know how to use them and know how to take advantage of them, but many centers of potential opposition - if this were coming from another source - were actually lukewarm supporters or, at least, neutral if it was coming from the Peace Corps, because they would not oppose President Kennedy's program. There was a kind of intellectual and emotional reach that was very helpful to us.

Q: Were you there when Kennedy was assassinated?

TAYLOR: Oh, I sure was.

Q: How did that hit?

TAYLOR: It hit me like a sucker-punch in the solar plexus, but what was, I think, more interesting is the effect it had in the community. I'll never forget it. I think that community and every community I knew of or later heard about in rural Colombia seemed to be as affected by that event as America was, and I still remember the endless lines of mules and horses and people that walked out of the countryside to come in and tell us, who were the only Americans they knew, how sorry they were and that in this Catholic country they all burned candles on the night after, when people knew that he had died. The whole countryside, as far as an eye could see, was full of candles. There's no electricity out there, but every little hut for as far as the eye could see had lit a candle in remembrance of President Kennedy. It was, in a depressing sense, kind of a magical moment.

ROBERT C. AMERSON
Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Bogota (1963-1966)

Robert C. Amerson attended Macalester College and joined USIS in 1955. His first assignment was in Caracas, Venezuela and then as press attaché in Rome, Italy. He served as Director of USIS in Bogota in 1963, and Public Affairs Advisor to Latin America Bureau in 1966 and as Assistant Director for USIA for Latin America in 1968. Later he served as Director in Madrid and Rome. This interview was conducted by Allen Hansen in May 1988.

Q: From Rome you went to Bogota. And this was your first PAOship. That was in 1963, and Colombia had not yet become one of the major sources of illicit narcotics.

AMERSON: Oh, no.

Q: What was Bogota like in those days?

AMERSON: Well, let me preface the specific reply by a reference. We came on direct assignment from Rome through Washington the week of November 22, 1963, which means that we were here on my last day of consultation when the news came that President Kennedy was shot. The funeral was on the day we got on the airplane to fly into Bogota. So we were in kind of a different era already. President Kennedy and Jackie had visited Colombia; after his death they were almost deified there, of course. So that made for representatives of the U.S. government, of the Kennedys' country, an aura of glory tinged with sadness. For a while the Alliance for Progress and all those ideals associated with the martyred President gave to us, in our work and in our personal relations, a special quality.

Q: What role did USIS Bogota have with respect to the Alliance?

AMERSON: Well, those were the years when we had Alliance for Progress Information Officers you may remember, working closely with AID. We did a lot of press and media relations, visits to projects, that kind of thing, to publicize and encourage achievements. Speeches, by the ambassador especially, to emphasize our working together towards common goals. And there was great hope and optimism. This was long, long before the shadow of illicit drug dealing became such an important factor in that part of Latin America. There wasn't any comparable major negative issue, those years when I was there. I suppose we were lucky in that sense.

We think very fondly back on Bogota of the sixties. Because in Colombia the people had a special quality it seemed to us. Maybe this was optimism. Nancy worked with a group of Colombian women, in social projects -- the only country where this happened in our experience. They really knew how to get things done, working with the YMCA and a group running a day care center. Somehow there was an attitude of let's solve problems together and be cordial about it at the same time. In another category, Colombia has this nice diversity of musical traditions. We enjoyed that. And such a variety of terrain -- from the coast of Cartagena and Barranquilla, up into the high plains of Bogota at 8,000 feet where it's always kind of cool. And even into the jungles of Leticia, deep along the Amazon -- a fascinating place to visit. So Colombia remains a lovely country of considerable affection in our mind; and I think we did some good work there.

Q: *The Binational Cultural Center in Bogota is practically world class.*

AMERSON: Well, it was then.

Q: *Was that well on its way at that time?*

AMERSON: Yes, we moved to the new center that had just been constructed in my early months there and under the directorship of Milt Leavitt and others it became a major cultural operation. I think it's going quite well today.

Q: *Definitely.*

AMERSON: That's nice to know.

Again, I guess I personally was lucky in that sense. Let me turn the clock backward again for a moment, because I don't want to pass over terrorism without noting that we had our share of it in Bogota. We've talked about Bogota and our being there before the drug issue arose. But there were occasional spurts of anti-American and anti-government terrorism in those years, too. Indeed, fifteen sticks of dynamite were removed 10 minutes or so before they were set to explode right outside my wall about six o'clock one evening at the Embassy. Bombs were going off in the city from time to time; indeed, right after I left bombs in our binational center killed some personnel and caused severe damage. So terrorism was even then a thing to be reckoned with.

JOHN A. FERCH
Economic Officer
Bogota (1964-1967)

John A. Ferch graduated from Princeton in 1958 and entered the Foreign Service the same year. His assignments began with Argentina, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, the National War College and the Economic Bureau. He was the DCM in Mexico, Chief of Mission in Cuba and Ambassador to Honduras. This interview was conducted by William E. Knight in 1991.

FERCH: So ARA was very interested in getting me back into ARA. I suppose the Department's formal policy at that time was that I should have gone some place else regionally. But ARA offered me an assignment as an economist in Bogota. It was doing the hard economics -- the balance of payments, the fiscal accounts. At that time we were putting into the Colombian economy through AID resources equivalent to over a third of their import bill. We were in Colombia in a big, big way and were working very closely with Colombia's economic policy and had great need for detailed reporting on the course of the Colombian economy. There I learned to do basically an IMF type economic analysis where you do a monthly report on the Colombian balance of payments, on the budget expenditures, etc.

Q: *You weren't there when I was down there on the aviation negotiations were you?*

FERCH: I don't recall. We had an officer in the economic section who had aviation as his specialty so there must have been an issue there.

Q: *What was his name?*

FERCH: I don't remember.

Q: *Well it had to be between '63 and '67 when I was in the aviation negotiations.*

FERCH: Well, I was there from 1964-67, three years. It was a very rewarding period of time. We produced our last child. Nothing else significant happened during that time. It was a wonderful Embassy. Covey Oliver was the Ambassador for most of the time. He was just a great ambassador. The staff had a high morale. I have been fortunate in serving in such posts and will talk about that under management.

I was involved during this time, 1959-86, 27 years, at very senior and very junior levels. Deeply involved with Alliance for Progress in Colombia, El Salvador and Guatemala. I saw what could be achieved with development assistance. I think the Alliance was a success. Growth rates were raised. Infrastructure was built. We were lax in that we didn't insist on a political element. We allowed crummy governments to get away with repression. Anyway, I was involved in development assistance.

DWIGHT N. MASON
Consular/Economic Officer
Barranquilla (1965)

Dwight N. Mason was born in New York and studied history at Brown University and the University of California, Berkeley. He entered the Foreign Service in 1962 and served in Morocco, Ecuador, Argentina and Canada as Deputy Chief of Mission. This interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy in August 1993.

Q: *Where is Barranquilla?*

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

Q: *Was it a port city?*

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

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

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

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

MASON: It was a consulate general.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Q: How were relations with the embassy?

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

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

MASON: It's an encryption device. It is a group of random letters with which you encrypt a message. It's quite simple to use but very tedious. The problem with one-time pads is typographical error. The product looks random, and it's hard to proof read. If you make a mistake, you're in deep trouble because such an error can prevent decryption at the other end. We

had also had to be concerned with how to destroy them, and that was not easy because they were as thick as a regular novel and they were glued together. I don't think we ever would have been able to destroy them all in a real emergency.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MASON: The "Hope" is a hospital ship, run by the Hope Foundation, and it wanders around the world doing good works. I guess I'm not terribly high on it, but a lot of good work does gets done. I signed off the crew twice, I think, during the time they were there. That is a lot of turn

over. The crews apparently did not like long port stays. Those were the days when consular officers had to sign everybody on and off a ship, and pay them in cash. I didn't end up having to pay them, I don't think in cash, but these crew lists were enormous documents. This was straight out of the 19th century, all I needed was a quill pen. That's fundamentally all we needed to do for them.

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

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

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

On the crazy side, I once met the inventor of the atomic bomb. He came to my office in his pajamas with his hotel keeper who told me, "This guy hasn't paid his bill." And the inventor said, "Well, the White House hasn't sent my monthly check." And he talked, and talked, and it quickly became clear that he was nuts. But I couldn't certify him as crazy as I'm not a psychiatrist. So I just sent a cable back reporting the conversation verbatim.

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

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

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

Q: Well, no coups, or riots, or anything like that?

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

NOEL MARSH
Program Officer, USAID
Bogota (1966-1967)

Noel Marsh was born in San Francisco in 1931. He received his bachelor's and master's degree at the University of California in 1958. His career in US AID included positions in Nepal, Brazil, Colombia, and Liberia. Mr. Marsh was interviewed by Yin Marsh in 1999.

Q: When did you arrive in Colombia?

MARSH: I arrived in Colombia in April of 1966.

Q: What was your position there?

MARSH: My official title was program officer, but the Mission was structured in a different way than what I had normally been used to. I think over time the position of program officer in AID had changed. The program office was under an officer called the Assistant Director for Programming. In the old days I think this was more akin to what the program officer was. So, when I assumed my new duty, I really did not have as much independent authority as I had been used to because the structure of the office was quite different and my immediate supervisor was reluctant to delegate responsibility to his staff. I admired the top Mission management, Jim Fowler, who was a very tough and able manager; his deputy was also a very fair and broad-minded person as well as being very capable, but I found my own position in the Mission quite restrictive and unrewarding. I did not enjoy my assignment in Colombia.

Q: What was the focus of the Colombian program, and how long did you work there?

MARSH: The centerpiece of the program was a very sizable program loan and the various negotiations that went along with it. The technical assistance program was less central to our overall interest but was an important component of the total assistance package. It was a fairly large program. Apart from working in the usual sectors of health, education, and agriculture, there were also sizable projects in Public Safety and Civic Action, where the Colombian military were using their armed forces to do public works construction. The security situation at the time was rather tense and this was an overriding consideration in a lot of the events and activities that we undertook.

Q: Even in those days there was security tension?

MARSH: Yes, very much so, probably not dangerous as it is now but, nonetheless, quite violent. There was a lot of guerrilla activity in the hills and burning of villages and shooting up of buses. It was not a particularly safe place to be, although Bogotá was usually relatively quiet and safe.

RICHARD MCKEE
Consular Officer
Barranquilla (1966-1968)

Richard McKee was born in Ohio in 1941. After finishing his bachelor's degree at Cornell University he received his law degree from the University of Virginia in 1965. His career included positions in Bolivia, Colombia, India, Pakistan, Tunisia, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Switzerland, and Turkey. Mr. McKee was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in April 2003.

MCKEE: Three officer post, wretched port city. My boss, may he rest in peace, was a drunk.
(End of tape)

We were in Barranquilla, I got there in the fall of '66 and stayed there until the Summer of '68, actually. And I was the visa and passports officer. It was a good assignment in many ways. Most distinctly in my mind, in those days the USS Hope, the Hope ships were very much active.

Q: You might explain what they were.

MCKEE: Well this Project Hope was the inspiration of a father and son team of doctors named Walsh. They persuaded the US government to give them two hospital ships, which they then, through charitable contributions, raised money to fix up. They sent these around the world. The idea was that Project Hope, which was headquartered in Winchester, Virginia, would way in advance send out a team to a particular place, Sri Lanka or Colombia or some other place, talk to the local medical establishment, gain its confidence, find out areas in which it could send its ships for ten months, to be essentially a teaching hospital for the local medical establishment. This required a pretty high level of diplomatic skill, by the way. Then the ship would come, it would dock. American doctors would take off a month or two, fly to wherever this was, practice their specialty. Obviously the ship didn't take local folks with colds or broken arms. It took people who had, what was seen as interesting, tropical diseases, or diseases of the area. I think it was usually the tropics. As the vice consul I had to go to Cartagena, Colombia, which was ninety miles away from Barranquilla every other Friday. I would sign seamen on and off the Hope Ship. The ships were crewed by Grace and company. Peter Grace being a devout Catholic, as were the Walsh's. Of course Grace and Company was a major U.S. shipping line. I learned how important unions were then. All of these seamen were unionized, and I remember they got about six hundred bucks a month, not counting room and board and clothes, which were provided. I remember thinking to myself at the time that if I had an idiot son I'd work my butt off to get him into the seamen's union, because it was, well, an easy life. The seamen were seamen. The Grace Company management argued that they were essentially a bunch of drunks and malingerers, and certainly that was often the case. The most interesting aspect of it was that they served two month stints on the ship, and then they had to be sent back to Miami, because the ship was just sitting in port. X number of them had to be employed, according to union rules, mostly chipping paint. It was my obligation as the vice consul to make sure that their allowances

were paid to various dependants. I learned there that it is really true, that sailors really do have a girl in every port. And I would solemnly check to make sure that Mazie in Panama City got her fifteen dollars, and Amparo in some place, some port in Nicaragua, got her twenty-five dollars, all of this from the same seaman, which I thought was very interesting.

Q: Did, Barranquilla, what was the sort of the center of activity there?

MCKEE: It was a commercial place. Barranquilla is about fifteen miles upriver from the mouth of the Magdalena, where the Magdalena River, a mighty river, drains almost half of Columbia, flows into the Caribbean. There had been a very tiny town earlier, but the entire history of the place dates from 1920. I assume the Colombian government, not the locals, floated a large bond issue, mostly in Chicago. This was subscribed, and it raised enough money to build a large breakwater out into the Caribbean. This made Barranquilla an ocean port. And so shipping was its main occupation. There was industry as well. Really, except for a very few small buildings downtown, all of it dated from the 1920s. Not a particularly attractive city. To the east was Santa Marta, which is a very historical town in a very lovely setting. And to the west was Cartagena, which was a fortress of the Spanish Main, in the eighteenth century, again a very dramatic kind of place.

Q: What, other than the care and feeding of the seamen, what other sorts of things were you doing?

MCKEE: I was a visa officer. Almost anybody could scrape up a hundred bucks, which is what it cost to fly from Barranquilla to Miami in those days, so we turned down a lot of visas. I did immigrant visas as well. Occasionally took care of American citizens. We had what we called it the widows' and orphans' fund. Whenever there was money left over from some party or something we'd toss it in there, and we used this money if somebody needed a hotel room for a night, until they'd take the plane out the next morning, didn't have any money. The inspectors came through and said we couldn't keep it, this was all against the regs, so we had to get rid of it, it was unappropriated funds.

Q: Oh, yes. So you were trying to hide it somewhere.

MCKEE: Well, we didn't, I don't know, we didn't hide it. The other thing, I was asked to clear out some old files, and I did so. Bundled stuff off and sent it to Washington. These files actually went back to the '40s, and they were absolutely fascinating, even in the '40s, because of the effort to combat Nazi and Italian fascist shipping and whatever. We had consulates in Cartagena and Santa Marta as well as Barranquilla. The locals told me that they remembered the FBI got in at that time, who were very obvious because they all had brush cuts and wore short-sleeved shirts and ties and nobody else in town did. They also couldn't speak Spanish, which sort of gave them away. But, above all, all the angry correspondence among the three consuls, each accusing the other of giving ten pesos to some American citizen deadbeat, which would have been enough to get him into the next consular district. Really quite humorous.

Q: I'm a professional Consul, you might say, and 'Oh lord don't let it happen in my

Consular district' is the Consul's prayer. And if it does happen you hope that somehow or another it can be moved to somebody else's district.

MCKEE: We were just three, the consul, who was essentially a South Asia expert, his French-Algerian wife, myself. I was then single, got married while I was there. The other vice consul, who went on to a very distinguished career, and whom I saw the other day for the first time in decades, here at DACOR of which he is a member. Also a regional Peace Corps director, a family named Hogan, to whom I was really close, and USIA had a bi-national center director in town. A total of five.

Q: How did you, you know, here you are, young officer, how did you deal with, was he Consular General, or...

MCKEE: Consul.

Q: Consul. How did you deal with your head man with the drinking problem?

MCKEE: It was very difficult. It was one of those situations which has only happened once or twice in my life. In the first interview, I talked to him, he talked to me, and it seemed clear to me from the outset that we wouldn't get along, and essentially we didn't. He was a nervous guy, very concerned about his career, had family problems, drank too much, which is particularly a bad idea in the tropics. Now mind you, up until five years ago I probably drank too much, so it's the pot calling the kettle black. He had a demanding eye in terms of details and respect and all of that. There were two low points. Bob, the consul, had taken the consulate car and driver, a short guy who could barely see over the windshield, and his wife, and was driving to Cartagena. There was this spot in the road where the pavement had given way, and the driver hit that full force, and Bob and his pregnant wife and the driver went head over heels as the car rolled over, off the road. Well, they all recovered, thank God Suzie didn't lose the baby, but I said 'Look, we've gotta get rid of this driver.' And I had worked it out with the Consulate doctor, the guy who interviewed the immigrant visa people, that the guy in fact had had TB, and the scars were still on his lungs, and I said to Bob 'Come on, why don't we just let him go. The doctor will say that you never really know with TB, the scars are still very much there. It could become active again.' I had it greased, the admin guys in Bogota were all set, he'd retire, he'd get a pension, and we get a driver who could see over the goddamn windshield.' Bob wouldn't buy it. So we continued to employ that driver. Well, he was driving me to Cartagena some months later, he hit exactly the same goddamn spot in the road and the car rolled over again, and I remember a ballpoint pen went through the soft fleshy part of my hand. We were okay. Incredibly enough, they were able to roll the car back up onto the road and we were able to get back to Barranquilla in some shape, and I was furious. I was scared too, frankly, but I was furious. I went directly to his house, and it was about two blocks from where I lived - unwashed, oil stains, blood, what have you. I knocked on the door. Bob came to the door, he was giving a reception, I said to Bob, 'Exactly the same spot where this guy almost killed your wife, he almost killed me, he's got to go.' Bob's reaction, I shall never forget this, was 'You're bleeding on my carpet.' It was not a happy two years.

Q: You mentioned you met your wife there, how did that happen?

MCKEE: No, not really, I met my wife in Bolivia, where she was an FSN, and I proposed marriage to her while we were still there. While I was in Barranquilla, I went through the process of seeking permission to marry an alien, which of course is legally the correct definition. It always reminded me of somebody from Mars. Anyway, the bureaucracy was very slow to move and my fiancée made wedding preparations. So I remember, I remember distinctly nothing had happened. So finally on a Wednesday I telegraphed them saying 'I'm leaving on Friday to get married on this coming Saturday, Friday night civil ceremony, Saturday church ceremony in La Paz.' And just before I left the Department sent back a cable saying 'Permission to marry granted. Letter follows.' Which I don't think I have anymore, but I had it for years, the copy of this telegram. Bob Carle, who is now dead, been dead for some time, he was my boss. He was this guy that I had a very difficult relationship with. But he gave me one piece of advice which was absolutely on the mark and for which I remain indebted to him to this day. He sat me down, just the night before I left, he said 'You know, you're marrying a Latin American woman, and I wish you well.' He said 'I really think you should not make Latin America your Foreign Service career.' And I asked him why. And Bob said 'Look, I'm married to a foreign woman, and I'll tell you, if you marry this woman in Latin America, if you stay in Latin America, the other American wives will make life difficult for her, don't think they won't. Any success that you achieve, there will be those who will say 'Well, he did this because his wife speaks the language and she's from here and she has all these connections that other officers with American wives don't have.' He said, 'I really think you ought to go somewhere else.' And I did, I put in for Farsi, Arabic or Turkish training. Basically it was a way of getting out of Latin America, and I think Bob was right. I pray desperately that things have improved, and I'm sure they have, but when I was there in the late '60s', mid-'60s', there was an awful lot of contempt in the State Department for the Latin Americans. I think some of it verged on racism. ARA was really in a lot of ways a place I didn't want to be.

Q: I must say, I sensed this immediately, the sort of thing you pick up in the corridors. Part of it was that if you, I'm not sure it was racism, because I didn't feel that, but I think the problem was that once you went there, sort of a black hole, you never appeared, you never went anywhere else, I mean there are so many posts you could go to, and the other thing was that quite frankly on our Foreign Policy radar it ranked pretty low. I mean Latin America, you know, every once in awhile something might come up but basically when you look at the problems of the Middle East or Asia or even particularly the Soviet Union and all, I mean these were the things that really engaged officers.

MCKEE: I think that's true. I think that people specialize in ARA because Spanish and Portuguese were frankly easy languages to learn. And in those days, this is all pre-drugs and pre-terrorism, except for plane hijacking, it was pretty easy duty. You could save money, have servants in the house. I suspect that people, the Arabists, the Kremlinologists, the NATO types, did look down on ARA. Once you're sort of in there, this is another point that bugged me, this is your second Latin American tour. I may be exaggerating here, but you know you do one more, and you'll never get out.

EDMUND MURPHY
Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Bogota (1966-1968)

Edmund Murphy was educated at the University of California, Berkeley. He began his career in the Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs in 1942, but left 9 months later to serve in the U.S. Navy during World War II. He returned to that office in 1946, and subsequently held a number of senior positions in the Foreign Service, including Policy Officer for Latin America. He served in Argentina, Haiti, Colombia and Finland. He later became a Senior Inspector for the Agency. This interview was conducted by Allen Hansen in January 1990.

Q: Now, in July of '66 you were then assigned as country public affairs officer in Bogota, Colombia. Was there any inkling in those days that narcotic trafficking would some day become a major problem for both Colombia and the U.S.?

MURPHY: None whatever. Nobody ever mentioned the subject of drugs during the time I stayed in Colombia.

Q: What were the major issues and concerns with regard to Colombian-U.S. relations at that time? I suppose the Alliance of Progress was one of them.

MURPHY: A lot of our work was on the Alliance for Progress in Colombia. We had a big publications program specifically on that subject and we also did a lot with AID and with student groups in Colombia, because coincident with emphasis on the Alliance for Progress there was a push for more programs aimed at students. I don't know whether you remember, but that began in the Kennedy Administration particularly with Bobby Kennedy, and it carried over to my work in Colombia. So I used to go into the countryside to work with students who worked on building projects such as building rural schools on a volunteer basis. And there was one Conference on Student Affairs in Lima that I attended because we were putting a big emphasis on new student programs in Colombia.

Q: Was the Peace Corps in there too at that time?

MURPHY: Yes, the Peace Corps was in Colombia.

Q: And you had a number of branch posts?

MURPHY: We had one USIS branch, consisting of a local USIS employee who had an office in the American Consulate in Cali. This employee worked mostly on information activities with emphasis on press. Otherwise, in a sense, we had assistance with cultural programs from the American officers assigned to binational centers. These were located in Medellin, Cartagena, Cali, Manizales, Popayan and Bucaramanga.

I was traveling a lot because I visited the binational centers frequently. They were considered to be an integral part of USIS programming and close liaison was necessary. We had meetings in Bogota of BNC Directors once a year, or sometimes twice a year. A windfall came to this program while I was in Colombia. It developed that Foreign Service Officers were no longer permitted, under State Department regulations, to sell their automobiles unless they gave all proceeds over cost of the vehicle to some recognized charity. A ruling was secured which included BNC's as eligible recipients, and this proved to be a boon to the centers enabling some of them to acquire building funds for eventual purchase of suitable real estate for center purposes, so some of them, like Cartagena, were able to get into building projects.

Q: The binational center in Bogota had a tremendous building project. Was that part of the program you describe?

MURPHY: No, that project had developed earlier. That building was financed principally by appropriated funds set aside by the U.S. Congress for overseas construction. That had already permitted the BNC in Bogota to have one of the few buildings which were designed from the outset to further the purposes of a cultural center operation, including classrooms, library, an auditorium and administrative offices. So when I arrived in Bogota, the BNC had one of the most adequate and best designed buildings in the whole Latin American network.

Q: . . . Anything else on Colombia you want to tell us about?

MURPHY: One of the exciting things while I was there was the visit of Neil Armstrong and Richard Gordon to Colombia. Armstrong was later to become famous as the first human to land on the moon. This astronaut visit was a very exciting affair. I had the opportunity to organize the all-over program in consultation with Colombian officials, including President Carlos Lleras Camargo himself, and Virgil Barco Vargas, the Mayor of Bogota [Who was President of Colombia, in 1986-90]. They took a personal interest and we were given unstinted support. So the public appearances, ceremonies and parades drew huge, enthusiastic crowds making the visit a truly memorable event. I got to follow the astronauts through every detail of their program and got to know them pretty well. I did not realize at that time I would see Richard Gordon again later in Finland.

Q: Did you have any presidential visits while you were in Bogota?

MURPHY: No, the closest I came to it was when President Lyndon Johnson's daughter Lynda (later Chuck Robb's wife) came to Cartagena and Bogota. She was visiting the Hospital ship HOPE, and she was afterwards guest of Ambassador Raymond Carlson and his wife Patricia at the Embassy residence. I was assigned as Lynda Johnson's escort officer, so I played official spear bearer for a few days.

RICHARD OGDEN
Economic Officer

Bogota (1966-1969)

Richard Ogden was born in Norwalk, Connecticut, in 1939 and grew up in New Canaan. He attended Stanford where he majored in economics and went on to receive his masters from the Fletcher School in the spring of 1963. He entered the Foreign Service in 1964 and in 1966 he began service in Bogota, Colombia as part of the Economic Section. In addition to Colombia, he was posted to Thailand, Argentina, Peru, England, and Spain.

OGDEN: Yes, I left in summer of 1966. I flew home stopping off in Tehran and Europe. Then I took Spanish language training and went to Colombia that fall.

Q: Was this a career choice or an assignment? How did this work out?

OGDEN: It was a career choice in the sense that I had expressed interest in getting a second language and maybe having a tour in South America. I hadn't specifically asked for Colombia.

Q: When you talked to your colleagues in Thailand, I would imagine that Latin America would be sort of the other side of the moon as far as people were concerned with it. The ARA at that time was almost like there were two different services or something.

OGDEN: It was totally different. You are right. The focus and issues were completely different in Colombia.

Q: We'll pick this up the next time when you are taking Spanish and you are going to Colombia. We haven't talked about how you got yourself indoctrinated before you went out into the world of the American Republics, the ARA. We'll talk a bit about that.

Today is the 23rd of September 1999, Dick. You had been, as I recall, in East Asia. East Asia had been your thing, hadn't it?

OGDEN: Yes, at Fletcher I had studied East Asian affairs, so ARA was really a new area for me and a new experience.

Q: What were you getting as you were talking to people about ARA and all that?

OGDEN: I think there was concern about Castro and the possibility of leftist revolutions in other countries. This also was a period of great hope in Latin America. The United States was giving the region a lot of priority. Alliance for Progress programs were beginning to have some impact. There was real hope that sustained development would raise living standards and promote stability and democracy.

Q: Now, you were in Colombia from when to when?

OGDEN: I was in Colombia from the summer of 1966 to the summer of 1969, just about three years.

Q: What was your job?

OGDEN: I started out in the Consulate for six months. Then, because of my economic background, I was moved from the Consulate to the Economic Section. In the Economic Section, I worked very closely with the AID mission on some of the big Alliance lending programs.

Q: What was the political-economic situation in Colombia when you got there in 1966?

OGDEN: The political situation was reasonably good. Colombia at the time had implemented the National Front system under which the two main political parties alternated in power every four years. This seemed to work pretty well. I got there just as the four year period for the Liberals was starting. Carlos Lleras Restrepo was the president at that time. We worked very closely with that government and provided a lot of assistance.

Q: Obviously, this hadn't been your place until you got there to really understand much about it. What were you getting from the embassy about the difference between the Liberals and the Conservatives? Were they the Reds and the Blues, or something like that?

OGDEN: I think the Liberal-Conservative split in Colombia was similar to other Latin American countries. The Conservatives generally favored centralized government and were pretty closely linked to the church and armed forces. The Liberals believed in more decentralized government and were more active in social and economic reforms. But in Colombia, the split got out of control and erupted in terrible violence. Fortunately, the National Front system of alternating Liberal and Conservative governments helped to reduce the violence.

Q: What were you picking up about the attitude of the Colombians at different levels towards the United States?

OGDEN: Colombia was an active participant in the Alliance for Progress and official relations were very good. And the general attitude toward the United States was pretty positive. There wasn't the kind of underlying anti-Americanism found in some Latin American countries. On the other hand, many younger Colombians were certainly attracted by leftist thinking and intrigued by the idea of guerilla activity. Che Guevara was pretty popular. And some more radical elements of the church were beginning to talk about the need for armed struggle to promote reform.

Q: What about the universities? In so many countries and particularly Latin America, the university students all go Left until they graduate and then they go Right.

OGDEN: The University students were a problem for Carlos Lleras Restrepo. I remember that on one occasion, the situation got so bad the President had to surround the University with tanks. On the other hand, I wouldn't say the uproar was directed against the United States. I think the students were more upset with the general level of poverty in Colombia and the slow pace of

reform.

Q: I think a couple of years before, I guess, that the United States had intervened in the Dominican Republic. Were there any repercussions about Yankee aggression?

OGDEN: I don't remember the climate as being anti-American at all. For example, I traveled around the country a good deal and never had any problem. I never had a security guard or escort or anything, and I took a lot of very interesting trips even to remote areas. I think the guerrillas controlled a few small areas but that was about it. In those days, the problems of drugs, terrorism and guerrilla insurgencies were pretty minor.

Q: Who was the ambassador when you arrived?

OGDEN: The ambassador was Ray Carlson. He was an economist who had a pretty rough start. Shortly after he arrived, he was interviewed and expressed the opinion that Colombia should devalue the peso. That comment almost started a revolution. There were calls for his immediate return to the United States. Ambassador Carlson was a very nice man who did a good job and was well liked in Colombia but he had to overcome a tough beginning. Of course, what he advocated was no doubt sensible, just not politically acceptable at the time.

Q: What type of first consular work were you doing?

OGDEN: I was doing non-immigrant visas. I did that for about six months. It was probably a good way to start in Colombia because it gave me a good chance to practice my Spanish. I'm afraid I tortured the non-immigrant visa applicants with a lot of questions because I really wanted the conversation. My worst memory during that period was of a bad plane crash in Bogota. I had to go to the airport and identify bodies and help with services. It was very sad.

Q: What happened?

OGDEN: As I recall, the pilot landed the plane about 300 yards short of the actual runway. The plane flipped over and burned and about 75 percent of the passengers were killed.

Q: Who were the non-immigrants who traveled from Colombia?

OGDEN: There were a lot of people who said they wanted to go to the United States to visit relatives. Sometimes it was hard to tell who was a legitimate non-immigrant. For example, I recall one time reading the Miami Herald and seeing that a guy had committed a serious crime. I had just given him a visa a few weeks earlier. Anyway, you just try to follow the regulations and make the best calls you can.

Q: Did many Colombians go to the United States as graduate students?

OGDEN: Yes, there were a lot.

Q: When you were doing economic work, who was the head of your section and what sort of

work were you doing?

OGDEN: Jim Lobenstine was the head of the economic section and Marvin Weissman was head of the AID mission. I was quite active in supporting AID's sector lending program. For example, AID would make a loan for the agricultural sector- training, market roads, seeds, fertilizer- based on commitments by the Colombian government in monetary, fiscal and balance of payments policy. I monitored and reported on monetary and fiscal policy to see if the government was living up to its commitment. I also attended most of the negotiating sessions between AID and the Colombian government, writing up the results for the record. It was very interesting to observe the AID mission working out these loans with the Colombian Central Bank and Ministry of Finance. This was a high priority for the mission as we were providing a lot of assistance.

Q: Now, what was your impression of your Colombian counterparts, the people were working on loans and that sort of thing?

OGDEN: I was extremely impressed. I thought they were highly intelligent and very well prepared. I think everyone at the AID mission felt the same way. Of course, we were dealing with senior officials from the Central Bank, Development Office and Economics Ministry so I'm not surprised. This was a very high quality team.

Q: What were you getting from both your own personal observations and others who were dealing with the delivery system? I mean, what we were investing or helping do? How was this impacting on the economy?

OGDEN: I thought the sector loan program worked pretty well. The idea was to take a sector like agriculture and to provide different kinds of assistance. Hopefully, this would overcome bottlenecks to growth and allow the sector to take off. At the same time, the macroeconomic commitments would ensure that general economic policy was helpful. The problem, I think, was that the levels of assistance were never enough to really transform agriculture in any fundamental way. Moreover, the macroeconomic commitments were rather intrusive because the government was required to follow certain policies. I believe that the Conservative government which came to power after I left decided not to continue with the sector loans because they were too restrictive.

Q: Was the Colombian agricultural produce competitive or complementary to American ones?

OGDEN: Both, although generally more complementary than competitive. In addition to coffee, I think major Colombian crops included sugar and cotton. Colombia exports a lot of cut flowers to the United States. The sector loans were designed to encourage the production of new crops for local consumption as well as promoting exports. I don't recall much opposition to the sector loans in the U.S.

Q: Today, narcotics is certainly the principal export. How did that play then?

OGDEN: It's amazing but we really did not have a big drug problem in Colombia when I was there. We had street crime. We had student demonstrations and riots. We had some limited

guerrilla activity. But no big narcotics problem. Anyway, perhaps if western assistance for agriculture could have been sustained at high levels over a long period the drug culture might not have flourished.

Q: Did you get any major presidential visits or anything like that?

OGDEN: No. We got a lot of senior visitors from AID and the Department though.

Q: As an economic officer, how were the statistics? You usually thrive on statistics.

OGDEN: We were able to get pretty much everything we wanted. The Central Bank made available to us the data that we needed from the various ministries. The president himself made it clear to the government that it should provide us with all the necessary data. We were quite demanding, I must say, but the level of cooperation was very good.

Q: How about Cuba? Was anybody looking over their shoulder about arms?

OGDEN: Cuba was in the background. Che Guevara was in the background. This also was a period in which the church in Colombia was divided between a conservative leadership and an increasingly radical group of young priests. One of them, father Camillo Torres, joined the guerrillas while I was in Colombia.. Father Camillo was a big hero for a lot of Colombian youth and the fact that he joined the guerrillas had a big impact on them.

Q: What did we think were the motives of the guerillas?

OGDEN: I think the guerrillas were interested in land reform, social reform, and a fairer distribution of national income. Of course, they also were interested in gaining power. Some of them no doubt were Marxists with close ties to Cuba and a strong interest in promoting revolution.

Q: In discussion within the embassy, was this a matter of concern?

OGDEN: It was a matter of concern. Our efforts were directed at land reform, too. I remember that we used to provide loans and assistance to an entity called the Caja Agraria, which gave peasant families financing to help them acquire their own land and homes. We also were trying to help the government redistribute the land.

Q: How about contacts with Colombians? Was there a problem of the wealthy people sort of gathering up the embassy as far as social occasions and that sort of thing?

OGDEN: I think the embassy did a pretty good job of getting in contact with various social groups although of course more could always be done. The AID mission dealt a lot with senior members of the government but that was necessary. The Political Section had active programs to expand contacts with universities and to identify young leaders who might be good candidates for grants to the U.S.

STEPHEN F. DACHI
Deputy Director of Peace Corps
Colombia (1967-1969)

Stephen F. Dachi was born in 1933 in Hungary. He attended the University of Oregon Dental School and then joined the Peace Corps. While in the Peace Corps he served in Colombia, Venezuela, and Brazil. During his career in USIA he served positions in Hungary, Panama City, Brazil, and India. Mr. Dachi was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in May 1997.

DACHI: They were in a brief historical pause between one type of violence and another. For many years, there was bitter political violence in Colombia between the two parties, liberal and conservative.

Q: Were they the Reds and the Blues?

DACHI: It was almost like the Hatfields and the McCoys, between the two principal political parties, the liberals and the conservatives. A lot of people died. Several months before my tour began there, there was a political accord to have a coalition government and end the violence with four presidential terms alternating between the two parties. I got there during the first of these periods with President Carlos Lleras Restrepo. He was quite a statesman. That was the launching of this brief period of political peace in Colombia.

Then not too long after I left, the drug violence began, rather slowly at first. But this very divisive thing where you have leftist guerrillas on the one hand and the drug mafias on the other increasingly working together, that was not apparent yet at the time I was there.

Q: What was the Peace Corps doing in the 1967-1969 period?

DACHI: That was the peak period of its fixation on community development programs. It was based on the belief that basically inexperienced but well-intentioned young liberal arts graduates could go into Latin American communities and take on the political establishment. The idea was to try to organize communities from the ground up and find a way to bring pressure on these somewhat corrupt and certainly very entrenched political powers to open up the political process so that it could become more democratic and participatory. That was a time when Sol Alinski, a sociologist in Chicago, was the great guru of community development in third world societies, and he had a tremendous impact on the Peace Corps. It was an uphill, mostly losing struggle that the Peace Corps had going in dozens of countries during the Kennedy/Johnson years. It was incredibly naïve. It just didn't work. So, that was a major frustration in the Peace Corps at the time, that its central theme wasn't working.

The other major thing going on was the Vietnam War and the large number of volunteers who were in the Peace Corps as an alternative to it. This increased their zeal to try to get results in community development, to be able to show the world that this was a far superior way to bring

about change. It increased their frustration when they failed at it. Then as the years went by, the Vietnam War became an increasingly bitter and confrontational thing among Peace Corps volunteers.

Q: Let's talk about Colombia first. In Colombia, when you were there, did you and the Director of the Peace Corps in that country see this social revolution that we were trying to promote with the Peace Corps as working? Was this a frustrating thing or is it only in retrospect that you see that it wasn't working?

DACHI: It was sort of half-way between. Certainly the realization was setting in that it wasn't working. But the zeal from the top was still very great. You couldn't openly argue inside the Peace Corps that it was time to change direction. The country director was a guy who was a particularly sensitive Latin Americanist who had come from a religious background, was a former Baptist minister. He was very sensitive to this. First of all, he believed very deeply in the idea of community development. At the same time, he was a very sensitive reader of the situation, so he also understood that it was failing. He was torn very deeply by that. That is what was happening. People were torn apart emotionally between the ideology and the reality.

Q: You were supervising Peace Corps volunteers at this time. Can you give some examples of what some of these people were trying to do in Colombia?

DACHI: Yes. Let's say there would be a volunteer working in a village. They would try to see if the mayor would fund a health care clinic for maternal and child care. Or he would build more classrooms. Or, much more dangerously, they would attempt to organize people to develop a viable alternative candidate to run in what they thought would be an honest election against this mayor who was not giving them the funds for the community health center or school. Trying to teach peasants how to organize to become politically effective rather than having to go and sit in the waiting room of some local chieftain and go hat in hand to ask for a favor to get a health clinic. To go in there and say, "This is our right. We demand it and, if you don't provide it, we're going to organize and elect someone else to take your place." This was a very American idea whose time had not come there. I'm not sure it has come to this day. To think that a "gringo" speaking broken Spanish, coming from a comfortable American middle class neighborhood and little clue about the local culture could make this happen still boggles my mind.

Another big thing was agricultural cooperatives. That tends to help some people move away from being sharecroppers or tenant farmers, to develop their own facilities so that they could market their products independently. You need farm to market roads, transportation, tractors, a lot of things. There was a big program of teaching people how to organize cooperatives, how to run them, and how to elect leaders of cooperatives. The idea also was that such cooperatives would develop democratic political leaders. An overwhelming task in most cases for a foreigner from another planet to undertake. Then unions, well, that wasn't such a big thing because there was no industry there. But in Latin America, the idea of having unions also goes for rural migrant workers.

Q: Obviously, you were working against the establishment in this. These young kids were guests in the country. What about the toleration of the central government and at other levels?

DACHI: The intolerance came first at the local level and worked its way up. In Colombia, the central government didn't really become seized with that issue until later. There were a number of countries where, from the beginning, central governments would not abide this idea. In countries like Mexico and Argentina, the Peace Corps was never allowed in for this very reason. In others, it was eventually asked to leave early. That happened in Venezuela, Brazil, and Colombia. But the intolerance originated with the entrenched powers at the local level that felt threatened.

There were two categories. Even in villages where they had sweet, wonderful people, a Peace Corps volunteer might not be an effective community development organizer for the simple reason that it's not easy to do even if all the lights are green. There were a lot of people who were not able to become effective enough and acted more as glorified social workers who weren't very popular and welcome after they failed to produce results. If they did happen to have the ability to become effective as political organizers, then they would either be isolated or expelled or something would be trumped up against them. There was a lot of drug use among volunteers in those days. Some mayor who wanted to get rid of a kid could easily enough hang the narcotics charge around him or her and we would have to remove them, put them somewhere else, or send them home. So, it had a limited effectiveness.

There always were, of course, many exceptions. Some volunteers would manage to adapt to local conditions, help start some good projects and become very popular with their local hosts. The Peace Corps always was a fertile ground for future foreign service officers and other professionals, who with this international experience later entered the private sector.

Q: What sort of support and interest were you getting from our embassy at the time?

DACHI: It was sort of a benign and somewhat affectionate, paternal kind of interest on the one hand and, at the same time, an increasing nervousness that the Vietnam dimension was creating and harboring some political militants who were going to create problems for them. All of these issues came to a head two years later in Venezuela. In Colombia, they were just being formed. These were the last two years of the Johnson administration. All these things were just percolating up to a crisis. There was this division of feelings in the embassy. "It's a wonderful idea, it's very nice, but we don't have enough control." First of all, the Peace Corps was semi-autonomous. The Peace Corps Country Director was supposed to keep the ambassador informed and to be a cooperative member of the country team. He was urged to do so by the Peace Corps in Washington. But it was also clear that he was not totally under the ambassador's control and had his own budget. It created some friction. Many of the Peace Corps Directors were a little bit anti-establishment themselves.

In Colombia at the time, the ambassador was a political appointee named Reynold Carlson. He had been head of the Ford Foundation's development program in Argentina before he came up there. He was very sympathetic to the Peace Corps because he had a development orientation. He had a benign personality and was content to preside over all embassy sections with a very light touch, without ever trying to exercise much leadership or control. Our Peace Corps Director was sort of in the middle on that. He was certainly not anti-embassy but he was not pro-embassy

either. There was a satisfactory *modus operandi*. Then there was AID in the picture. There was always an argument as to whether we should tie Peace Corps programs in more closely with AID, but Peace Corps policy was opposed to that.

Q: This was the height of the Alliance for Progress, too.

DACHI: Right. But AID, particularly in Colombia, was so big and powerful at the time that the head of AID was really the most dominant and influential figure in that embassy, in many ways more so than the ambassador. He had so much money at his disposal. The Peace Corps, even though we had one of the largest Peace Corps in the world with 800-900 volunteers, from the AID Director's standpoint, was a little gnat on his arm. They didn't feel that these amateurish efforts would in any way compare with the major things they were doing like educational curriculum and agricultural reform. In many respects, they were right. The Peace Corps was in a different kind of framework. And sometimes, small could be beautiful too.

ROBERT A. STEVENSON
Deputy Chief of Mission
Bogota (1967-1971)

Robert A. Stevenson was educated at the University of North Carolina where he majored in foreign trade. He also earned a master's degree from Harvard. During World War II, he served as an ensign in the Navy Supply Corps. He entered the Foreign Service in 1947 and was assigned to Costa Rica. He also served in Ecuador, Germany, and Chile. He was appointed Ambassador to Malawi in 1974. This interview was conducted by Charles Stuart Kennedy in September 1989.

Q: What was the situation when you arrived in Colombia in 1967?

STEVENSON: They were still operating under the agreement that the Liberal Party and the Conservative Party had arrived at, whereby they would alternate presidencies. When I got down there in the fall of '67, Carlos Lleras was the president, and before him had been a conservative. Now this was Carlos Lleras Restrepo, a Liberal. Actually, I got down there, I guess, in August of '67. While I was there, a Conservative came in, Misael Pastrana, and he was the last of the alternating Presidencies. Then they threw it open to the full democratic process, and I think that Julio César Turbay was elected, and then, I know Lopez Michelsen was elected. They were both Liberals I believe.

Q: Had this arrangement been brought about because of--

STEVENSON: Because of *la violencia*, the period of years of violence, when 100,000 to 300,000 people were killed.

Q: The violencia was in what period?

STEVENSON: Not too long after the Bogotazo, so from 1948 to 1958, in that time frame, and it was a very miserable business. It was so bad that finally the Liberals and Conservatives got together and said, "This must stop." I mean, whole villages -- one village would set out and murder the people in another village.

Q: The situation when you were there was then stable.

STEVENSON: Quite stable, and there was no drug thing, I hasten to add. Probably drug traffic had begun then, but we were innocent. We were babes in the woods. We certainly weren't aware of it, nor was the Colombian Government. Looking back on it, we had a consular agent in Leticia, Mike Tsalikis, and the U.S. Customs had accused him of putting packets of cocaine in pythons that he'd shipped to the United States, or boa constrictors, I guess they were, because he was in the wild animal exporting business down on the Amazon in a place called Leticia. Mike, of course, had denied it. Mike was a former sergeant in the American Army, a very personable guy, and he denied it roundly. We kind of accepted that. We did end the Consular Agency in Leticia because we really felt we didn't need it. There was a restriction on funds and whatnot. But we didn't think Mike was guilty of drug trafficking. Looking back on it, I think probably he was guilty as sin, because he lived too well down in Leticia to be operating strictly on the wild animal export business. He'd built a hotel down there. He was always good to the Peace Corps volunteers whenever they got down to Leticia, which is, as you probably know, way the hell and gone down in a little corner of Colombia that borders on the Amazon, not too far from Iquitos, way up on the upper Amazon there. He built this little hotel, a nice little hotel, and he'd always put up the Peace Corps volunteers, a very good guy. But I suspect that he was very much into the drug business then.

I recall a German with an American wife who lived very well and supposedly got his money from a *finca* down on the Rio Magdalena.

Q: Finca being a ranch.

STEVENSON: Yes. What's the river called there, the big river? Magdalena, I guess. We assumed his money came from that, but looking back on it, no way could he have made that kind of money, his kids all in private schools, etc.

Q: There just wasn't an awareness, because it was not a major problem. We're speaking now of 1967-71. This interview is in 1989, in which Colombia is top priority as far as being a source of drugs, and there's violence there within the country and all that. So in that perspective, we see quite differently.

STEVENSON: The system was really functioning quite well. The elections were reasonably honest. The court system, as in all of Latin America, is very defective. The legal system is very defective. I can remember a good Colombian friend, a lawyer, who was a very sharp lawyer, saying, "Every judge in Colombia has his price. Prices differ, but every judge has his price." This is the sort of thing you had to contend with down there. So it was hard for the little man, as Graham Greene points out, to get justice. It's hard, really.

Q: How about the Alliance for Progress? How did that stand at that point?

STEVENSON: It was going strong. We had a big AID mission in Bogotá. In many ways, Bogotá was the most interesting job I ever had, because it was a big operation. We had a big AID mission. Marv Weissmann was the head of the AID mission. We worked in the rural area with rural credit in a big way, setting up rural cooperatives, a land reform scheme that we helped to finance. We had a big operation going there. I would say not only was it going full scale, but it had some very positive effects.

Q: We talk about big AID missions, and there's sometimes the feeling that just the number of Americans, when AID comes into a country, the AID bureaucracy seems to proliferate, and all that money that's paid to them comes out of the AID allocation for the country. Did you feel that maybe the administrative tail was not worth the dog?

STEVENSON: No, I really didn't feel that about it. I know what you mean, and I think there is a tendency for the AID bureaucracy to get pretty inflated. But Marv Weissmann was a very able Mission Director and he kept it pretty functional and operating pretty efficiently.

Mind you, I think it's good that this Mission has ended. I think the Mission did its job and the Colombians have gotten to the point where they should be able to do their own developmental work. I was impressed, before I left Bogotá, by the fact, for example, that they had 130 members in the M.I.T Club in Bogotá -- 130 members!

Q: Graduates of Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

STEVENSON: And others of them went to Rensselaer. They had the technicians, in other words, the economists, and the experts, with the big help that we gave them in that period, to run it themselves. I think it's wise that we faded out.

Q: What were we trying to do with the Alliance for Progress there?

STEVENSON: We were trying to raise living standards, primarily.

Q: What type of programs were they, mainly?

STEVENSON: I've mentioned them. The rural credit program was a very big one, to try to help the campesinos. Let me see if I can recall some of the others. Of course, the rural credit had a big fertilizer component. Let's see if I can think what other things we did. There was a large technical component known as the Nebraska Mission which was headed by the present U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, Clayton Yeutter. It was primarily in the rural area, the program was -- crop diversification, land reform. There was a land reform law, and we were trying to help the Colombians to implement it. There were some big estates, big *fincas*, that were not productive, and it was felt that they would be more productive if the campesinos working them had an interest in their output.

Q: What about the Peace Corps?

STEVENSON: Peace Corps operated primarily in the rural areas, but also in some small industry, cottage industry, crafts, encouraging that sort of thing. We had a very good Peace Corps Assistant Director in Cali, Ed Corr, who has gone on to be Ambassador to several countries. In fact, I think he's still in the Service. Ed Corr was a very able Foreign Service Officer who had been detailed to the Peace Corps and was operating the Cali, Colombia program. He set up a program of MBAs, and had about 12 or 15 Peace Corps volunteers, all with MBAs, Master's of Business Administration, to try to help with business and industrial development in the Cali area. It was quite successful.

I can remember one fellow who helped in setting up a packing plant for hams and bacon and that sort of thing. They were an imaginative, bright bunch -- most MBAs are -- and they did some good work down there. A couple of them, after they left the Peace Corps, stayed on in Colombia. I never knew how they made out, but they did stay on.

Q: What were American business interests in Colombia at the time?

STEVENSON: We had a group there, all right, because we met once a month. American representatives of American business met with the Ambassador in the residence, and they came from Cali and from Medellin as well as from the Bogotá area. Goodyear was there. What are some of the other ones? It's been a long time. Price Waterhouse and one or two of the other big accounting firms. Union Carbide had a big plant down there. Let me see if I can remember some of the others -- Colgate Palmolive, several of the pharmaceutical firms. So American industry was down there.

Q: Sometimes it's said that American interest, particularly in Latin America, is driven by our business investments and all that.

STEVENSON: That's an old cliché, Stu.

Q: This is the reason I want to ask. Did you find that sometimes we'd say, "We want to do this," but that might hurt the relations of ITT or Union Carbide?

STEVENSON: Never. I don't think that really happened after World War II. I used to hear it often in Costa Rica, where the United Fruit Company was very big and had been very big, and I think before World War II, it's true that the United Fruit Company could make or break regimes in Central America, where they had big interests. I think probably in Honduras, more than once they said, "We want so and so elected," and he was. But after World War II, that really changed. The governments in Central America got control and it was never really true in South America. I think to a lesser extent, there might have been occasionally some cases in Central America. But even though United Fruit -- now Chiquita -- was very big in Costa Rica, as well as Standard Fruit, they never wagged the dog, ever.

Q: How about the American Embassy, though? Were you aware of pressure, you might say, from American business interest to get us to do this or that, that might become paramount -- were you ever aware of the embassy being pressured by American businesses?

STEVENSON: Never pressured. I can remember talking with business interests in Colombia very frankly about their problem in getting their earnings out. They were having some trouble because of the shortage of dollar exchange. They were allowed to take out only a certain percentage that had relationship to their original capital investment and so forth, like ten percent per year of their total capitalization or something like that. They talked to us about that problem, but I can never remember, for example, going to the Foreign Ministry and laying about on such a problem. We may have mildly expressed our interest and hope that they would find some way for American business to get its money out, but I don't even recall that.

Q: I ask this question because in doing these interviews again and again, I ask sort of the same thing, and I usually say, "What about the pressure on us from American businesses?" and I usually get a rather blank look when somebody is trying to come back and think about this, although this is propounded in schools many times, at least as far as embassies are concerned. It's a concern, but it's certainly not major.

STEVENSON: It was not a major one. Cubans, for example, the Castro Cubans, say that the S really hit the fan in U.S.-Cuban relations when they passed their agrarian reform law, but that's absolute nonsense. We never questioned their right to pass an agrarian reform law. All we ever said was, "Okay, you have every right to expropriate these rural and other properties." King Ranch had a big property down there; ITT; Ebosco; Sears & Roebuck; United Fruit had big properties down there. "You have every right to expropriate them, but all we say is that they should receive prompt, adequate, and effective compensation," which was an old Marjorie Whiteman phrase. She was ARA Legal Advisor from way back, a fine old lady. That was all we did.

But it's curious that now, according to Wayne Smith -- and he agrees with me on this -- the Cubans keep saying, "It was the land reform that really broke things, because you wouldn't go along with the land reform." As far as we're concerned, that's absolute nonsense.

Q: We pushed land reform in a lot of countries.

STEVENSON: Yes. We always said, "You have a right to do it, but we just think the people whose land is taken should be compensated."

In Colombia, I don't recall any real big American business issues, except their problem of getting their earnings out. There was some concern and problem, and they would talk to us about it. We were certainly a sympathetic shoulder, but I don't ever recall laying about or trying to put heavy pressure on the Colombians.

Q: What was the perspective of Cuba from our embassy in Bogotá? Did we see it as a threat to problems in Colombia?

STEVENSON: The first couple of years I was there, there was some thought that they might be aiding the ELN. That was the Ejército de Liberación Nacional. There was some thought that the Cubans might have been aiding them, but about the time I got there, and for the next couple of

years, our intelligence people never could really confirm that they were feeding anything in. We had the feeling that they had cut them off. Cuba, of course, was quite willing to promote insurrection in these countries, but where they didn't feel it was going to get anywhere, I mean, their resources were limited -- I think they really pulled back in Colombia just because it wasn't getting anywhere.

Q: You were dealing as Chargé and also as DCM. Was it easy to deal with the Colombian authorities?

STEVENSON: Yes, I would say that it was. I was Chargé for almost a year out of the four years I was there, one long stretch of eight months and then two other stretches. So I got quite well acquainted with the Foreign Ministers. Hernan Zea was the first one, and I got to know him quite well.

I think an interesting thing was when the first Panama Canal Treaty was about to go through in '68, if I'm not mistaken, we suddenly got a rocket cable from the Department saying, "Please go in and tell the Colombians that we are abrogating the canal treaty on Wednesday of next week." This was like a Friday we got this cable. I was astounded. Ambassador Carlson was away, and I was in charge for the moment. I was astounded, and I cabled back and said, "I will want instructions to do it." I wanted to be instructed to go in and tell them this. So I got back a cable saying, "You are instructed to go in and tell them that we are abrogating the canal treaty three days from now."

Colombia had a little piece of that Canal Treaty. Their naval vessels were authorized free transport of the Canal, and their goods had some rights on the railroad. Well, in point of fact, the only thing that they ever used occasionally and benefitted from was occasional passage of a Colombian naval vessel through the canal, and they didn't have to pay any tolls. But we were telling them that we were going to abrogate this treaty. And they had never been consulted, which I find really an oversight.

So I went over on Saturday morning and talked to Zea. He received me in his study, in his dressing gown. He broke out the Scotch, even though it was morning. The more we talked about it, the madder he got -- not at me personally, but at the whole idea that we were asking them on such short notice to agree to the abrogation of the Treaty. He said, "It's got to go to the Congress. The Congress has to agree to that before we can do such a thing." So by the time I left, he was pretty upset. I was trying all the arguments that the Department had given me about how, in the long run, it was in the best interests of Latin America.

Q: Did you buy these arguments?

STEVENSON: Well, yeah, I think probably I did. In fact, I was in favor of ending the Canal Treaty if we could work out a sensible way, and this seemed to be a pretty sensible way of doing it. Now I'm not so sure, with Noriega, but back then it seemed a reasonable thing. I think I made a pretty good case, but I thought we were just woefully off base with the Colombians, even though their interests were small.

So I went back to the office and fired a cable up and said, "You'd better think about sending a special envoy bearing gifts if you want the Colombians to agree to the abrogation of that treaty on such short notice." I suggested Ambassador Bonsal, who was very highly regarded in Colombia because he had stood up to General Rojas Pinilla, the former dictator. Actually, Bonsal told me the Department did contact him, but you recall that Torrijos, two days later, led a revolt and overthrew the government. It was one of the Arias family in power -- I've forgotten whether it was Roberto or Arnulfo.

Q: This is in Panama.

STEVENSON: In Panama. There was a revolt, and Torrijos took over, so the whole canal business was suspended.

But in that cable I said, "One of the things we might do," trying to suggest something as a sweetener, "would be to agree to relinquish our claims to Quita Sueño, Roncador, and Serrana," which were little banks closer to Central America than to Colombia, but to which Colombia claimed title from old Spanish deeds and grants, and which we claimed under the Guano Act. The Guano Act -- I think it was 1910 -- more or less, as I recall, said something to the effect that any little atoll or islet where we have collected Guano, nobody else has bothered us, and we've collected the Guano, is U.S. property. So we had this claim to Quita Sueño, which is a great long reef about 20 miles long, and Serrana, which is two or three acres, and Roncador, which is another little islet.

I remembered that I had mentioned this. It must have been a year later, although the Liberals were still in power and Lopez Michelsen was acting Foreign Minister, everything was quiet and we didn't have anything on the U.S.-Colombia agenda. I thought to myself, "Jesus, we really ought to settle this before somebody discovers oil on one of these things, and then we'll really have a donnybrook." The Colombians clearly had the best claim to it. "We ought to negotiate a treaty and settle this thing."

So on my own, I mentioned it to Lopez Michelsen. I said, "Don't you think maybe we should? Everything's quiet now. We don't have any problems. Wouldn't this be a good time to settle this question of sovereignty over these little atolls and islets?"

He said, "Yeah, I think it would."

So that's what started the negotiations, and it led to a treaty which was signed in 1972 and ratified in 1982, if I'm not mistaken.

Q: It shows you how long these things take.

STEVENSON: Yes. The main obstacle to the final ratification were fishermen from New Orleans who fished for red snapper on these banks. The Treaty provides that U.S. fishing rights will not be barred. In other words, they can still go there and fish and there will be no restriction on it. But it did get settled. I've always been kind of pleased that I started it -- Charlie Meyer, who was Assistant Secretary, when I came up on home leave about 1970, I guess it was, said to

me, "How did we ever get into this, anyway?" I didn't quite have the nerve to tell him. (Laughter)

Q: That shows you that you shouldn't leave diplomats alone in quiet times. Again, this is part of the diplomatic process, trying to settle some things which are obviously "settable," but only in quiet times, that you use this time to take care of some things where there is not a lot of heat or political capital to be made by taking a stand.

STEVENSON: You could never do it right now, for example. You could never do it with all that drug business. So I agree with you. I don't feel at all badly that I suggested maybe we could look at it, because I think it was a fair treaty, and our interests were covered and fully negotiated.

There's something I wanted to tell you. Virgilio Barco, who is now president of Colombia, the one who was up here about six weeks ago talking to President Bush, was Mayor of Bogotá when I was there. I used to talk to him from time to time. I found him a very capable, honest sort of fellow, not very colorful, but capable and honest. I wish him every success. He's a Liberal, of course, and he was elected to succeed a Conservative, rather a kind of Liberal/Conservative. Yes, that's right. So they have been alternating just in the democratic process.

Q: I'd like to go back and sort of pin this down about the Panama Treaty. Colombia was part of the treaty.

STEVENSON: Yes.

Q: The United States and, obviously, Panama. Was this an oversight? It sounds like a very arrogant thing to do, to all of a sudden say, "Well, we're going to abrogate the treaty," maybe for good and sound reasons, when there are arguments to be made and you can consult and say, "Let's redo this treaty."

STEVENSON: I think it was a bad oversight. I really think that's what it was. The Colombian interest was very small. As I say, it involved just a few things: free passage for their naval vessels, and there was something about shipping freight over the railroad, but it wasn't done anymore, so it didn't mean anything. It was a very small part of the Treaty with Panama. But there are sensibilities, and the Foreign Minister was really outraged that we expected him to abrogate it on two days' notice. I think it was terrible. That's why I asked for instructions. I wasn't going to do it unless I had instructions.

Q: This is the sort of thing that makes us look like the overbearing gringos.

STEVENSON: We were saved by Torrijos on that one. There would have been a real stink on that one, and we would have had to do a lot to placate the Colombians. Every enemy we had down there would have been agitating and yakking about it.

Q: It happened before it had a chance to really surface and generate that.

STEVENSON: Yes. I was told the new Canal Treaty was in suspension. As I recall, I probably just telephoned Zea and said, "Forget the whole thing. Torrijos has taken over and we've pulled

back on the Treaty."

Q: The Nixon Administration took over in 1969. Did you feel any change in how we looked at Latin America from the Johnson Administration?

STEVENSON: I guess that's when Charlie Meyer came in as Assistant Secretary, isn't it, in the Nixon Administration? He was a damn good Assistant Secretary. I thought he did a fine job. He'd been with Sears and Roebuck, and came in there. I'm trying to think who preceded him. Jack Vaughn, for one, but I think there was somebody in between Jack Vaughn and Charlie Meyer.

I would say that in Colombia, we noticed very little difference. Things went along just about --

Q: This was not like a major change.

STEVENSON: No.

Q: Covey Oliver.

STEVENSON: Yes, Covey Oliver.

Q: We had almost a rotating --

STEVENSON: Covey Oliver was Assistant Secretary, wasn't he? He had been Ambassador to Colombia. I think he came back and was Assistant Secretary, but he was under the Democrats and Lyndon Johnson. Probably Charlie Meyer took over from Covey Oliver.

Q: Yes, he did. There was a period of very rapid change in that office of Assistant Secretary for Inter-American Affairs.

STEVENSON: Yes.

Q: The new ambassador was Jack Vaughn. Could you describe him as a person? He's been around quite a bit.

STEVENSON: Yes, he has. Well, a colorful character, if you've never met him. Some day you might want to do an interview with him.

Q: I'm hoping to.

STEVENSON: He's a very colorful guy and very able. Speaks Spanish fluently. Has a heavy quotient of bullshit. You just allow for that, and there's a lot of good stuff there, too. He was quite passionately disposed to help the little guy in Latin America. He didn't have much patience with the Colombian upper classes. I think probably he offended some of them more than once on social occasions. But he got around the country widely and he met with the union leaders and leaders of agrarian organizations. Even though Jack was always portrayed as a Kennedy admirer

-- he said he was a Republican but he was a very liberal Republican -- you'd have to say that -- in the attitudes that he took.

He worked much with the Peace Corps. He'd been Director of the Peace Corps, of course, so he took a special interest, I'd say. I'll never forget how angry he got when he saw two or three volunteers in a group that burned the American flag down by the Embassy Chancery. It was the Vietnam thing. He got very angry and called in the Peace Corps Director, and told him if he saw any more Peace Corps volunteers down there where the American flag was being burned, they were going to be shipped home immediately. That stopped that. I was with him on that one.

The Vietnam thing again, incidentally, one time Hernan Zea, in a speech at Christmas time, I guess it was, or maybe the New Year's or some damn thing, when the diplomatic corps was all present, made some very sarcastic references about U.S. involvement in Vietnam, so much so that I almost walked out. I was really mad. I was Chargé at the time. I turned to the Brazilian Ambassador and said something to him about how annoyed I was about it.

So the next day, without waiting, I just went over to see Zea, and I said, "You know, this is a very difficult problem for us back in the United States, and we're struggling with it. My son has just registered for the draft. I really didn't appreciate those remarks about the U.S. involvement in Vietnam." He was quite apologetic. He took it very well, actually.

About a week after that, I ran into President Lleras Restrepo at some other social gathering. I never saw him very often, but I had talked to him a couple of times. He knew who I was. I chatted with him and I said, "Perhaps your Foreign Minister mentioned to you that I came to see him the other day about his remarks on U.S. involvement in Vietnam."

He said, "Ah, yes. Entiendo que es un punto muy neuralgico." ("I understand that it's a very neuralgic point.") They never, ever, said another word about Vietnam. No official in the Colombian administration ever talked about Vietnam after that. So I really felt that did some good. It was a tough enough problem for us without flak from a foreign country we were helping in a large way.

Q: You mentioned something that I think would be interesting to talk about. You say Jack Vaughn did not get overly involved or sympathetic to the upper class in Latin America. I have never served in Latin America, but I understand that in many of these places, the upper class often controls things and is very powerful, particularly because of its wealth, and there is little relationship with the people down below. From your impression, looking at the Foreign Service, do we get captured by this class, because of their social abilities and all this? Or is it a problem?

STEVENSON: I think it's a problem you have to watch. I think it can happen, because many times they are very attractive people, very well educated, just attractive in every way, a lot of them. It was certainly true in Chile, that Chilean upper classes are delightful people, very cosmopolitan, witty, and bright. But I think the thing is changing in Latin America. For example, many of these people in Chile had become Christian Democrats and were working fervently to try to change things, to better the lot of the inquilinos and the poor, rotos, in Chile, the very poor elements. They were working hard. I think in Colombia, an increasing number of upper-class

Colombians were concerned about the social and economic situation, so that you did have a good many upper class people who were working hard for social programs, a lot of times with the Catholic Church. You still had real reactionary business types, you know. I shouldn't say just the business types, because there were many reactionary landowners, too -- really throwbacks. But this social ferment of raising the standard of living and bettering the lot of the lower class has really bubbled a lot in Latin America.

When I was in Chile in 1980, I saw there were big changes in the rural countryside, and I didn't see any more of the barefooted Inquilinos that I remembered from my time in Chile, which was '62 to '65. In 1980, I didn't see any of them. They were wearing their blue jeans and sneakers, but they were better off, no doubt about it. They used to look so miserable in their rags and bare feet, standing in the cold mud, because it gets cold down there in the wintertime.

Eduardo Frei, the Christian Democrat who was elected in 1964, had a big program to try and help the rural poor, and, I think, with a lot of success.

What I see now, however, despite the success, and there has been growth in Latin America and there has been betterment of the living standards of little people, is that the gap has widened because we've grown so much more. A lot of their progress has been overwhelmed by population growth. They've had such a rapid increase in their population that it's very hard for the per capita standard of living to grow very much.

Q: While you were there, Governor Rockefeller made a visit.

STEVENSON: Yes.

Q: Could you tell what happened? This was in 1969.

STEVENSON: Oh, God, yes! That fiasco when President Nixon asked him to go down, and a group of distinguished people to go down.

Q: At the time he was the governor of New York.

STEVENSON: Yes, and President Nixon had just come in. He appointed this high-level group to take a survey of Latin America and tell him what should be done about our Latin America policy. God, it was a high-powered proposition. Advance men came down and told us just where they wanted the lectern placed and all that kind of crap. They are miserable people to deal with. Rockefeller himself was very pleasant.

But this was set up so that Governor Rockefeller and some of the key people would talk to the president of the country without the presence of the ambassador. Now, some ambassadors wouldn't stand for it. They said, "Nothing doing. If he goes in to see the president, I'm going with him, and I insist," and should have, and did insist. I don't think Rey Carlson insisted, and I don't criticize him for it, because I don't think I myself pressed him. But the GOC indicated to us that it wanted him present, so I think he was always there.

So they came in and the head of IBM was along. I've forgotten his name. It was a high-powered group with their own plane, who toured around. They got a lot of good suggestions, I think, and not one damn thing came of it. Not one thing. It was a complete waste of money and time.

Q: *There wasn't a mob attack or something like that at that time?*

STEVENSON: No, not that I recall. I found Governor Rockefeller -- I met him two or three times, and my wife and I took him out to the plane. Again, I don't know why that happened, but we did. He and his wife were very nice, very pleasant. I would have liked to have seen the report. I think it was probably a pretty good report.

Q: *Did you have the feeling that everything was focused on Vietnam? Because Nixon obviously came in with probably as much expertise and self-learned knowledge of world affairs as any president in history.*

STEVENSON: Yes. And some firsthand knowledge of Latin America, too.

Q: *Yes.*

STEVENSON: Latin America was distinctly back burner, and continues to be, except for the -- well, look at the OAS. We haven't even paid our quota in the OAS for years now.

CHARLES W. GROVER
Principal Officer
Medellin (1971-1973)

Charles Grover was raised in Gloversville, New York after several years of moving when his father was permanently assigned. He earned a major in American History from Antioch College in Ohio and then received his master's in history from the University of Oregon some years later. He joined the Foreign Service in 1956 and in 1971 served as principal officer in Medellin, Colombia. In addition to Colombia he was posted to Bolivia, Spain, Brazil, Chile, and Ecuador.

But anyway I took the year of Latin American studies and remained in Latin America, became even more specialized. I spent the last twelve years overseas all in Andean countries so that's the ultimate in specialization. Four years in Bolivia, four years in Chile, two in Colombia and two in Ecuador. We've done the Bolivian portion which came after the year of Latin American studies.

Q: *You were in Bolivia, just for continuity here...*

GROVER: From 1966 to 1970, and then in 1970 I went into senior training at Stanford Graduate School of Business for one year; and then to Medellin as principal officer in 1971 to '73, which was a lot of fun and I loved Medellin.

Q: A different place then I gather than now.

GROVER: Well, it certainly had many of the same elements but drug culture did not dominate in Medellin. I don't think the Medellin cartel had been born yet. The drug problems were up in the northwest and mostly marijuana coming out with the banana boats from the Bay of Uraba in northwestern Colombia. At that time there were ten banana boats that were constantly in motion between Florida and Colombia. I don't think they ever docked. They carried a lot of bananas but they also carried an awful lot of marijuana which was usually thrown off the boat wrapped in plastic and then picked up by people. I remember receiving one report from, I guess it was the Custom Service, that a twelve ton shipment had been found on one of those boats.

Q: It was thrown off the boat?

GROVER: Thrown off the boat in the United States, at the port of arrival in the United States. There were two ports, it was either Miami or Tampa, and I've forgotten where it was but this was fairly common that very large floating objects were sometimes found near those boats and it was usually marijuana. That could very well be how the cocaine...

Q: You mean they were thrown in the water?

GROVER: Thrown in the water, that's right, and they float and are picked up by launches. They are dropped off at designated points on the route where they can be picked up by launches. The story at that time was that if an honest police chief was sent up to Turbo in the banana country--there were two consequences of his first week of duty; one was, if he remained honest, he would be dead at the end of the week. In other words, if he tried to enforce all of the rules on the banning of the export of illegal substances; or the more likely result was that he was corrupted by the end of the first week and was forced to participate in the business. That area was largely without law, and I think what happened was that spread from the Bay of Uraba through the very enterprising Medellin business community. The remarkable thing about Medellin is, what good businessmen they are for whatever they happen to be engaged in. And if it's textiles, it's one of the major textile cities in the western hemisphere; they're very good businessmen. And then, if its drugs they are very good at that too, unfortunately. That's how its become in Medellin.

Q: You were the Consul there?

GROVER: I was the Consul. The Consulate was a relatively small post--it was a small post, no doubt about it. There were two Americans, a Vice Consul and a Principal Officer, an American secretary although she was local hire, and about five or six local employees all of whom were absolutely first rate. They were very good. I was very sad when the post closed because we lost...one of the great assets we have in these small posts are local employees who are so good, and often very dedicated as well. We lose a great deal in our understanding through the loss of the contacts that those local employees have.

Q: When did the post close?

GROVER: It was not for several years later. I was not there. As a matter of fact I can tell you

exactly when it was. I replaced Tom Boyatt as DCM in Chile, and Tom went to Upper Volta as Ambassador and then he went to Colombia as Ambassador, and that would have been about 1980 to '82 that he was in Colombia and closed down Medellin-- closed down both Medellin and Cali, but left open Barranquilla on the north coast in order to have, I guess, a drug listening post in Colombia. Curiously, in my time Barranquilla had been closed, and Medellin and Cali were kept open. Now circumstances have caused the decision-makers to reverse that. Barranquilla was reopened about five years after it was closed in order to try to keep an eye on the drug trade; and Medellin and Cali were closed because of the perceived danger. There is a great deal of violence in the Medellin area. It was always that. A lot of kidnapping. During the worst of the Violencia in Colombia from 1948 until the political parties tried to come to grips with...15-20 years later. Some of the worst of the violence had taken place in Antioquia, which is the general area of Medellin. One of the first things that happened when we arrived, a very prominent local guy was kidnapped, held for a month, and they found his body in a shallow grave. The family wouldn't pay the ransom that was asked. There were always kidnappings taking place. Fortunately there were no Americans kidnapped, no official or private Americans that were kidnapped.

Q: Who were the kidnappers? Were they just criminals doing it in a rather unorganized way, or is this...

GROVER: They were guerrilla that had a veneer of ideology. Some of them were doing kidnapping. The M-19 and the FRAC organizations like that were involved in kidnapping, but most of the kidnapping ranged from minor league activity in a small town; small kidnappings on an extortion basis; to groups without any real political import at all who were set up to kidnap and extort on a massive scale. They developed infrastructure for holding people for a year or so while they pressed for payment of a ransom which could be as high as a million dollars.

Q: It was in effect a business.

GROVER: It was a business, a kidnap business. Occasionally there was a little political veneer on it, but that was more artificial. What there really was in Colombia over a period of years, was a breakdown in public safety, and elements that had aggrandized during this period, developed kidnapping as a way of making their living.

Q: Over a period of years beginning when?

GROVER: Well, off and on throughout Colombian history there has been violence, but since 1948. That's a landmark because that's when the Violencia broke out in its modern manifestations with the assassination of a liberal politician in Bogota. Coincidentally, at the same time that the OAS was being established in Bogota by the initial meeting, the liberal politician was killed on the street and the city erupted in violence, and the violence continued. [I'm trying to think of the name of the politician?]

Q: Then, in your years there in Medellin, what was the mandate, or the main thrust of our policy? What were you trying to do in particular? Was there any big particular, or was it simply managing consular matters as they came up?

GROVER: Well, consular matters were a real part of it. The big days in AID were in the process of being passed although, I think, Colombia was one of the largest US recipients in 1971. It began to diminish shortly thereafter. Peace Corps, there was some Peace Corps in our area. The major aspect of interest in Medellin was business and government, or politics. Antioquians from Medellin were usually a little ahead of the rest of the country on political developments. It was in Medellin that...

Q: *What's an Antioquian?*

GROVER: Antioquia is sort of the province of which Medellin is the capital, but it has taken on a meaning of more than that province, but that part of Colombia which consists of maybe five or six provinces which have more or less a similar history. And it's one, incidentally, an area in South America that sociologists have studied carefully to try to figure out why the area is so enterprising, in contrast to other areas that seemed to have a different part of the Hispanic experience in their background and tend to be rather non-performing. For example, the American businesses in Medellin, by and large, were managed by Colombians. Whereas in Cali, which had a totally different historical background, most of the American businesses were managed by Americans. It made Medellin very interesting for me. Many of the textile entrepreneurs, however, had been to the United States and been trained at Lowell Textile. There was a good pool of textile managers who knew the United States very well in Medellin, and why would you want to put in an American in charge of operation which Colombians could manage, probably at a lower cost to you, with all of the skill, and maybe more skill than an American in your company foreign service would have. So that was the picture.

But the businessmen in Medellin were a very clannish sort, and kept a very close eye on politics and did their best, whether liberal or conservative, to try to bring about "a kind of stability in which" the good people would come out on top. The businessmen in Medellin really organized and brought about the downfall of the dictator Rojas Pinilla, for example. This was well before my time. And in the one election that I saw in 1972, it was pretty clear that liberals and conservatives were getting together to undercut the position of the daughter of Rojas Pinilla who was a candidate--a national candidate at that time--and they succeeded. It's very difficult for a non-establishment person to get into a serious position in Colombian politics. Whether you're a liberal or conservative, the business of the country will support an establishment position which may make the two seem indistinguishable. Both parties will maybe have three liberals and four conservatives on the ballot. But only one of each which bears the endorsement of the liberal and conservative establishmentarians, which makes it rather dicey for people who would like to see a little more upward mobility in their politics. They just didn't have it. Sons and daughters of former presidents seem to have the best chance of ascending to the presidency.

Well, I think they saw it, though, as an opportunity to try to have the appearance of stability during a transition period out of violence. And part of that arrangement that "the good people will run Colombia" was the alternation of liberals and conservatives for a period of time. An agreement that was made in order to try to bring stability to the political process. That's a foregone conclusion that establishmentarians are going to be the presidential candidates of the two parties during their period of alternation. But it has become a much more troubled country now than it was during our time, although it has many of the same problems that Brazil has with

population growth. Colombia seemed a little more aware, and certainly Antioquians much better prepared to think about the problem of population growth than the Brazilians were. That was something that was always very alarming to me; that Brazilians thought a population growth not as a problem, but as somehow an opportunity. That was not the way Colombians looked at it. It diminishes the per capita income in this country unacceptably. I'm not suggesting that they were able to do much about it, they were simply a little more worried about it than the Brazilians were.

ROBERT E. WHITE
Deputy Chief of Mission
Bogota (1972-1975)

Robert E. White entered the Foreign Service in 1955. He worked primarily in Latin America, with posts in Ecuador, the Dominican Republic and Honduras. He was DCM in Nicaragua and Colombia and Ambassador in Paraguay and El Salvador. He was interviewed by Bill Knight in 1992.

WHITE: The Department then transferred me to Colombia, a bigger post. I was in Colombia from 1972 to 1975. Bogota was a reasonably traditional post, the only traditional post I ever had. You know, where you send a note to the Foreign Office and you get a note back. After about a year in Bogota, Ambassador Leonard Saccio resigned, Watergate hit and I was Chargé for a year. So that was fun. I enjoyed it.

Pete Vaky then became ambassador in 1975 -- a most capable officer. We worked well together. Bill Rogers, who was then Assistant Secretary for Latin America, said he wanted to do something with the Organization of American States and asked me to become Deputy representative to the OAS.

Q: You raise an important point. The Department of State has never organized itself properly to deal with the field. The last person I can remember who really took the field seriously and knew how to move things through and how to relate at the proper level was John Crimmins. I think that the demands on the Assistant Secretary have become so great that unless a country is in crisis there is almost never this kind of contact. When I was Chargé in Bogota every once in a while Assistant Secretary Harry Shlaudeman would call and we would chat and that helped you feel you were connected, but normally I would relate to the office director. I think very highly of Shlaudeman, for technical proficiency. I suppose he's one of the really important figures that the Foreign Service has produced.

ROBERT L. CHATTEN
Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Bogota (1972-1976)

Robert L. Chatten received an undergraduate degree in journalism from the

University of New Mexico and went on to receive a masters degree in communications and journalism from Stanford. He was sworn in as a Foreign Service Officer in 1959. In 1972, he was stationed in Colombia as the new PAO in Bogota. In addition to Colombia, he was posted to Bolivia and Ecuador

CHATTEN: We got involved in the Andean countries later on. By the time I got to Colombia in 1972, it had really become a consideration and was indeed a subject of no small contention between our post and the USIA support mechanisms in Washington. We knew that it was a major factor in the bilateral relationship between Colombia and the United States, that it had serious international dimensions and that it was on the rise as a factor in the internal dynamics of Colombia. But it was hard to persuade anyone in Washington that we ought to get their attention and resources focused upon this. Fortunately, at that stage, we were a big enough post that we could do considerable programming ourselves. As you know, it was happening in Thailand at the same time. To a certain degree we could go our own way. We had the support of the area office in the sense that their blessing was contingent only on having drug traffic fully justified in our country plan.

We were getting ready to round trip in Quito after two years, to go on home leave and come back when Area Director Darryl Carter flew in with the new that changed everything. As I took him from the plane into the terminal he said, "Congratulations, you're the new PAO in Bogota. You do want to go to Colombia, don't you?" But he said it in that order. We had invited the staff to our house to meet him and he was staying with us, so we went straight from the airport home. I was just barely able to whisper to Pat, "We're going to Bogota" before attending to the guests. She was standing on one foot and then on the other for two hours until we got the other people out the door and got the chance for him to fill us in.

Ambassador Leonard Saccio in Bogota, who had been an AID career person, decided that he was going to clean house. In one of the most impressive sweeps I've ever seen, within three months he got rid of his DCM, bringing Bob White from DCM Managua to fill that slot, and his administrative counselor, a high profile station chief, and PAO Darryl Drucker. Drucker had no prior experience in Latin America. He had been deputy PAO in India and had held the place together after Dan Oleksiw was thrown out by Ambassador Daniel Patrick Moynihan, and had been acting PAO for a long time. As a reward for those labors was put into what turned out to be a meatgrinder in Bogota

Q: At that point did you have to pack your bags?

CHATTEN: They let us go on home leave. Bureaucratically, the most impressive part of the house cleaning was that Saccio replaced the flamboyant Station Chief, a college chum of William Buckley, with someone who in the Central American wars of the 1980s, became even more well known, Nestor Sanchez. When we went through Bogota years before on our way to our first Latin American assignment in Lima, it had appeared to be a gray place, with gray people, and gray skies. Maybe we just caught it at a bad time on the earlier visit or maybe all those intervening years in Latin America had changed our perspective on what places look like,

but it turned out to be a place of very congenial people who received us almost embarrassingly well. Four years there was our longest assignment anywhere and a kind of golden time.

We had the benefit of a number of people on the staff who were absolutely outstanding and who later went on to bigger things. BPAO Mike O'Brien, IO Greg Farmer, and AIO Chuck Loveridge became conspicuously successful Country PAOs. Bogota BNC Director Sally Grooms became both a PAO and Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago. Sidney Hamolsky was and continued in other big posts to be the prototypical CAO.

We also had an environment in which some very useful things could be done. As opposed to most places in Latin America, the Colombians had remarkably few hang ups about their relationship with the United States, which was a huge asset for us, of course. It had a lot to do with the fact that we were not the dominant force in their international trade. It was not the tourist Mecca with attendant pluses and minuses it often entails. US extractive industries did not have an overwhelming presence. And the history of the relationship, while not totally felicitous, was certainly a lot healthier than it had been in other places. Most important in the light of subsequent developments, we were there only in the earliest stages of the drug business, though it seemed big to us at the time.

Ambassador Saccio's left about six months into our stay, to be replaced by Pete Vaky, then in the early stages of well-deserved ARA stardom.

Q: What kind of programming did you people develop when you saw the birth of the drug industry or at least the early stages of it?

CHATTEN: We did a number of things. One of them was to determine how much assistance we could get from Washington in putting together media and speaker programs and other kinds of educational and outreach efforts. We learned that it wasn't easy. It's hard to believe in terms of subsequent developments but it was perceived in Washington as our local problem. Our biggest asset was an Area Office that said "OKAY, you're the PAO. Go ahead and spend your program resources the way local circumstance dictate." If I could justify something on those terms, I could do it, but I got precious little institutional support from USIA.

Drug trade did not skew everyone's attention upon Colombia, as it later did and so there were still healthier things that you could talk about. There came to be a time in which you couldn't mention Colombia in Washington without first dealing with drugs. This engendered a great deal of negativism about the whole nature of the relationship, and came to dominate everything. We didn't have later levels of security problems pressing down upon our physical presence. That was before we closed down operations in other cities.

When we went, there were class A binational centers in Cartagena, Barranquilla, Medellin, Cali, and Bogota. This put officers in key places all around the country, and we were able to approach Colombia from a somewhat broader base.

I could still come and go freely from downtown, and walk into the offices of newspaper editors with whom we had very cordial relationships. Even though ultimately I came to need a

bodyguard in our last years there, it was a very different atmosphere than in Colombia of a few years later.

Now to answer your question of what did we focus on. We often were able to deal with more hemispheric level problems. The foreign office there had assumed a position of leadership and, for better or for worse, Henry Kissinger developed a kind of simpatico relationship with the foreign minister. As you know, that's a two-edged sword and so we occasionally saw more of Kissinger than most people might want to. But even when Bill Rogers was Secretary, someone got the unfortunate idea he should address all of Latin America from the Colombian legislature. Think about it for a minute. The Secretary can make it only to Bonn, but he's going to address England, France, and the rest from there. He's in Tokyo, so he might as well speak to China and ASEAN from the Diet. We were able to keep people focused on the good side of that as opposed to the down side, at least in Colombia. As in Ecuador, I was chairman of the Fulbright Commission and spent a good bit of time trying to make sure that we kept our scarce resources focused on the more important faculties of the more important universities. The dilemma is familiar in most places: do you want a few US professors and researchers for an extended period of time, or do you get more people and more exposure in more places but for a shorter, less enduring exposure? We went for breadth over depth and tried to make it up with intensity. It often worked, though not always and it wasn't easy.

Q: Let me interject a question here. Between 1972 and 1976 the period you were in Colombia, it seems to me that was the period when the Agency was starting to withdraw from very active support to the Binational Center movement in Latin America. I know it was taking place in Brazil and other parts of Latin America.

CHATTEN: It hit us too, and we knew that we were swimming against the tide. We reached the very conscious policy decision to conduct most of our cultural programming from or in the name of the BNCs. This took advantage of, and helped perpetuate, the centers' substantial local credibility. With the support, or at least the acquiescence, of the Area Office, we were able to spend GOE resources on supporting them in one way or another. Occasionally, we were able to get some relatively modest, but nevertheless new, grant money from the Agency. Whatever our contribution, it always was augmented by local support, often quite substantial and coming from important people in local communities, Colombian and American.

Cartagena probably was the biggest problem with our class A centers and it was downgraded to class B, that is to say, one without a USIS officer on loan.

Agency resources were shrinking all over and the pullback from our investment in binational centers was just part of the overall drawdown. Certainly it continued in Colombia, just as it had hit me within weeks after I got to Ecuador. In my time in the PAO business I was continually being asked by somebody in Washington to cut resources, cut program and, the part that weighed the heaviest upon me, fire employees. The cumulative effects of that probably figured as much as anything in my ultimate decision to retire when I did. I was just tired in job after job of having to fire people. It really got to me.

Q: I can identify with that. Being in the milieu of reducing resources is very difficult.

CHATTEN: The Colombian experience also was very good because of the history of post relationships with media there and our ability to continue doing useful, and occasionally innovative, things with them. CU/ARA in those days was headed by an old friend, Max Chaplin, who in the fashion of CU reserved a lot of resources to be spent on regional projects. Working together and with other PAOs, we were able to put together a series of regional media seminars that turned out to be extraordinarily beneficial. They resulted in a lot of coverage of subjects we cared about in the national media in Colombia. They also helped cement our relationship with the leadership of the national media, building crisis capability and access that allowed us in unanticipated circumstances to cash in some chips.

These Regional seminars allowed me to take four of my closest associates in the media, one of the co-directors of El Tiempo, the most important newspaper in the country, one of the top editors from El Espectador, the largest circulation newspaper in the country, the head of the government TV network, and the presidential press secretary to Stanford for a week. The program that incorporated people at that level from all over Latin America, bringing them together with high level colleagues and contemporaries from the United States. Michener, for example, was a participant. And he didn't just show up and speak. He was around for awhile and we really got a chance to interact. At the Stanford end was Lyle Nelson, former chairman of Communications and Journalism at Stanford, who had been head of the Board of Foreign Scholarships Latin American operations. He went on to be head of the BFS.

These programs worked enormously to our benefit. We had another, similar one run by the University of Maryland, to which I was able to take four more of my top media contacts. Former LBJ Press Secretary George Reedy, then professor of journalism at Marquette, was the main cog in the Maryland Seminar.

Q: Was this 1974, Bob?

CHATTEN: Probably.

Q: Because I brought four people from Brazil.

CHATTEN: You were there. And it was exactly the kind of thing that CU and USIA and USIS did at their best. That kind of cooperation and field input made for short term and long term good for USIS and US interests wherever you were. Because of the experience of those two seminars we were able to keep the ball rolling with a third one in Caracas with media people from Venezuela and Colombia. It was set up by PAO Jack Higgins and IO Yale Newman. Again, I was able to spend a week in close professional and personal contact with a group of my very best media contacts, including another presidential press secretary. Yale had been a first class media person in his own right, before he came into the Agency, and was able to get Eric Sevareid, Pierre Salinger and Helen Thomas from the United States.

Both we and the Venezuelan Government put up money. While we, in fact, selected the participants, they came at the invitation of the Venezuelan Government. It marked a kind of Golden Age in cooperative interaction that I don't recall having seen duplicated other times and

other places. It may just have been unique to the time and place. I don't know.

Partly because of that, and partly because I had been in the area for a long while, our approach to people and programs came to the attention of the front office of the Agency. Jim Keogh eventually asked me to be Area Director at the conclusion of our four years in Colombia. Nothing in the bureaucracy is ever done for just one reason. Colombia marked for me the high point in USIS operations which were integrated within the post, within the mission and with the people who had responsibility for supporting us from Washington. You could superimpose upon that whatever the issues at the moment were.

SALLY GROOMS COWAL
Public Affairs Book Officer, USIS
Bogota (1973-1974)

Director, Cultural Center, USIS
Bogota (1974-1978)

Ambassador Sally Grooms Cowal was born in Oak Park, Illinois in 1944. After graduating from DePauw University she joined the United States Information Service as Foreign Service Officer. Her service included assignments as Cultural and Public Affairs Officer at US Embassies in India, Colombia, Mexico and Israel. She subsequently held a number of senior positions in the Department of State, including Assistant Secretary for Latin American Affairs and Deputy Political Counselor to The American Ambassador to the United Nations. In 1991 she was appointed Ambassador to Trinidad and Tobago. Ambassador Cowal was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy August 9, 2001.

Q: Right, today is the 15th of November, the ides of November 2001. Nineteen-seventy-three, you're going to take Spanish and off to Colombia. Had you taken Spanish before? I can't remember.

COWAL: No.

Q: Had you had any connection with Latin America at all?

COWAL: No, and, actually, the decision was I went to India, as I described the last time, without any language training, because I was going to work all over the country and English was, although spoken by only I think 2 percent of the population, it was the 2 percent we were really trying to reach in India. That might or might not have been the correct policy, but that was certainly our policy, although I must say many of my fellow officers there were language qualified. It was always in one of the regional languages, and there was the feeling that English was as good as anything else if you were really going to be working throughout the country, which was what my job was.

So I hadn't yet taken a foreign language, unusual for a Foreign Service Officer, but because of the way I had come in, through the management intern program, that's the way it was. As my time in India came to an end and it was clear, I think, to me and everybody else that I would make a pretty good Foreign Service officer and therefore shouldn't be recycled back to Washington but should go on to other places in the world. The question was really did I want to study Spanish or did I want to study French?

Q: Getting you up to speed.

COWAL: Getting me up to speed in some world language. Well, I thought that studying Spanish didn't get you to Madrid and studying French didn't get you to Paris, but studying Spanish got you to Buenos Aires or Santiago or Mexico City or Bogotá, and studying French got you to Fort Lamy or Niamey or Kinshasa. And being a very urban person – I think we've talked about my growing up in Chicago and close to the museums and the concert halls and the libraries, I didn't see myself as being off somewhere in the bush in a little town of 3,000 people, trying to eke out an existence. So I said, "Aha, I will study Spanish and that will lead me toward a world civilization of some kind or another." That was essentially correct, although I got to Bogotá after – so I was assigned to Tegucigalpa, I believe, initially.

Q: Not exactly a major world capital.

COWAL: Not a major world capital. Of course, it later became in its own weird way for a brief moment in time sort of a major world capital when we were funding the Contras and worrying about a war in Central America, but that would come almost 10 years later. So Tegucigalpa, the more I looked at that, the more I thought, "That doesn't fit my definition of a major world capital either."

I suppose, and maybe this is the first time ever revealed here, that because I had worked in the personnel office at one time, I still had some good connections in it, including the director of personnel.

Q: Who was the director?

COWAL: Well, USIA at that time. His name was Lionel Mosley, and he had been there for a long, long time, was a civil servant and a very good one and a very dedicated one. I had worked for somebody who had worked for him, so he knew me quite well, and I went to him and explained that I didn't think my aspirations would be fulfilled being the cultural affairs officer in Tegucigalpa, and this was literally right before I was supposed to go. And he said, "Who is the public affairs officer," and I gave him the name, which I have forgotten, but someone who wasn't all that well respected, I must say. This was, after all, the backwater of the backwater.

At that time, there were maybe 600 Foreign Service officers in USIA, and he literally knew every one of them. It was a small agency, and upon hearing who it was I was supposed to work for, he stopped and he said, "Oh my God, you'll kill him," and squelched the assignment on the spot. Then they scrambled around a little bit and decided that I would be the book officer in Bogotá, Colombia. The book officer's job was to travel around the continent – this was a

regional job – promoting the sale and the placing of American books translated into Spanish.

The books were published in either Buenos Aires or Mexico City, which is where the publishing industry is. But in Bogotá they had this regional job that said you'll take these 20 or 30 titles, which were well-known books, basically, on history and on political science and on American literature, and things that I really loved and liked dealing with. You'll travel around the continent and you'll go to book stores. You'll go to newspaper book review sections. You'll go to television shows which interview authors. You'll go to university deans and professors. And you'll try to get these adopted as textbooks, and you'll try to get the bookstores to buy them, and you'll try to get some publicity about them, so that somebody will want to read them.

I thought that was a great idea, and it gave me a chance to not simply see one country in Latin America, but in fact to see all of Latin America. The only problem with it was that I had a certain budget to do this promotion, and I was so active and got so many things sort of going, that of course I ran out of the amount of money that I had to spend on it much before the end of the fiscal year. Then I was sort of sitting around, figuring out what else I would do since I didn't have much of a budget left. As I was trying to decide that, the person who was the head of the cultural center in Bogotá was suddenly replaced. I was in the right place at the right time and asked to – essentially grabbed by the PAO as a good resource. Rather than waiting for six months or something for Washington to assign him a new cultural center director, they asked me if I would do that, and I was delighted to oblige.

Q: Let me get some dates here. You got out there in '73?

COWAL: I got there in November of '73.

Q: And how long were you book officer?

COWAL: I know I was book officer less than a year.

Q: So '73 to '74. Let's talk just a bit about being a book officer. What was your impression, I mean, was USIA doing anything for these publishing houses to translate and print out these books?

COWAL: Yes, it was a huge subsidy program, really. AID and USIA were both in this business, and I happen to think it was a terrific business. But AID stuck to the more technical books. They had the agriculture books and the electrical engineering books and so on, and USIA's field was more the humanities broadly speaking, so we had books on art and literature and music and history and philosophy.

They were heavily subsidized, insofar as we paid for the rights and then we paid for the translation. Then we would go to a publisher to get more or less a commercial deal on the publication, hoping that the publisher would take that in as part of his own line, his own stock, whatever he was going to put out, but the advantage to the publisher being that he didn't have to negotiate for the rights and he didn't have to do the translation. So, if it was an American book he was interested in, it was a much better deal for him. Then we provided some supplemental

services such as publicity materials, and me, to go around promoting this list. In a way, it helped the publishers also, because if I was talking about one book, we might sell five others that weren't part of our list. But I thought it was actually a very, very valuable program.

Q: What was your impression of the American studies within Latin America, because you were right in the guts of it. I mean, that's what it was all about.

COWAL: It was. That's what it was all about. It was really not about commercial book publishing, so it got me on a lot of university campuses, as well. It was really, I think, very important in terms of my understanding of who we are. This is 1973; interesting things are going on in Chile. Vietnam is still very much underway. Campuses are pretty anti-American, by and large, but we're promoting books like Neither Marx nor Jesus, the Jean-Jacques Ceron Shriver, translated Ni Marx, Ni Jesus, and trying to get some discussion going on college campuses through the medium of these books as to whether or not Communism is a system which succeeds or fails. Is it a workable economic and political system or is it not?

My impression is that the public universities in most of Latin America had already become pretty much entrenched in Marxist thought, but not all that effective, because not only were they in Marxist thought, but they were also in a completely chaotic situation as public institutions of how they would run. So it was often the case that they were closed or that they didn't run at all because the professors were on strike, or the students were on strike, or the university workers were on strike. So the Catholic universities and the private universities across the region, which continued to function, were certainly allowed to move into a position of having more influence because of the disarray in the public universities.

Q: I've never served in Latin America, but one gets the feeling that you had these faculties that were full of Marxists and they had the kids all excited, and as soon as they got out, Marxism, except for a very small number, didn't take at all.

COWAL: Right. I'm wondering whether it wasn't only that it didn't take after they got out or the fact that it also was pretty poorly taught. As a philosophy or a system of government, it was sort of a catch word, but I'm not sure that people really studied it or learned it all that well. It might have succeeded better if they'd been more efficient at doing it. But, yes, it was a very hot time in Latin America, and certainly, as always, and this is even before the Central American real conflagration, the United States was the pole of opposition around which much rallied. We were simply trying to, in our own small, modest way, inject a different point of view into the dialog that might have been there without it.

Of course, we didn't just parachute into the campus. We would work with the USIS missions in each country and we would use their contacts, but their contacts sometimes didn't extend to the book review digests in the local newspaper. They would know the news editor. I think we were fairly successful at getting a degree of interest in these books that we were promoting, at least in some of them. Some of them were real dogs, and they would negotiate all the rights stuff in Washington. Of course, we didn't select what books or the price, so sometimes you had the people in Washington who didn't understand Latin America very well and what would be interesting to students in Latin America. Then the U.S. government was trying to do everything

on the cheap, so when they couldn't get something for free, or almost for free, they sometimes abandoned it.

Now, some of the best stuff got out by itself anyway, and got translated by itself. If there was a hot new novel by John Updike, they didn't need us. It was going to find its market in Spanish and in Latin America anyway, but for a lot of books that I think probably affected, if not a lot of people's lives, at least for a moment in time their thought process, we were able to get it.

Q: How did you find you were received, one, at the newspapers and maybe there are stories or episodes of different places or different campuses? How did you find this?

COWAL: How did I find the reception?

Q: Yes.

COWAL: Well, pretty good. I mean, again, it's not so often, I suppose, that an American Foreign Service officer comes to call on a campus bookstore manager. If our philosophy in those days was that we should be working with the political leaders, the media leaders and the economic leaders, or people who would become one of those things in the fairly near future, then to seek to influence a university market was a good thing to do. I suppose it to a certain extent taught me some things that I'm still using today, and that's if you can have your point of view buttressed by some hard facts, you're in a much better position than if it's simply your point of view against somebody else's point of view.

I use that even today in the work I do on Cuba, where I'm out here. We're looking at this book on my table which is a draft report on economic impacts of U.S. agricultural exports to Cuba, and it's a survey that we've just had done by Texas A&M University, which is showing on a state-by-state basis just what we're losing because we have an embargo against Cuba. Okay, USIA is the foreign policy agency charged with propaganda or charged with public diplomacy or whatever you want to call it. You're a much more effective advocate when it's evidence based, or facts based. I think I learned that very early on and it sounds silly to say, but I've always loved books. From the time I was a little kid, I was a voracious reader, so actually to have a chance to not simply say what did Sally Grooms believe in, because who the hell cares, but here was a point of view which was different, in many cases, from that which was being taught as the truth revealed in Latin American universities and because of our subsidies and because of our working. But we weren't changing the facts, here.

We were simply taking the facts that we found useful, and not always facts. Maybe it was a Mark Twain book. Maybe it was a novel that reflected something about American society. But by providing a way for those thoughts to get to people in a language that they could read them, and at a price that they could afford – this was never a giveaway program. This was always, “You will care more about this book if you buy it.”

Q: Oh, absolutely, yes.

COWAL: Even if you buy it, it's a book that costs \$1.00 and the other book costs \$2.00, so

maybe we think you'll buy our book if you don't know the difference because ours was half price, but we never gave it to you. I mean, we might give a professor a copy so that he would read it and get enthusiastic about it and put it on his syllabus, but this was not a wholesale giveaway program. Sometimes AID's were. They would just provide the text book.

Q: That doesn't work very well.

COWAL: So I learned a lot of things. I learned that you're on much better ground when you're standing on the facts, and I learned that giveaway schemes don't work, but selling schemes do. So I guess I liked it because it was a place where the marketplace had a role, also. It was not just straight government. I also liked it because I traveled to every country in South America.

At the time I went to Cuba last year, Cuba was the only country in all of the Caribbean and Latin America that I hadn't been to. I'd been in every single country, from Paraguay to St. Kitts and Nevis through my various jobs in the department, but I hadn't ever been the Cuba. So I traveled. Three weeks out of every four I was on the road.

Q: How did you find the Latin Americans? Are they readers? One thinks of the French as being readers, and of the British being readers, but I was wondering whether one can draw conclusions, or is it broken down by country?

COWAL: Well, I think it's broken down by social class and by country, and that, in some ways, has something to do with climate. For instance, Bogotá, the people of Bogotá are huge readers, and that's because it's got a climate about like London. It's damp and dark and wet for nine months of the year, and so there's a lot of emphasis on music and on theater and on reading. I mean, people pursue indoor activities, whereas Rio, everybody goes to the beach nine months of the year, and maybe they read under the palm trees, I don't know. Of course, I should say Brazil is the exception because of Portuguese being the language, and I was the Spanish-language book officer, not the Portuguese.

Literacy has never been very high in most countries in Latin America, certainly compared to some other places, except Cuba, where it was pretty high, but of course we didn't go to Cuba. But there are reading publics in Latin America, and ideas are important, and the discussion of ideas is important and I think there's a pretty good education.

Q: Well, was there a Sally Grooms working for the Soviet Union running around North America?

COWAL: I'm sure that there was, and I don't know that I ever actually met that person, but I do know that one of the jobs that I also had to do when I went into each country was sort of a survey of what was being sold. Of course, I could find evidence that Sally Grooms had been there. I mean, Sally Grooms of the Soviet Union had been there, because there were certainly things that wouldn't have gotten there translated from Russian if somebody hadn't been promoting their translation, so I would say very definitely so. And, of course, we thought ours were a superior product, both in their content and their presentation. Ours, though they were published in Mexico or Buenos Aires, they were kind of American standard in terms of their publishing quality.

Q: Did you find places on the campuses where you're up against the local Marxist mafia, within the faculties?

COWAL: Yes, there were places we were totally shut out, no question about it, and then there were places where people wanted a dialog. I don't think that those campuses were ever totally monolithic. There were always those who had been trained in Britain or in France or in the United States – well, some of those trained in France certainly ended up being Marxists, and some of those trained in the United States did as well, and some of those trained in Britain did as well.

I think the relationship, and I guess this is something I learned early on, too, in my first assignment in Latin America, which was this one, is that the relationship between the United States and Latin America is one of the most extraordinarily complex in the world, simply because of where we sit geographically and where they sit geographically. So that was also an important lesson, that while in most places I think it could be genuinely described as a love-hate relationship.

In most countries, the foreign policy elites, or the economic elites and the political elites, initially gravitated toward Europe, primarily France and Spain. Then a couple of generations before me they certainly gravitated toward the United States as being the pole, the place where they didn't want to go to the Sorbonne anymore, they wanted to go to Harvard. They didn't want their kids to go to Oxford, they wanted their kids to go to Princeton, and that all began to change. Then you had Vietnam, I suppose, and Vietnam simply revived the anti-Americanism, which was always latent and which probably goes back to the Monroe Doctrine, the feeling that who are these upstart gringos who are going to tell us what to do, just the way they're trying to tell our Asian brothers what to do? And despite the fact that we like the music and the food and the universities and it's certainly closer for us to get there than it is for us to get to Europe, among a certain class, both I would say the artists and philosophers and some of the political elite, we'll totally turn our back on that. We'll reject that.

Certainly you lived with those two worlds, but I must say, my own experiences with personally directed anti-Americanism were few and far between. As usual, when people got to know you, as they did, as a person, or dealt with you as a person, it always also came out how much of the United States they admired and respected, and how much their constitutions and bills of rights and so on were more or less founded on ours. That was the system in which they were steeped.

Q: How about Mexico? I would have thought that there you would have found a different reaction range and all than different parts, being so close, and the love-hate relationship being much more intense.

COWAL: Well, you know what they say in Mexico, or they used to Mexico, "Poor Mexico, so far from God, so close to the United States," which was something said by a Mexican President, Porfirio Diaz, in 1910. It still, I think to this day, expresses the feeling of many, many Mexicans. I think if you scratch the surface of a lot of Canadians, you'd in fact find very much the same feeling of Pierre Trudeau said, "Well, when you sleep with the elephant, you always worry

whether he wakes up and rolls over in the middle of the night,” which is pretty much a way of saying the same thing, that it’s just so close that if we get a cold, Mexico has pneumonia, and so on. We’re seeing that in the economic recession right now, which is badly affecting Mexico.

Q: Well, did you find a different caliber of people, say, on the campuses of bookstores in Mexico than elsewhere? Because of the closeness, more people go to school in the United States and all that?

COWAL: Especially in those years of the early ‘70s, I don’t think so. There was a feeling between Mexico and the United States, very distant neighbors. We used to say in the United States, we were willing to do anything for Mexico except think about it. In Mexico, after the loss of the territory, this is the only country in Latin America – well, with the possible exception of Cuba, perhaps, where we still own Guantanamo Bay – but where in the case of Mexico, we actually lopped off about a third of it and annexed it to the United States in 1848. And then Mexico went through a very difficult period in the 1860s, with the French essentially taking over the governance of Mexico, and then the Mexicans sort of coming out of that with the Mexican Revolution in its various incarnations. But the Mexican revolution being a total rejection of anything that might have the power of dominating them, whether another country or a religion. They were the only country in Latin America that totally separated church and state to the point where a cleric couldn’t appear on the streets dressed as a cleric, and a religious wedding in Mexico doesn’t count. Your wedding has to be done by civil authorities, so even a more complete separation of church and state than we have in this country.

That was all part of, I think, the Mexican desire to be as fully independent as they could be, living where they lived, and to sort of seal themselves off. I think for many years, there was this huge gulf. I mean, the Rio Bravo or the Rio Grande, as we call it, was in some places no more than a few inches wide, but it was as if it were a different planet. I think you only saw this sort of gradual pirouetting and turning to face each other along this border, instead of turning our backs to each other, it really didn’t begin to happen until I would say the mid 1980s.

Q: Well, did you plan to yourself as you were lining up your trips, were there any countries where you were saying, “Oh, God, do I have to go there?”

COWAL: Well, I was never very fond of Central America, because it was a poorer and less developed region of Latin America, and that was true. And of course, I didn’t in those days go to the Caribbean, because I was only doing Spanish-language books, and I guess nobody bothered with the Dominican Republic. Cuba we weren’t doing, and the Dominican Republic we left aside, and we didn’t go to Haiti, either, and we didn’t do the English-speaking Caribbean because we didn’t have anything to offer there.

So, for the places that I went, I would simply find the intellectual dialog less rich in most of Central America. After all, they were smaller populations, they were much poorer. There was maybe one university. Anybody who could get out got out, and few people came back, because there was not much reason to come back. The famous El Salvador was controlled by 14 families and whatever, so I must say I didn’t terribly look forward to the trips to Central America, but I loved going to Mexico and I loved going to Argentina and I loved going to Ecuador and Bolivia

and Peru. I also have to say Venezuela has never been one of my favorite countries, because it doesn't seem to have a sense of what it is as a culture.

Most of the rest of Latin America has a very strong feeling about national identity and culture, and I think the Venezuelans – I don't know whether it's the oil wealth or what it is, but I don't think they've ever quite known who they were. So that was sort of less interesting to me. But I think there was always this contrast between what you thought if you hadn't been there and what you thought, having been there, in terms of perception of people and their respect for the United States, or their desire to have some contact with the United States, was usually much stronger than was perceived if you simply saw Nixon being stoned in Caracas, or another of these anti-American manifestations. The Cubans also, whom I've come to know only much later, I think there was never any love lost between the Russians and the Cubans. There is simply something about Russian culture, Soviet culture, that has basically no appeal for Latin America.

Q: Well, it also didn't have in the Arab world, either. It's interesting – and in the oriental world. I mean, it doesn't translate very well. The type of government, too, didn't allow sort of the scholars and the interests to go out, so sort of xenophobic.

COWAL: Right, right. So the Latin Americans wanted to preach Communism or that they were all very pro-Russian or something, but that was more a way to stand up to the United States than it was a genuine feeling that this was something that they wanted for themselves. After all, they wanted the freedom to criticize both their own governments, and ours, and I think the brighter of them realized that in a Communist system you didn't have that freedom. So there was a real contradiction in terms there, and brighter people were smart enough to recognize that if they hadn't been living in at least quasi-democracies, they wouldn't be able to do what they were doing.

Q: Did you find any problems of cooperation with the Church? I'm referring obviously to the Roman Catholic Church in those countries.

COWAL: Actually, it was an interesting time for the Church in Latin America. I think because of the whole liberation theology movement, there was a real conflict within the Church between the more repressive voices within the Church and the more liberal voices, and Vatican II playing into all of that. So, in my year of being the book officer, I didn't deal with so many church people, although I do recall having had pretty good reception at Catholic universities. The Catholic Church did provide a fair percentage of the tertiary education in most countries in Latin America. But when I actually then stayed home in Bogotá and worked running this cultural center, my relations with the Church were actually very good, actually quite good. That's when I discovered that the Church wasn't a monolith either, and that there were progressive voices in the Church, as well as repressive ones.

Q: Al right, well then, let's see, from '74 to when were you running the cultural center. We'll talk about that.

COWAL: Well, from '74 to '78.

Q: Good God.

COWAL: So I got another four years in Colombia.

Q: They sort of lost you there.

COWAL: They did.

Q: They threw you into that briar patch and they never ...

COWAL: They did. They did, and I would scream about the briar patch for the same reason Brer Rabbit screamed about the briar patch, because I hoped everybody would leave me alone. The first time I had really run my own show, and this was a cultural center that had 6,000 students and 200 faculty and I think an annual budget of a couple of million dollars a year, as I recalled, 90 percent of which was generated by student fees.

Q: Student fees, I was going to say.

COWAL: So the only subsidies that this center had, which was a bi-national center, and they were all over Latin America. They were in a few other places in the world, also, but Latin America is where the model stuck. The genesis for them was actually out of Nelson Rockefeller, in the early days when he was working on inter-American affairs, right after the Second World War, in the late '40s. If you remember, the Rockefellers have a big association with Venezuela, among other things, but Nelson Rockefeller had this wonderful collection of pre-Columbian art. David Rockefeller has a huge connection with Latin America. The Rockefellers that I know are very much connected to Latin America.

So, when Nelson Rockefeller was in the State Department, which was briefly after the war, the whole genesis for these things – it's very interesting looking at the situation we're in today and saying we need to do a better job on public diplomacy and we've lost the young people of the Arab world, and how will we get them back and how can we influence them? So these bi-national centers were set up I think in every country in Latin America. Maybe they didn't all stick, but most of them did and were having a real heyday, again, in the '70s. Most of them then got set up in probably the early '50s, and their mission was to be English language institutes which would also provide cultural programs, and they were a way of reaching the young people with a product that young people wanted, namely, English language.

We would take any adult. We didn't take anybody below 12. We didn't have kids' classes. So our population was basically secondary school and university. So we had these 6,000 students. We charged a fee. It was enough to break even or a little bit better. We had a bi-national board of directors. In the case of Colombia, we had nine people, five Colombians and four Americans. It was a corporation – they owned the facilities, they hired the staff, but like the Alliance Française and so on, there was a close affinity with the U.S. embassy, but my office was not in the embassy, my office was in the bi-national center. Every American worked for the ambassador, but my day to day responsibilities were to this board of directors. While I was there, I think three out of the four years, the chairman was a Colombian.

So it was a Colombian institution, as it was a Mexican institution or a Peruvian institution or a Venezuelan institution. In Colombia, I think we had five or six of them, so these were not just in the capital cities, but we had them in Barranquilla and Cartagena and Cali and Medellin and whatever, but of course the jewel in the crown was Bogotá, and, in general, the bi-national centers in the capital cities.

Oh my, it was a wonderful job. That's why I hoped they'd forget me in the briar patch forever. I had quite a lot of autonomy, because it was unclear what the reporting relationships were. I mean, the embassy could certainly crack down. I think the cultural affairs officer sat on the board, as one member of the board, but he was only one member of the board. So I ran the show, and what I decided to do with that cultural center was that instead of making it an English-teaching center that sometimes did cultural programs, I'd transform it into a cultural center which also taught English.

So we really stepped up the cultural activities, and we presented everything from film series to concert series to lecture series. We had really quite a good library. That was when some of the technology was beginning to transfer things so we could do – you couldn't do online searches in those days, but we were a research library, and for Colombia, we were probably the best American research library. I mean, if you really wanted to know how many tons of steel were going into the World Trade Center, we could get you the answer. Also, we began to use fax machines and copies of articles and stuff, so we would get 100 periodicals, I suppose, but the librarian would make up a little bibliography of 10 articles from 10 of those periodicals and we had a little list of high-powered people that we'd send them to say, "Check off which of these 10 articles you want and we'll Xerox it and put it in your mailbox within 48 hours," or whatever it was.

We began to not only have the very young, who were the students, but to have a way into a different segment of society, and we did spectacular exhibitions. We did a complete revamp of the whole building, and we ended up with an art gallery that was as good as any art gallery in the city. Then we would do great publications of catalogs, and so the whole artistic community would come there, and that would get me on TV, talking about what we were presenting. Because we were a bi-national center, sometimes it was American and sometimes it was Colombian, or sometimes it was a Colombian photographer's look at New York City or something, and sometimes it was purely Colombian.

I mentioned the Church, and we did one exhibition on Church artifacts and vestments that had never been seen outside of the Church before, and the cardinal agreed to loan them to us, with the popular insurance policy and everything. But, suddenly, as *objets d'art* you had these great monstrances and chalices and Church vestments on display and in a catalog, and the cardinal thought that was great. The ambassador wanted to make the cardinal happy, more or less, so the ambassador thought it was great because the cardinal thought what the Americans were doing was fantastic. And I got them all funded from American businesses, basically. We would go to Pepsi-Cola and say, "Will you underwrite this exhibition," and we would get – we're not talking about a lot of money, but you'd get \$10,000 or \$20,000, and with that we'd do a spectacular show.

So we really put this thing on the map, and it was a wonderful experience for me. It was like a little university and a little Kennedy Center and we had a cafeteria that served American food, a little snack bar. We had a genuine American cook in there doing French fries and hamburgers and hot dogs. So it became a place where – this is pretty much pre-McDonald's – where if you had some nostalgia about things American or you thought you wanted to be American, you could go there and pretend like you were in little America.

Q: So the Colombian students dropped by?

COWAL: Right. I mean, we were close to three of the major universities, and a little farther from the national university, which was good, because it was usually on strike and it was usually very anti-American. But we were close downtown to three of the major universities, and those students, many of the university students had in fact been our students as high school students. So they knew about it and they would continue to come.

Then we started a whole sort of Berlitz program for executives, where we'd do intensive English, high powered, six weeks, put them through a basic English course, and that, again, it was a vehicle. It was not an end in itself. It was a way of reaching a target audience with the product that audience wanted, which again they had to buy. You didn't get a free hamburger. You didn't get a free book. You didn't get a free English course. You got one which was meant to be priced at a place where you could afford it if you were the high-powered executive. It was a lot more expensive than what the student paid, but it was not a giveaway. I never had such a good time in my whole life.

Q: Where did you get your English teachers?

COWAL: Americans. Many of them returned Peace Corps volunteers, or Peace Corps volunteers who never returned, I should say. These were young people who had come to Colombia in the Peace Corps for two years and then just couldn't face going home. Again, we're talking about the '70s. Some of them didn't go home because they were going to get drafted, and some of them didn't go home because they discovered that there was a whole world out there that was different than Poughkeepsie, and they liked it. So they spoke Spanish very well and they stayed on.

I think 80 percent of our staff was native speakers of English, and the other 20 percent spoke English extremely well. It was a highly qualified staff. It was also unionized, and so one of the first things I had to do upon becoming director was go through arduous negotiations with the labor union, so that was a good learning experience also. It's something that typical Foreign Service officers don't have to do, but I learned how you would deal with the president of the union or a union negotiating team, and we avoided a strike. And then some of these bi-national centers in Latin America essentially went out of business because they did run into labor and other problems.

Q: Bolivia comes to mind.

COWAL: I think you may be right. Mexico, actually, and they just couldn't get it done, but we

followed a curriculum that was from the English teaching office of USIA, and they gave us the basic curriculum. I think we brought our books from Mexico, from a brother or sister English-teaching institute in Mexico. It was very professional. I mean, our teachers were all trained. We had good teacher training programs. We went about this extremely professionally.

We graduated, which was, like, 12 courses and a proficiency exam, I don't know, maybe 500, 600 kids a year. We were the ones who gave the TOEFL, the teaching of English as a foreign language, which students needed to qualify for admission into the universities in the United States. So we became just a wonderfully vibrant and alive sort of student center, and everybody just said, "Oh, where are you going today?" "Oh, I'm going to the Colombo." Well, the Colombo was the Centro Colombo Americano, and to this day, when I meet Colombians and I say I was in Colombia and such and such, they'll say, "Well, what were you doing," and I said, "Well, I was the director of Centro Colombo Americano in Bogotá." And they'll say, "The Colombo!" It's still open and it still has a bit of that, I think, aura about it, and it was just a wonderful job.

Q: Being close to three universities, were there demonstrations against you a lot or not?

COWAL: I never remember a demonstration against us. The demonstrators went to the embassy.

Q: That way.

COWAL: Yes, exactly, "That's up on 36th Street." The Colombo was theirs in that sense.

Q: Tell me, I mean, you were in Colombia from '74 to '78.

COWAL: Seventy-three to '78.

Q: I mean, '73 to '78. What was your impression of Colombia as a country, politically and economically and all of that type of thing?

COWAL: Well, it was in a very interesting period, politically, because they had had for I guess maybe 40, 50 years something that came to be known as *La Violencia* (The Violence), which was essentially politically driven. I mean, there were two political parties, the liberals and the conservatives, more or less standing for what you would think they would stand for. I mean, the conservatives being more church oriented. I guess we would call them maybe Christian Democrats, and I guess the liberals were more or less socialists. They were actually both reasonably centrist, and the conservatives tended to be more pro-American, and the liberals tended to be not pro-Russian, but more pro their own sense of nationalism, perhaps.

This came to be much more the case in Mexico than in Colombia, but the move was to nationalize the means of production and to provide this import substitution model which said we're going to put up high tariff barriers, and there's no reason why we should import water from the United States, we'll bottle our own water. And that took over in all of Latin America, or that was the dialog, essentially, whether you ought to have higher taxes and more social services provided by the government, or if you need to go to the private sector to do that.

It was the same sort of fight in Colombia. The problem was that in Colombia, in the '20s and '30s, it became extremely violent, and a town was a conservative town or a liberal town. You knew that. I mean, this is not Bogotá, but for all the *provincia* (provinces). Most buildings in Latin America are sort of adobe, or stucco, painted white, and then they usually have shutters on the windows, and the window shutters have a particular color. And in Colombia, if the village was a liberal village, the shutters were red, and if the village was a conservative village, the shutters were blue. You could go anywhere in the country and you would know what was the political persuasion.

If you, Stu, were wearing a blue shirt, you shouldn't be living in that red town. There would be incredible pressure on you to change or move, and there were also these armed gangs going around the country and saying, "Well, we're all wearing red shirts. Let's go to that town where they've got blue shutters and shoot them up." So, after many, many, many years, the Colombians somehow a national peace process got together in the sort of '60s and '70s and they said, "We want democracy and so on, but each of our elections, '48 with Rojas and stuff, has been incredible massacres, incredible bloodshed. So we're going to do democracy in our own style, and that's going to be to essentially allow primary elections so that the conservatives will fight the conservatives and the liberals will fight the liberals, so that we'll see who the conservatives really want as their leader, but we'll agree to trade off every four years. So '60 to '64, the president will be a liberal, and then they'll have a primary and they'll figure out which of the liberals it is. And '64 to '68 will be conservative, and '68 to '72 will be a liberal, and we'll trade back and forth."

That actually worked extremely well, and so when I was there, they were on the last period of this agreement, and it was a liberal president, named Lopez Michelsen, and the election which came in 1978 then was the first one in which they would see again whether the two parties could contest one another without their being a huge blowup. I would say, politically, it was a very interesting time to be there, and it worked. In 1978, it worked. The drug trafficking apart, and we can talk about that a little bit, but in terms of achieving a certain maturity as a political system, I think the Colombians managed to do, and so there hasn't been a military government in Colombia for, I don't know, a long time, 50 years or so. The military was out of politics, was always out of politics, and they got to the point where I think the guy who succeeded Lopez was a liberal, but the next guy was a conservative. They have gone back and forth, as they do today.

Economically, it was also the best-managed economy in Latin America, and I learned why while I was there. I didn't learn completely by accident. I guess I had heard something about this, when we closed down this cultural center over the period of six months, in the same location, but greatly expanded cultural facilities. We had enough money that we more or less financed it ourselves. While it was closed, I rented a huge house in the old part of town and I simply moved the cultural program to my house. So every night I would have a movie show or a lecture or something.

But for the grand reopening, we wanted to have a concert and a lecture and a feature film, and every night we would do something to show the kinds of programs we did in total. So, for the lecture, I decided it should be an economic lecture, and called up John Kenneth Galbraith at Harvard University absolutely cold, out of the blue, and said, "Would you come to Colombia and

give a lecture for the opening of this cultural center?" And he said, "Sure, I'll come."

I said, "Well, what would we have to pay you or whatever," and he said, "Well, a first-class ticket for myself and my wife, and take my wife on a shopping trip." A \$500 dollar shopping trip, and she only spent \$300, and I tried to give him a check for the other 200, and he said, "Well, keep it to buy books for the library." And I said, "Should I buy Galbraith?" And he said, "No, I'll give you all the Galbraiths you want," he said, "Buy pornography." But, at any rate, I found out through having the Galbraiths, and the Galbraiths came and stayed with me for three or four days, and he gave this lecture, that one of his professors, who was a Canadian. If you remember, Galbraith was a Canadian. And his name, I think, was McLaughlin, a Scot, was actually the architect of the whole Colombian economic system, had been a consultant to the government of Colombia in the '30s and had really put in place an economic system which worked extremely well.

Again, had it not been for the last five years or so – even the drug trade didn't overwhelm them until about five years ago. They were always sort of free marketers. There was always a fairly free market. There was always a fairly free peso/dollar exchange. So they didn't get behind all of these nationalist barriers. As the means of wealth, they had enormous coal reserves from oil, more or less enough to take care of themselves, although not to export. They had very good fish stocks. They had cut flowers in abundance, horticultural products. And then, of course, they had emeralds. They had mineral wealth that had an enormous export value.

So they were handed some good cards, but they also, over all the years of changing between the conservative government and the liberal government, they had a number of people, the governors of the central bank, the minister of finances, the minister of the economy, who were always well educated and well chosen. That provided a huge difference. There was always an American private sector there, or a foreign private sector. There was always foreign investment. There were reasonable rules of foreign investment.

Q: There wasn't the threat of nationalization.

COWAL: No.

Q: It so screwed up the economies of many ...

COWAL: Despite the fact that they had these terrible internecine sort of political battles, they were able to leave the economy out of it, and I say, that's probably why they could survive as well as they've survived. The drug thing began when I was there, and I think we didn't quite know it, we didn't quite recognize it. I remember the first manifestation of it being up on the coast, up in Cartagena and Barranquilla, just traveling, doing some weekends. Those were beautiful places to go. And going to someone's house and realizing that all the faucets in the bathrooms were gold, and so you suddenly had all these people with so much money, and nothing to invest it in. So they had wonderful art collections and gold faucets and stuff in the bathroom. You just sort of said, "Well, what's all this about?" But you didn't know.

I left in 1978 and still didn't know, I must say, and went back for my first visit in 1982, and I'll

never forget what one of my Colombian friends told me – ‘81 or ‘82. And I said, “Well, you know, Pedro,” or whatever his name was, “in the three or four years since I’ve been gone, what’s changed here? Tell me about how is Bogotá different than when I was here.” And he said, “Well, you know, Sally, when you lived here, if you were walking down the street and you somebody coming down the street toward you in a Mercedes, you waved, because you might not know exactly whose Mercedes that was, but you knew you pretty much knew everybody who had a Mercedes.” And he said, “You don’t wave anymore, because those aren’t the people. It isn’t our friends who own the Mercedes, it isn’t the doctor and the lawyer and the head of the business corporation, it’s the drug traffickers.”

I thought that was always very profound, that now the Mercedes are in different hands. You know, it was obviously already happening before 1978, but in the years ‘78 to ‘82 was when it got a really, really, really strong foothold in the country.

Q: You mentioned the violence, La Violencia. From what I’ve gathered, the Colombians were renowned sort of in the United States as being more violent. They and the Jamaicans were sort of within gangs or what have you. They’re more likely to pick up a submachine-gun than anybody else.

COWAL: Well, as I said, drug trafficking – and, of course, drug trafficking is also linked to arms trafficking. A whole lot of drugs going out of the country are paying for arms coming in, so the fact that they had a lot of drug trafficking certainly caused an escalation in the number and sophistication of the arms going in. The other thing about Colombia, I mean, one of the things that was totally not successful about it, was a large number of orphans and abandoned children.

I suppose this is in part the anti-abortion policies of the Catholic Church, but there were more children born than could apparently be cared for by their families. So I can remember, even when I lived there, that there would be these gangs of very young children, starting maybe at age six or seven, who were called *gamines* (street kids), and they would be on the streets, and they would usually live under the protection of an older boy, let’s say, or an older child. These were mostly boys, not exclusively, but mostly.

Of course, the way they survived was they stole. Now, in the days I was there, it was relatively petty stuff. It was relatively innocent. But I think it became also much more violent. And, again, for all that it was a well-managed economy on a macro sense, there was a lot of corruption. One of the things, for instance, was I think, as I recall, the emerald mines were guarded by the army, but they had to change the soldiers every six weeks or something like that because they discovered nobody stayed incorruptible longer than that. Because all you had to do to get out with a handful of emeralds in your pocket was to bribe the soldier who was supposed to be inspecting your bags. If you could get a pocketful of emeralds out, you didn’t have to work for the rest of your life, or the next 10 years, or whatever. You would constantly be offered emeralds on the street, or green glass. Of course, I stayed out of trouble, because I actually knew whether it was green glass or emeralds, so I was never really tempted to buy much of it.

I knew a society which was intellectual, sought learning and had a wonderfully sort of almost English kind of climate and people who walked around with their rolled-up newspapers, their

umbrellas and their Hamburg hats. That was a whole Bogotá, but the other parts of the country, and even within that large metropolitan area, of course, there were a huge variety of social classes. But for me, it was a wonderfully stimulating sort of heady time.

I suppose next to the ambassador, I became one of the best-known Americans in the country, because I was constantly out in front of the center, which was doing so many great things, so it was a nice experience.

Q: How did you find the hand of the ambassadors – I assume there were several – and of the public affairs officers?

COWAL: I was very lucky. I had by and large people who either liked it or could tolerate it. It was a flash learn for the ambassador, too.

Q: Do you remember some of the ambassadors or public affairs.

COWAL: Oh, sure, I remember them all, I suppose. The first ambassador I had was Pete Vaky, Viron Vaky, and he now must be 80, I suppose, but remains very involved in the Council on Foreign Relations and the Inter-American Dialogue, and was after that I guess assistant secretary of state a couple of times. So he was a really spectacular guy, and he was followed by a not-very-spectacular guy who was a political appointee of the Nixon administration, who was a businessman from California named Phillip Sanchez, who I never had any problem with. But after having somebody like Vaky, the Colombians found this not-very-interesting, not-very-bright, not-very-well-educated Hispanic American to be not their cup of tea.

When he got ready to leave, I suppose after two or three years, they were going to name another – it was quite interesting – they were going to name a similar kind of person. Actually, I think it was somebody who would have been very good. It was Amanio Baesa, who is a Cuban American who is quite intellectual and Harvard educated and so on, but the Colombians wouldn't give him agrément because they were so sure they were getting sort of once again handed this piece of political baggage. And so the State Department came back at them with, "Okay, you won't give agrément, but we won't totally give into you, so we'll name a career person, but it will be somebody of Hispanic origin." So they named Diego Asencio, who to this day is also one of my friends and serves on the board of directors of the Cuban Policy Foundation.

Q: Of course, Diego, unlike most, is Spanish born.

COWAL: Is Spanish, absolutely. So the State Department thought it got what it wanted. It was able to name somebody whose last name ended in a vowel, and the Colombians thought they got what they wanted, because they got a career officer with good preparation and not some political hack from wherever he came from, so that was the compromise, and those were my three ambassadors.

Q: Were you there when Diego was kidnapped?

COWAL: I was in Israel by the time he was kidnapped, but it was very shortly thereafter. I think I left in August and it was November.

Q: How about the public affairs officers? Did they leave you alone?

COWAL: They were great, basically, great supporters. The first one was Bob Chatten. I don't know whether you've interviewed Bob. He was a terrific guy.

Q: Is he around here?

COWAL: Yes, he's in Arlington.

Q: How do you ...

COWAL: C-H-A-T-T-E-N. He would really be great to do an interview with. He's a very interesting guy, he's extremely articulate and had a career, some in Japan, mostly in Latin America, and a spectacular guy. So he was the first and he was the one who really – I came as his book officer and he decided that I could be a terrific person in this job, and he picked me for it and he was always very supportive. He was replaced by a guy named Don Gilmore, who just seemed to me to be kind of nothing, but didn't really get much in my way. He was replaced by a guy named Mike Kristula, who was again very supportive. So I had three ambassadors and three PAOs, and not too much of a problem, although I think sometimes I was probably a headache for them and they just were nice enough not to say it.

It would sometimes get a little out of hand. Things were going on faster than they could keep up with, and now I know, having been a senior manager, that nobody likes surprises, even if they turn out to be good. It was the jewel in their crown, so when Henry Kissinger came, I met him because he came to the center. After Carter was elected, one of the first things he did was he sent Rosalynn to Latin America. He couldn't go, so his wife came, and she came to Bogotá, and where did she come? She came to the center. Because it was just so refreshing for someone who thought that the whole continent was anti-American and that we had no influence and we had no way to work with these student groups who were perceived to be very against our policies.

Then you would come to the center and you would see all of these people who were not necessarily the rich elites. This was the striving middle class, and I think one of the things that Colombia managed to do in those years also was expand the middle class, and that's what didn't exist in Latin America. There were these huge extremes, and because they had a good economy and a reasonable social policy, they did better than most countries at achieving that. Our target market was not the kid whose parents would send him to Exeter, but the kid whose parents wanted him to be able to go to the University of Florida, or to be able to handle a curriculum in English, the middle class. That's pretty much the basis of most societies, so I think we did a pretty good job of reaching those.

Q: How did the Rosalynn Carter visit go?

COWAL: I think it was fine. I have some pictures of it, but I don't remember that much about it

except that the DCM was all flapping around.

Q: Who were your DCMs?

COWAL: Well, actually, I had some good DCMs, too. The first one was Bob White, who then became very spectacular because he was ambassador to El Salvador and got very upside the policy and currently is the chairman of something called the Center for International Policy in Washington, but again, I think a terrific guy. He was the first. The one who got all nervous, I think his name was Dexter, and I don't remember very much about him. So I guess I don't remember any of the other DCMs except Bob, who was great. All of our posts at that time were somehow small enough that even though you were a junior officer, the ambassador and DCM knew who you were.

Q: This was still in the mid '70s. How'd you find being in a macho society and all as a woman running a very big operation? Any problems there, either from the embassy side or the Colombian side?

COWAL: No, if there were problems, they were not very well known by me. My experience was always much more positive than negative, but if you were good and you were female, it was so much easier to stand out, because there weren't 10 of you who were all good and who all looked more or less alike. There were 11 of you who were good, but only one was a woman. So people would go away from that experience, meeting 11 of us who were equally bright, and they'd remember me.

I always thought that worked very much to my advantage. Those were still in the days where it was about one-tenth, I suppose, maybe a little bit more than that. But, certainly, I think about all those PAOs I mentioned were male, and all those ambassadors were male and all those DCMs were male. When I was there, one of the assistant cultural affairs officers was a woman, and that was about it, that I remember. So a male-dominated room ...

Q: Were you married at the time?

COWAL: I was married at the time, but my husband was living in the States, basically.

Q: How did that work out?

COWAL: Well, it eventually didn't work out very well at all, but through those years he would come and I would go and we felt ourselves lucky that I was no longer in India, which was a 24-hour trip away. Bogotá wasn't all that bad a trip. He was in New York, and then in Washington, and I was ...

Q: It does point out one of the problems of the Foreign Service, of finding suitable employment for both, and then there wasn't much effort to try to do anything about it, was it? That was your problem.

COWAL: There was none, really, and there was not even an effort to make the laws work better,

the local employment laws work in your favor. Somebody who came as a spouse came as a spouse, and that's what they were expected to do, is to be a spouse. I do remember one little incident, and I say this just reflecting the time, not really a reflection on Ambassador Vaky or his wife, whose name was Luanne, and who is also still alive. They were both lovely, lovely people, but the word went out shortly after I got there that Mrs. Vaky would like all the spouses and the female officers to call on her. She was very much a white glove type, and I refused. I said I meant no disrespect to Mrs. Vaky, and I thought it would be a lovely idea if she asked all officers and all spouses to call on her. However, she wanted to do it in groups or individually, but I didn't see why she only wanted the spouses and the female officers to call on her. I'm sure she was doing it as a gesture, to be nice, and I saw it as an attempt to say, "Well, we're all the same, except Sally will go call on Luanne." So Sally didn't call on Luanne, and I guess she understood that.

Q: It was part of this transition.

COWAL: It was.

Q: There were all sorts of little – I won't say slights, but nobody was really sure how to handle the damn thing.

COWAL: Right, and that comes up. We'll talk about that some other day, but it comes up later in my career, also. I never tried to be belligerent, but I always tried to say, I just don't understand why we're doing it this way.

Q: Well, they do it, since I'm trying to pick up the period and the time and the culture, because it is changing and has changed so much.

COWAL: I mean, can you imagine in this day and age a female officer getting the post and being told that she would call on the ambassador's wife when her male colleagues weren't asked. But I think the Vakys were on their second or third embassy. She had always done it, and it had always been nice, and the women had talked about running the servants and homes, which God knows, I needed some advice about, but I didn't want to get it in quite that way.

Q: Well, probably a good place to stop. You left there in '78, and in a way, I think it would be you were spoiled, weren't you, having run your own little – or big briar patch.

COWAL: After all, remember that I celebrated my 30th birthday there, so I was still very young.

Q: You'd be spoiled rotten. I'd hate to have you around.

COWAL: I was on top of the world, and of course, my boss, Bob Chatten, had gone on to become the head of Latin America for USIA, so he was offering me all kinds of wonderful jobs, PAO Bolivia or something, which was three steps up, and so on. This was when Kissinger was the Secretary of State, and Kissinger said, oh, no, every officer has to have at least two areas of expertise, and two languages, and two this, and two that. So we won't give you another assignment in Latin America. You've got to go somewhere else. That's how I came to go to

Israel.

Q: You were Glop'd.

COWAL: I was Glop'd, or whatever it was.

Q: Which is G-L-O-P-D, which is global outlook or something. Anyway, my understanding is that Kissinger went to a meeting of chiefs of mission in Latin America, in Mexico City, and found that some of them really didn't even know what NATO (North American Treaty Organization) was. I mean, I'm exaggerating, but he said, we've got to stir this culture around.

COWAL: Right, and to a certain extent, he was right, and it was one of the best things that ever happened to me. But, I must say, I sort of went kicking and screaming, because I had found my little oyster and my little niche. I was by then a four-plus in Spanish. I was extremely comfortable. I said after being in India as a first experience, being in Colombia or anyplace where you could buy Tampax and pantyhose in the grocery store had to count as civilized. So the studying of Spanish did everything for me that I wanted it to do. It was a language I could learn, I understood the culture, I spoke the language well, I identified with the people, I could buy Tampax and pantyhose and go to a concert and listen to a lecture and I was in my element and I didn't want to go anywhere else. So we'll leave it there.

PAUL GOOD
Director, Binational Center, USIS
Colombia (1974-1975)

Paul Good was born in Kentucky in 1939. After receiving his bachelor's degree at Cascade College he received his master's degree from Ball State. His career in USIA included positions in Thailand, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Nigeria, Australia, Yugoslavia, South Africa, Morocco, and Senegal. Mr. Good was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in August 2000.

Q: What was the situation like in Colombia when you were there?

GOOD: It was very nice. They didn't have a curfew. You could walk the streets at night and not worry about a mugging, didn't even think about it, very few people on the streets at night. I lived down next to the bullring in a high rise. They were two story apartments; I was on floors 27 and 28, looking to the mountain, which is to the east of the town. Elevation is somewhere around 8,000, 8,500 feet at that point, a wonderful climate, just magnificent climate.

It's a shame that things have gone downhill. But this was sort of in between the La Violencia of the '50s and the problems that started in the '80s. My father in law, now deceased, was a city counselor for forty years, a criminal lawyer and was very frustrated with the inability to move the administration of the government, that's of course the capital of the entire country, into modernizing. They had really done no infrastructure work. They didn't put any new roads in,

except the road to the airport on which our new embassy is sited, and none being over the mountains to the plains on the east side, no improvements to the roads to the coast. It's the kind of problem that if you think about trying to do a military exercise in Colombia you're in real trouble, because you can't move. Helicopters, okay, but even helicopters have trouble with the clouds and the mountains. They've got planes that have disappeared decades ago they've never found. If you want to see Colombia you've got to be on the ground. But you're not going to go fast on the ground.

Q: Who was the ambassador in there when you were there?

GOOD: Viron P. Vaky.

Q: Yes. V. Vaky.

GOOD: V. Vaky, bless his bureaucratic heart. He felt it necessary to sign every message, every memo, every document that went to the government and that included household effects customs orders. He just didn't know how to release and delegate. His deputy, Robert White was superb. Course, he fell into problems later with the Carter administration in Central America. But he was a real pro. Our PAO, Bob Chatten, was probably the best PAO I've had, arguably one of the two best that I've had.

Q: The situation there, what sort of government did they have?

GOOD: This was still under the alternating system that they'd set up after the La Violencia, where they'd go liberal, conservative, liberal, conservative every four years.

Q: Reds, blues sort of thing?

GOOD: Yes. It was agreed to, like Lebanon went for quite some time. So you really didn't have anything more than a discussion as to who was going to get the nomination for the next party in. It was not progressive looking. They really didn't think to the future very far. My father-in-law was convinced that the only answer was a strong military, but that the military was not capable of making that kind of move. There are some excellent officers, but like so much of Latin America, the military comes from the working class, middle class at best and consequently doesn't have the standing in the class structure that you've got in Latin America.

Q: And also the technical knowledge and all.

GOOD: They weren't trained.

Q: I've seen this assault in Greece with the car bombs and they did a lousy job. They order something off the top of their heads and they don't put it through sort of the democratic processes, same one it's working on.

GOOD: Even if they did that, they weren't capable of judging whether they were getting the right thing. It's like the management of the INS (Immigration & Naturalization Service) today.

They're not trained in technology, and so they don't understand that they're making a mess of what Congress had delegated them to do.

Q: In the first place, how did you meet your wife?

GOOD: She walked in the door soon after I got there. I was there as the Bi-National Center director in Bogota. I had asked that I get a language tutor to beef up my Spanish. She had been a teacher there the year before and earlier when, she finished high school and had taken the bilingual secretarial course, because her father didn't believe that upper class children should go to the university. Boys, yes, her brother was a well-known surgeon in town. She was trying to fight that. She had gotten to the States for junior college here, and she had persuaded her father to let her go to the same university he'd gone to. But then of course, they had student riots, and the university closed down, so she'd gone off to Venezuela, spent a couple years at the Canadian embassy there and came back and was teaching English and Spanish at the Bi-National Center. Then she'd gotten into an accident, a car accident. Her fiancé had smashed head on, and she almost lost her leg and of course had been in the wrong section of town. They took her to the hospital where nobody knew her, in a lower class area. Fortunately somebody got the word to her brother, and he got over there in time to save her leg. She came in to teach me. She had just come back. She was still with a cane, didn't have crutches, but with a cane.

Q: Yes.

GOOD: We actually didn't do much language teaching study at that point, because no sooner had we gotten started than we fell in love and I didn't want her to be teaching me then at that point. So I did the unpardonable and hired her as my secretary, because I trusted her, and we were having trouble in the Center.

Give a little background. The person I had replaced as I mentioned earlier had been medically evacuated and ultimately lost the lower part of one of his legs. His predecessor, Ernie Aribé had hired an administrator to run the institution. Soon after he did that, he realized that he'd made a mistake. Now this was two years or so, maybe even three before I got there. He realized the guy was sleazy and corrupt, not the kind of person you wanted in this kind of institution. He tried to fire him, but Alvaro decided that he could fight that one easily, and he began to organize the staff as a union. That was not something the board wanted to touch. So Ernie had to back down and agree, "I will keep you on if you cancel the union organizational efforts." Fine.

My predecessor had a policy that he make no major change in the first year of his stay in any posting. He hadn't quite finished a year when he was evacuated, so he hadn't had a chance yet under his rules to do anything with Alvaro.

I had no background about this. I was brought up on a direct transfer, postponing home leave to take over because of the med evac (evacuation). On the way over, the CAO (cultural administrative officer), who was taking me said, "Oh, by the way, you are to get rid of Alvaro Bolívar." That was news to me. The next day I got a memorandum, "Found the PAO," it said, "You have 90 days to do it."

Well, obviously Alvaro decided he would take the same steps that he had taken earlier, and successfully under Ernie, and began to organize the union, which scared the board silly. It turned out that the board, which was half American and half Colombian with a Colombian chairman. The chairman had been handpicked and put in by Ambassador Vaky, one of the Colombian members, an attorney, was the chairman's personal attorney and business attorney.

Now I'm an attorney and I applied my American ethics to this situation. It turned out the guy was a labor lawyer. I found out also that he was, contrary to the rules of the board, on a retainer from Alvaro, another complication. So I wrote a letter to him, copies to the board, saying that I would appreciate it very much if he could provide me with his advice, since he was on a retainer from the center on what to do with this effort by Alvaro to organize a union. There was an explosion, because he lost face, obviously, and by his losing face, because they found out he was doing something that they didn't approve of, the chairman lost face. So immediately I had two enemies.

Q: Yes.

GOOD: Didn't make any difference to my job to get rid of Alvaro. I told Alvaro, first of all, to get an audit done. Audit was done and came back with the information that showed that he was a corrupt operator. I told him he had to go, so he went to the chairman, and the chairman went to the ambassador, and told the ambassador that I had lost the confidence of the board. That was his opinion. The board reversed that message by voting me their confidence.

The ambassador had been briefed by PAO at that point about what the problems were. At that point Bob was on home leave, so it didn't help; it was a month before he came back. In the end, they affected a compromise. The chairman said, "Okay, Alvaro goes." The Ambassador said, "Good goes."

The area director came down from Washington. Dorothy Dillon had served with Vaky in Guatemala some years before, and she thought that maybe she could persuade him to use some good sense. She failed, but her retaliation was to take the assistant cultural officer away who Vaky wanted to keep as his social secretary, if you will. She was a smooth operating Georgian lady. So he lost her, Bob lost me, and we both were sent up to the DR (Dominican Republic).

Q: Dominican Republic?

GOOD: Dominican Republic. Behind all of this there was another problem. Of course immediately upon the board finding out that the chairman had told the ambassador this, they called in a meeting and said, "We give our full endorsement to Paul" to just tell the chairman what they thought about him. Of course he voted along with them to agree, because he didn't want to lose face anymore at that point. He was the president of the local W.R. Grace Company Branch and also was with the Bank of Bogota. So he was a player in the community.

There was an interesting sidebar to the meeting in which they thought this out as to whether they'd accept the compromise that the Chatten had worked out with the chairman of the board. I asked if they'd mind if I taped the session, horrible idea in hindsight, and they said no. But half

way through the meeting, one of the Colombians on the board, not the lawyers, but an advertising executive, jumped up, snapped open the tape recorder, grabbed a tape, and pulled the tape all over the floor. I guess at that point he realized that this wasn't going to do him any good if it got out. None of this was going to get out; I just wanted to rib him.

But behind all this there was another problem. That was that when I came to the country I had told Bob that my wife and I had agreed on a divorce, but that we were waiting to go back to the States to finish it up. He knew that, but we didn't put it in the embassy rag. It probably would have been better if we had, because the perception then was that I had found this Colombian girl and was dumping the American girl, an obvious perception if they hadn't the background. So I was called over one day by the PAO, we were in separate parts of town of course, and he said, "The ambassador wants to know if you're sleeping with her, the Colombian girl or whether you're going to get married."

I said, "We plan to get married."

"Oh," he said. "Then you've got to get out of the country. This is a totally separate issue to the problem at the center itself."

The reason why he said that was his wife was worried that he would get ideas and dump her.

Q: Mrs. Vaky?

GOOD: Mrs. Vaky, who was a good friend to the wife of one of the American members, the finance officer man with the local Chrysler plant, who was also worried that her husband would get these ideas. They wanted to get this example out of the country so that it wouldn't be leaping up at them. Confirmation of this theory as being true came after I left when he bounced the JOT out, who was single, but got involved with local lady.

Q: JOT is Junior?

GOOD: Junior Officer Trainee.

Q: Junior Officer of Trainees.

GOOD: He was not junior by any means. He had been a prisoner of war in Vietnam, and he was a native born American, but born in Peru and raised down there as a youngster so his Spanish was native! He's currently come back from retirement to handle the exec job in Lagos, very nice fellow. But he was kicked out because he had no clout to it. The ambassador tried to kick out the AID director. Now he lost on that one, both because the AID director had enough clout and because the AID director was officially separated, his wife wasn't in country, and his girlfriend was Brazilian and only came over on occasion. So the ambassador didn't have quite as much of an argument against him. In any event, come November, I was on my way. But I left a record because I raised \$125,000, set up the expansion plans with that money for the expansion of the building. We had a center branch in the north part of town. We had 5,000 students. We had a...

Q: Could you explain what a Bi-National Center in Colombia at that time did?

GOOD: Colombia had a very active operation that we had set up back in the '50s where we incorporated locally in a number of communities in the country, an institution whose aim was to provide English language training, access to American cultural presentations, and a library for research. In the Bogota operation we also had a printing plant and an art gallery. We were used as a convenience by the embassy as well, to do things which the embassy regulations would not allow them to do, like we could handle liquor, buy it with the money. They would grant us a sum of money to handle the program for them, and then we could use that money in ways that they couldn't. This was common throughout Latin America where we had these Centers. It was set up with a local citizen as chairman and then equal number of other board members, half of the, in our case, Colombian, and half American. The Americans were, if possible, members of the local community, Americans who might have married a Colombian or at least were on assignment to a Colombian company, American-Colombian branch of an American company. On occasion in some countries, you also had perhaps a member from the embassy. Usually the PAO was ex officio on a board. It raised its own money, although it got quite a bit of support from the embassy. My salary was paid by the embassy, of course. The librarian's salary was paid by the embassy. We provided the books for the library. We brought the printing plant in for the press. We supplied most of the machinery. In other ways, the car for the operation was a castoff from the USIS fleet at the embassy. As a castoff, I can remember one day I tried to shift, and the whole gearshift came off in my hand. It was old. But that was background support. Probably without that the Center wouldn't have made it.

We had a reasonably good relationship in Colombia at that time in that they, well, the board on the Colombian side was interested in self-promotion in the community, unpaid jobs of course. The embassy was looking for pushing the American agenda. Sometimes those conflicted because we weren't after just a show and publicity for the Colombian interests; we were interested in the American. I wouldn't take that kind of a job again, because there was a conflict of interests for the director as well.

But we ran a good operation. We had other Centers as well when I arrived. We still had local hire directors in a couple places like Cartagena on the coast, and we had an American down in Medellin and in Cali. There were a couple of reading rooms left, but mostly they were closing down. In general in South America now, I don't know of any operations which are remaining. We separated our interests finally from this operation. Some of them continued as in Mexico City and Buenos Aires, locally run by the city government cultural center. We had turned around to set up an information center separately and ran our programs through that, because we found ultimately that the conflict of interest was too great. While you could run it fine for a couple of years, down the line, it would turn bad, turn sour, and you'd get locally bad feelings which countered any of the benefits that you were coming up with.

We had problems in some places with corruption on the American side as well. It wasn't just the host nationals that gave us problems. After I left, they did a study and found that one of the Americans in the community who had been Peace Corps in Malaysia, an architect, had been in connivance and got some juicy contracts without competition, and there was money being bled out. Of course, they didn't do anything about it in Washington. They got the information, but

they decided that it wasn't in our best interest to flag it at that point.

I had a good staff; still have some contact with them. The Webmaster at the embassy is our former librarian, still hanging on. Most of the others left, retired, and so forth. But we did a good job, and there was a lot of interest in the community in English, obviously with 5,000 students, because there was-

Q: Yes, where were the students? Was it mainly a business orientation that they were doing then?

GOOD: They wanted it to improve their chances of getting better jobs in their businesses. Yes, they were mostly business people, young people in the main. They knew that business with the States was the way things were going. That's where the money was, and if they had the English, then their company could use them, and they'd step up. They worked hard. We had a good set of teachers. Some were Americans who were passing through and decided to stay for a while and teach. Others had really moved into the country some time back, maybe married a Colombian and decided to settle in Bogota, all kinds of reasons behind why they were there. One of my curriculum supervisors then joined the USIA a couple of years later, and I saw her next in South Africa. She came out as the branch officer for Cape Town.

Q: Yes.

GOOD: She's since retired, but she had purchased an apartment next to my apartment building, I suspect she still has it. As I said the other day, we didn't have that much contact with the embassy because we were far away, a couple miles, and with the traffic as it was, I got over there for staff meetings usually, but I didn't have much else to do with it.

ROBERT W. DREXLER
Deputy Chief of Mission
Bogota (1975-78)

Robert Drexler was born and raised in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He received his Bachelor's degree from Harvard University before entering the Foreign Service in 1957. In addition to Colombia, he was posted to Malaysia, Hong Kong, and Geneva. Mr. Drexler was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1996.

Q: Today is the 19th of March, 1996. Bob, we're off to Colombia. First of all, what did the Drug Enforcement Agency, which was relatively new at this period say to you. It wasn't the powerhouse it now is.

DREXLER: Yes it was. They showed much more interest in my assignment to Bogota than the ARA bureau did. So I for the first time realized that drug enforcement might be an important part of my job. But even with the DEA briefing, I didn't think it was going to be the major concern. And when I arrived in Bogota, it was not in fact a major concern of the Ambassador.

Q: By the way, had the desk said anything about drugs?

DREXLER: No, I did not really talk to them about that. I was also sobered by a briefing by Security, who told me about the security risks in Bogota, which I hadn't known about since I'd come from Geneva, and that I couldn't drive my own car; that I would have bodyguards 24 hours a day, and wherever I went that my house was under special protection, and so it was. I had an armored car, a policeman with a submachine gun in the front seat, and when I was in charge there was a follow-up car with four more bodyguards behind. When I got to Bogota I was issued a riot gun, which was an automatic sawed-off shotgun, and a .38 caliber pistol. All of this was laid out for me by SY, which also had a sobering effect. When I got to Bogota, I was welcomed by the Ambassador at the airport. I'm surprised that he chose me, although he probably had to take someone from outside of ARA under the GLOP program. I did not know him, nor he me. He was Viron "Pete" Vaky, an outstanding diplomat. I replaced Robert White, who went on to become ambassador to Paraguay and El Salvador, and a very outspoken liberal minded expert on Latin America. He has a very strong personality, and I was told that Ambassador Vaky was looking for a DCM with a less strong personality, sort of vanilla flavored DCM, and I guess I filled that prescription. But anyway, he welcomed me and my wife, and we developed a very good working relationship, and I had and have great respect for him. At that time, the embassy was mostly concerned with trade and aid issues. There are always trade problems, having to do with quotas, and reduction of duties, and so on. In the case of aid, we had a very large AID mission because Colombia had been one of the pilot countries for the Alliance for Progress in the 1960s. The Colombians loved planning, and that sort of thing, and they had experienced a number of different US AID mission strategies for development. At the time I arrived, the AID mission was very large. In fact, it occupied the whole former embassy, from which we moved out when the new chancery was built. The Embassy was also concerned with crime problems -- kidnapping in particular, because the American citizen vice-president of Sears was being held by kidnappers when I arrived. This was a common Colombian crime. I myself narrowly escaped them a couple of years later. I found the DEA mission in the basement, in a crowded office which had formerly been the senior officers' dining room, off the cafeteria. It was headed by a Cuban-American, and he had about four other officers, and their job was to train the Colombians in controlling narcotics traffickers. They themselves could not engage, of course, in any police-type missions, or enforcement or interdiction operations, and they had a small budget and were making small progress in training the Colombians. But this was not one of our major concerns at that time. Shortly after I arrived, I went with the Ambassador to present the AID mission's grand new aid plan for the coming year or the coming years, to the Minister of Finance. He shocked us by saying, in effect, thank you, we don't want your AID mission anymore. We appreciate it but you can close your shop and go home. The Ambassador was totally surprised by this...

Q: I'm surprised there hadn't been emanations or something.

DREXLER: That's right. It shows how out of touch our AID people were. They were shocked, and AID in Washington was offended that the Colombians would do such a thing. The Colombians said that they felt that they could go it on their own; they had their own plans, they were grateful for what we had done for them over the past 12 years or so.

About six months after I arrived, Ambassador Vaky was transferred to Caracas and replaced by Phillip Sanchez, a Republican political appointee who had been Ambassador in Tegucigalpa. On arrival Sanchez told us he wanted me to manage the Embassy's operations while he devoted himself to "policy matters." In practice, he did virtually nothing. I later learned from our Regional Security Officer that they had some concerns about Ambassador Sanchez from his previous tour in Honduras, but they never alerted me to this until it was too late. We could have coasted along that way. As I said, the White House didn't mind whether Sanchez did anything or not, the Bureau didn't mind, the staff was not very happy, but we were all doing the best we could. But then the drug problem arose, and this made the arrangement with such an Ambassador intolerable, and very damaging.

I should explain that the drug cartels, as we came to know them, were formed at this time. The mid-1970s were the formative time. Before that time, marijuana had been the main drug industry. About 70% of all the marijuana coming to the United States came from Colombia, the northern part. But then, the market switched to cocaine. The two Colombian entrepreneurs were Carlos Lehder and Fabio Ochoa who made common cause with the Medellin underworld. There had always been a highly developed underworld in these big cities, counterfeiters, kidnappers, and so on. And they began to form the infamous Medellin Cartel, to get a monopoly over the supply side. We saw that this was happening; DEA saw that this was happening, and tried to encourage the Colombian police to crack down on them, but it was impossible for me to go to the Colombian president, or to deal with Cabinet ministers. In the first place, Bogota was highly protocol conscious, very snobbish, and this was something, quite properly of course, for the Chief of Mission to do. And, in fact, it would have been regarded as a slighting if someone less than the Chief of Mission tried to go off to see a person of higher rank. But Sanchez had not developed any rapport with the president nor his top officials. So we did not have that high-level access that we needed to give orders to the Colombian police to alert them to the problem and to begin to take cooperative measures with us. Even if Vaky had still been there, it would have been tough, because as I said, President Lopez's mindset was against getting together with us on a new aid venture. More basically he felt, with reason, that this was an American problem in its origin. That you should curb it on the demand side, and any help he was going to give us was going to be a special favor, and if we wanted help, we would have to pay for it, provide the means and all of the equipment. So we tried to get this, but it was very tough, and such programs as we had going made some progress, but not much. Meanwhile, this very large operation that I had been briefed on in Washington by DEA, was initiated and was a colossal flop, because the drug traffickers had already penetrated the Peruvian, Bolivian, Ecuadoran, and Colombian law enforcement agencies involved. And it was easy to do, since so many countries and people were taking part. So this had failed. We tried to warn the Colombians that this drug trafficking would pose a danger to them too, and we got USIA to make a film which was designed to show how they might become consumers of cocaine, just as Americans were. We misjudged the threat to Colombia. That is, we thought that it was going to be a spread of addiction, when instead it was the spread of corruption in the country. The film was shown, but it didn't do much good, and we weren't doing much good.

I should say also that the State Department then began to give more attention to the narcotics problem, and for the first time named a Special Assistant to the Secretary for Narcotics Coordination, Sheldon Vance, the Ambassador who passed away recently. He was behind the

first efforts we made to organize our selves better to fight narcotics. A mid-career Foreign Service officer was named to be the Narcotics Coordinator at our Bogota Embassy. He reported to me, as did the DEA people. And we tried to work out a anti-narcotics country plan, and concert our efforts, and then work with the Colombians. The DEA people were restive under this arrangement. They didn't like to be supervised by Foreign Service officers, but we more or less saw eye to eye on the Colombian problem. They didn't like the money being in State Department hands, although there weren't major differences over its use, but rather there was never enough of it. And the DEA people were sometimes anxious themselves to get into some of the enforcement operations; they couldn't resist going after some of these guys when they saw what they were up to, since it was aimed at American markets, and the Colombians weren't doing much to stop the trafficking. So I had tensions with the Special DEA Agent in charge over this to be sure that he and his agents kept back and did not get caught up in gun fights or missions in Colombia, which were really against the law. And I had an argument with the Special Agent one morning on this. That afternoon, my wife who was at home, heard screams from an anguished and terrified woman coming over the security radio network that linked all of our Embassy houses and offices. And this woman said that she was trapped and had locked herself in the closet in the DEA office and that a killer was rampaging through the place and was after her. My wife, of course, was appalled to hear this and she got me on the phone and we all listened, and the trapped woman didn't know whether to shout or to keep her voice down. She said, "Oh my God, he's trying the door, he's coming..." and so on. We learned that there had been shooting at the DEA office, which by then had moved across the street from the embassy, in office space in a commercial building. We asked that Colombian police be sent, but they refused to go, because they said it was diplomatic property. The Marines went over, and took the elevator to the top floor where DEA was located. The Gunnery Sergeant stepped off and was confronted by a man who had an automatic pistol aimed at him and said, "Get out of here, my quarrel is not with you." So the Gunnery Sergeant retreated, brought more Marines over, and they came up the stairways and the fellow with the gun realized that he was trapped, and he put his pistol in his mouth and killed himself. By that time he had murdered Octavio Gonzalez, the Special Agent in charge, which was a terrible shock to us all. We finally got the Colombian police to come after it was all over, but it took some time to recover from this.

Q: What was the genesis of this?

DREXLER: We never knew. The assassin was an American. We think that he was an informant, probably, that DEA had probably found him no longer useful or undependable, and that led to a dispute between the two, at a time when the Special Agent was alone in his office. Having moved to this new building, they had less than adequate security arrangements, not even metal detectors at the door at that time. They probably had a quarrel, Octavio was murdered, and then, as I said, the fellow then killed himself. It is possible that the assassin didn't mean to survive, because we found in his hotel room, that he had piled all his clothes up neatly, and left a farewell note to his father. Typical of the situation I faced, that very night Ambassador Sanchez was due to leave for Barranquilla to reopen the Consulate formally. It had been closed just before I got there, it was my original post in the Foreign Service, of course, and then we had to open it at great expense again because it was needed, especially in the drug war. But Ambassador Sanchez wanted to stay in Bogota to console Gonzalez's widow, who was distraught. And among my many concerns then was to get Ambassador Sanchez out of Bogota and up to Barranquilla, not

only because he had an important function to perform there to open the Consulate, but I wanted him off my hands and out of the way while I dealt with this killing. So I finally persuaded him to leave and was able to attend to the matter without detracting from Sanchez. So this was an example of how I was obliged to operate with such an Ambassador. Interestingly, the Colombians never sent any condolence message, not a wreath, not an expression of interest even, in Gonzalez's assassination. Only some months later, when we had an altercation with the Colombian President over a kidnapped Peace Corps volunteer, did the President send us a message, in which he pointed out that the killer of Gonzalez was an American, which, he thought just went to show that drug trafficking was an American problem. So that's how the situation dragged on. We were not able to really work out any good cooperation with the Colombians while Sanchez was there. The Ambassador was, of course, concerned as he saw the drug problem growing. He was shocked, of course, by the killing of the DEA agent. But he did not involve himself directly in our efforts to change the situation. His status and standing in the community fell continually, and I became rather distressed by this situation.

The Ambassador began to act strangely. He told me that he wanted to fire the butler at his Residence, who had almost a quarter century of loyal service, because he suspected that the butler was taking kickbacks from suppliers. It would have surprised me only if he hadn't been doing this, because, well, it was one of those local practices, but he was an expert person, and the Vakys had thought highly of him. I said to Sanchez, well, of course if you want to fire him we'll have to let him go. But without telling the Ambassador, I kept the man on the payroll by bringing him into the General Services section and finding a little job for him so that he didn't lose his pension or have his heart broken. I offered then to go to the employment services to find a replacement, and the Ambassador said that he had found one already. It was the head gardener, a personable young man, whom he promoted to be butler at the Residence. We were astonished by this, and it was not only surprising in an ordinary sense, but even in the Colombian social sense.

To put a man who was a gardener over the staff of an Ambassadorial Residence created, even within the working class of Colombians, all sorts of problems of status. Nonetheless, the Ambassador went ahead with this. The boy was bright, and he tried hard, but of course he wasn't a butler. It perhaps didn't matter too much, since the Ambassador did not give any formal entertainment, but before long, the Ambassador had changed the whole staff there at the embassy. I, of course, did not involve myself in this, I had too many other things on my mind, and I didn't pay careful enough attention to it, nor draw the proper conclusions. Anyway, the Ambassador also was a night owl. He used to go out in the evening and come back and tell me about his dealings with the 'pueblo,' as he called it, with the common people. As I remember, he told me he would put on a ruana, a sort of blanket-like garment that the Colombians wear, like a poncho, with a hole in the center. And it's perfect for the cold Andean climate. And he would go out to places and mix with the people, sort of in disguise. I mentioned that this was a very dangerous city, and he of course had bodyguards, but I learned later that he sometimes left them behind when he went out at night. And on one occasion when his wife was sick and at home, I tried to reach him on the radio. She was bleeding from an operation. And we couldn't get through to his follow-up car, which was supposed to maintain constant radio communication. I reprimanded our security officer for this, and found out only after the Ambassador left that he had ordered that the radio contact be broken off by his bodyguards, so that his movements could not be monitored at the Embassy. I later found that he went to places where an American

ambassador had never been seen before, and where he shouldn't have been seen. And they were probably places that were under police surveillance. And it is possible that information and intelligence about his nighttime activities were brought to the attention of the President.

Q: Are we talking about bordello type things?

DREXLER: Well, I can't go into details, really. Certainly the Ambassador didn't break any law, and he may even have run into other high-level government officials at some of the places he frequented. But the point was that he further diminished his stature in the eyes of the Colombian government, just by acting imprudently.

Now, at this time, the major foreign policy interest of the Carter Administration in Latin America was not drugs, but the Panama Canal reversion. We were acting rather paradoxically, since we had taken Panama away from Colombia to build the Canal, and we now turned to the Colombians to persuade the Panamanians, whom they looked at as their little brothers, to be reasonable and accept reversion of the Canal under President Carter's terms. And President Lopez was in fact helpful in this regard. The Canal was important to Colombia, because it links their ports in the Caribbean, in Cartagena, with a port in the Pacific, and they told me privately that they would have loved to have us keep the Canal, because they weren't sure the Panamanians could manage it, but that of course they had to support Latin American solidarity. And Lopez was helpful. But Washington never told us how the negotiations were going on. We knew that they communicated directly and privately with Lopez. For me that meant I had to be careful. We could not rile the President or pressure him on narcotics, and risk jeopardizing the Panama Canal treaty negotiation. So that was the situation.

Q: Excuse me, Sanchez was there when Carter came in?

DREXLER: Yes. He stayed on after Carter was elected, because he thought that even though he was a Republican, that Carter would keep him on because he was a Latin. He finally had to be ordered out of Bogota, in a peremptory cable from the State Department that told him to leave within 10 days. During the negotiations, Ambassadors Linowitz and Bunker came to Bogota to consult with the President on the negotiations. They were to be there for one night and I assumed that Ambassador Sanchez would entertain them, but he told me that he had tickets for a skating show, something like the Ice Capades, and he was going off to see it, and wanted me instead give the dinner for Bunker and Linowitz, which of course I did. Bunker and Linowitz were of course great gentlemen statesmen, and didn't seem to mind so much, and we had a very interesting dinner. They went off then for their meeting with the President. Shortly before it, about the time they arrived, a cable came from Washington with instructions for Ambassador Sanchez. The Ambassador was, of course, invited to the luncheon that the President of Colombia gave for Linowitz and Bunker, and he accepted. But he was told by Washington that about 15 minutes before the apparent end of the luncheon he was to excuse himself and leave the premises, so that Linowitz and Bunker could speak privately, with Lopez. I was astonished by such an instruction. And Sanchez, even with his lack of familiarity with diplomatic and State Department procedure, even he thought it was humiliating. It was done that way as instructed. And then a few weeks later, or perhaps it was a month or so, the Ambassador was ordered to leave. A day or so after he left, a message came in marked from the Secretary for me, which said that I should know that

during this fifteen minutes, Ambassadors Linowitz and Bunker conveyed the Secretary's personal apologies to President Lopez, for the embassy's mistake and overzealousness in pressing the Colombian president to take more action to free an American Peace Corps volunteer who was being held by guerrillas.

And the President of Colombia accepted these apologies. And so you see, from Lopez's point of view, he saw that for the sake of the Panama Canal negotiations, the Administration was willing to disavow its ambassador and the embassy, even though I think our position was a sound one and the representations we made on the kidnapping case were on instruction. So I think Lopez felt that 'I can handle the Americans this way on the strength of their needing me for the treaty negotiations; they're not going to be so much trouble on narcotics either.' And indeed, he continued to brush us off. There was a constant stream of visitors to Colombia: Senators, Congressmen, bureaucrats, and so on. He handled them all very deftly. His command of English was flawless, he had gone to St. Alban's School in Washington, of course. He was very debonair, sure of himself, and of course firm in this idea that it's your problem, you should solve it from the demand side. So he was able to sort of sail through. Meanwhile, while we could not get our act together, the Medellín Cartel did get its own act together. The Cartel began acquiring sophisticated equipment, planes, telecommunications, money, organization, and made better use of Colombian officials for their purposes than we could for ours. And so that as we got into 1977, they were well advanced in the cartelization of the supply side, and we were way behind in even recognizing, to say nothing of meeting the problem. Then, of course, the Carter Administration came in, and Sanchez was ordered out. It was clear by that time, even in the ARA Bureau, that Sanchez had been a disaster. And I learned from Frank Devine, the office director, that they advised the new administration, to by all means send in a career diplomat, someone who knew Spanish, and someone who could deal with the President, not another Sanchez. Instead, they nominated I think his name was Pedro Cabranes, a Puerto Rican American, a former member of new Secretary of State Vance's law firm, and a golfing partner of his, which was just the worst sort of move. This was to Lopez another slap in the face, even though Mr. Cabranes was a Yale graduate and was I think Counsel of Yale University. He was no Sanchez at all, in intellect, or personality, or professional abilities. But he looked the same. Mr. Cabranes's first move was to curtail my assignment, even before we had asked for agreement for him from the Colombian Government, and to designate a young man he knew who was then at our embassy in Amman, Jordan, as the new DCM. This came as a considerable blow to me, because of the burdens I had least fancied I'd been bearing under Mr. Sanchez and the stress of the Bogota assignment, but what could you do? Then came the time to seek the agreement, and we held it off until the new Assistant Secretary of State, Terry Todman, was paying a flying visit to the region -- one night in Bogota, and we decided that he would present the note, asking agreement. He saw the President in the morning, and Lopez didn't say very much. Todman later said to me, "Well, it looks pretty good," although I think Mr. Todman should have realized since there was ample information that this was probably not going to be a good move, but we went ahead with it. That afternoon we saw the Foreign Minister, and he said that they were thinking of denying the agreement, causing a major political crisis. Todman was absolutely shocked, and flash cables went back in the agreement channel, that for the first time in the history of bilateral relations, the Colombians would refuse an Ambassadorial nominee, and of all things, from the new Carter Administration, which was pro-Latin American in its orientation, and its sympathies. Carter spoke Spanish, after all, right?

So we were in a fix, and I didn't know exactly what my status was going to be. My replacement had meanwhile departed his post in Amman, and Mr. Cabranes's wife's parents arrived in Bogota, and asked to be shown the embassy residence, which we did, but not telling them, of course, what was amiss. The Carter Administration was shocked, and meanwhile had planned a tour of Latin America by Mrs. Carter, and she was coming to Bogota. It delighted us and displeased Lopez, who felt that sending a woman was inappropriate -- President Carter should have come himself. So President Lopez was again offended and thought that Mrs. Carter was going to be a frivolous person. We had great difficulty with the Presidential Palace in working out the arrangements, which they sort of wanted to be Ladies' Night, Ladies' Day, Ladies' Luncheon, Ladies' Teas, and so on. And the Palace only grudgingly agreed to a short meeting with the President. So we had the ambassadorial problem and Mrs. Carter's arrival, and the President's state of mind, and the drug problem. So the fat was in the fire. Great pressure was put on the Colombian government to accept Mr. Cabranes, and one of the leaders behind this was one of Cabranes's fellow Puerto Ricans, the Mayor of Miami, Morris Ferre, who on his own, tried through his own business connections to put pressure on the Colombians. And I was on one occasion summoned urgently to the Foreign Ministry and the Foreign Minister complained to me that Mr. Ferre had said that if they didn't accept Cabranes, Mrs. Carter would not come. And the Foreign Minister said that he thought that this was intolerable. And I said that I couldn't believe that Mr. Ferre was speaking for the government, nor that there would be any such linkage, and I would report this immediately, which I did. And I got a message back from the Secretary, saying "Tell the Foreign Minister that Mr. Ferre is acting on his own. The Secretary confirmed that Mrs. Carter will come in any case." And so she did. The Cabranes imbroglio was a serious and sensitive political problem for the Administration. On one occasion I was talking to our desk officer on the phone -- this was the one officer in the Department who spent his whole day working on Colombia, rather than part Venezuela, a capable and serious young man. He told me that he was going to go off to see the Colombian ambassador on some matter, and it was clear to me from what he said that he didn't realize that Cabranes might not get the agreement, and so I felt he would either make a fool of himself personally, or make the Colombian Ambassador think that we were in total confusion. So, trying to double talk, I signaled to him that there was a problem. But he had not been told about this before. And he then went to see his superiors, including Deputy Assistant Secretary Bill Luers, who got me on the phone and reprimanded me for having told the desk officer about this. Thereafter, as my punishment, the Department kept me totally in the dark about the efforts to get the Colombians to accept Cabranes. I learned at a luncheon with some Colombians, for example, that they were planning to send Ambassador Vaky from Caracas, to see his old friend President Lopez, to try and make him change his mind. The Department did not tell me anything about this. I reported it matter of factly, and I didn't complain. Several months dragged by. We're talking now about the middle of 1977. And meanwhile Mrs. Carter came, but just to continue the Cabranes thing, one day the Foreign Minister called me on the phone, and told me with delight that Cabranes was not coming. Washington had not bothered to tell me this, and in fact never did. And it turned out that the Colombians had grudgingly granted agreement, but by then Cabranes felt that he was not welcome, and he didn't want to go. So he didn't come to Bogota, and the poor fellow he selected as DCM, I don't know whatever happened to his effects on board ship from Jordan to Cartagena, but I stayed on as DCM. And the White House was miffed, and took its time to name a replacement to Cabranes. The Colombians made it known that they would really like a career

man, and preferably not a Hispanic, and the Department was not about to cave in. As a result, I found myself as Chargé d'affaires for about 10 months of 1977, which was again, a formative period for the drug cartels.

Mrs. Carter came, and the visit was quite successful. I found her totally charming and a very intelligent person, with most winning ways. To spend five minutes with her was as if I had known her for 20 years. Undemanding, but very professional, serious minded, articulate. She turned her brief visit with the President to the greatest possible advantage. I think she charmed him, and I think he realized he had made a mistake in not taking her seriously. So that visit was a plus when she came she stayed at the Ambassadorial residence, which was vacant of course, and was to be for some time. I met privately with her before we were to go see the President, and she told me that she had orders, instructions from her husband, President Carter, to take a very hard line with Colombia. I should explain that in our efforts to get some equipment for the Colombians and activate their drug interdiction programs, we'd gotten \$3 million to buy them three helicopters and some related equipment. And it took a long, long time to get it delivered. And of course Lopez would always throw this delay in our faces, saying, "You say you want us to help, but you're not giving us the equipment. You're not fulfilling your promises. Where are the helicopters?" So I thought, well, Mrs. Carter was coming and we could formalize the helicopter arrangements, but she had orders from President Carter to tell Lopez that there would be no helicopters. She was to say also that there would be no further assistance of any kind unless Lopez dealt with the official corruption that the embassy had reported was spreading throughout his government. I was horrified, and I argued with her. I said, "There is corruption, it is growing, but it's going to be a long-term problem. We simply must have the helicopters because he will regard it as a broken promise. Any chance of getting the President's cooperation will be jeopardized if you take this line, and moreover, at the working level, the ordinary Colombians, that is, the Colonels and the police and so on, have been counting on this equipment, and they really need it. If we deny it, they will be demoralized and will not believe any further pledges that we make to them." So I pleaded with her to not follow her husband's instructions. And to my surprise, she agreed, and told me that she would not, after all, take this line. And she didn't. She met with the President, she touched on the subject of corruption lightly, and went on with confirming that the helicopters would come, as they did. I was of course pleased, though it was a close-run thing. Later I regretted this, and I think I made a mistake, that they were right all along in Washington, that they should have drawn the line then, that it would have been better to have a confrontation with Lopez at that point, because when the helicopters were delivered -- and I received them, I stood there getting sprinkled with holy water at a military airfield when they were turned over -- I was immediately invited on a joy ride with the Colombian Military high command, who it was clear to me thought that they were getting some wonderful new toys, and that they were likely going to divert these helicopters to their own pursuits, rather than have them used for drug interdiction. And I had a constant battle with the Colombians over the helicopter support facilities. They wanted us to provide not only the helicopters but all the support costs as well. And Ambassador Sheldon Vance would get on the phone and reprimand me for even considering this. He said this was unthinkable. And I said, "Well, Ambassador, you just don't understand it. The Colombians will just let those helicopters rust away, unless we provide what they want. We are at their mercy." And he grumbled, but we did this. We provided the additional support but it became clear to me that the helicopters weren't going to be effectively used.

Then, the CIA Station Chief came to me with a plan for CIA involvement in anti-narcotics work. And it involved an intelligence operation. There's no point in my giving the details about it, but he asked me to approve it, and said it had been approved by the 40 Committee, which was the sub-Cabinet level group that passed on clandestine operations abroad that were sensitive. And this was not to be made known to the DEA. So I approved it, and we started it. It was, in essence, a fine operation in which we used a very small number of trusted Colombian law enforcement officials, who we could monitor closely so as to ensure that they weren't being turned against us or corrupted, or that we would see it when they were; and in which we collected intelligence on the contacts between the drug traffickers and high-level Colombian officials. The idea was to pass this on in Washington. The program worked very well. The intelligence it gathered was horrifying, because it detailed the rapid spread of corruption. And of course, this depressed me all the more. Meanwhile, I got constant visitors, including members of the Congressional Special Committee on Narcotics, Congressman Gilman and Congressman Lester Wolf, who subjected me to almost a congressional type of investigation and interrogation in our conference room, putting a microphone before me, recording my remarks, and throwing questions at me which were designed to show that I and my staff were not doing enough to curb the flow of narcotics to the United States. And their final conclusion was that it was bad that the embassy was left in the hands of a Chargé d'Affaires. We should have an ambassador. Of course, I would agree with that, but we know why we didn't have one. The Congressmen came down frequently, and were a heavy burden, particularly for my wife, since their wives were inveterate shoppers. My wife and the other wives were almost exhausted by their demands. I had no doubt that Congressman Gilman was sincerely interested in narcotics. He was sympathetic and seemed to understand my problems and the difficulties we faced. Mr. Wolf, I always thought was grandstanding it, and was insensitive and demanding, and mostly liked to hear himself talk into the record.

Nonetheless, they went to see the President, and he brushed them off again, and so we drifted along. To make a long story short, finally a new ambassador was nominated. It was Diego Asencio, the DCM in Caracas. The State Department had agreed, in other words, to the Colombian demand that it be a career diplomat, but they would not accept that he should be non-Hispanic. But Diego, of course, met the bill, because he was Hispanic from Spain, he was not Mexican or Puerto Rican. So he came to Colombia. Of course he was a very capable professional, very bright, hard driving, and he sort of reestablished the relationship we had had with Lopez under Vaky. But by then it was too late. The corruption of the officials, the organization of the cartels had gone so far, that it could no longer be reversed. And as I say in the book I've written on this subject, I think that it was in late 1976 and 1977 that the balance of forces theoretically was still in favor of the law enforcement side. That is to say, if the United States and the Colombians could have effectively allied their law enforcement and judicial forces against the cartel at that time, we could probably have swamped them, or at least forced them to go someplace else; disrupted them at a time when they were very weak and disorganized, and still eliminating their own rivals. But by the end of 1977, the balance of forces, I think, was in their favor, and it couldn't be reversed. And it still hasn't been. Ambassador Asencio arrived with his own plan to fight the narcotics problem. He said to me, "I may not be able to stop the flow, but they won't be able to accuse me of not having tried." And he was right in both cases. He unveiled to me an ambitious plan involving more US government entities, Coast Guard, Customs, and so on. The plan also involved the Colombian military, which I was opposed to,

because I feared that they would be corrupted next. Asencio also thought he could work effectively with the new Colombian president, Turbay, about whom I had doubts. Ambassador Asencio, who was and still is a friend of mine, had no previous experience in Colombia, and didn't know what we had been up to. He didn't know, for example, that I had met privately with the Colombian President and Peter Benzinger, the DEA Administrator, who had come down secretly, and that we arranged a completely off the record, two-on-one meeting with the President, in which we turned over to him a list of officials of his government we believed had been corrupted. I didn't know if he would throw us out of his office or what he would do. But he looked at the list and said very gravely that this confirmed his worst suspicions, but he took no action. He never even asked me for further information on the officials, and none of these people, to my knowledge, were ever removed from office.

So I thought that Ambassador Asencio's plan was completely unrealistic. I prepared a dissent channel cable to this effect and took it into him. I said that I thought that this would not work, that the drug war couldn't be won in Colombia, that the decisive battles had to be fought in the States. We should have some programs going on in Colombia, like the small intelligence operation I just described to you and had started, but we should collect intelligence for the purpose of interdiction of these people in the United States, interdiction of their persons, and their funds, and so on, and just keep a small program going in Colombia. Asencio told me in the friendliest possible way that such a dissent telegram would ruin my career. Not that I would be fired, but I could say good-bye to any important assignment, because he said that in Washington the sentiment was so strong now, and so revved up behind anti-narcotics, that anyone who didn't share this view, and didn't have a can-do attitude, but had a defeatist attitude like mine, would be brushed aside and would be discredited. I should remind you that by that time, I had already lost the assignment to Peking as DCM because of my disagreement with the Carter Administration's policy on China. And so, of course, this was a sobering thought, that I would suffer further in this connection. I was coming to the end of my assignment in Colombia, and of course, never expected to be involved in narcotics again, but I agonized over this, and finally we thought of a way out. Asencio said, "We're going to have a team of inspectors coming, it's going to be a new policy inspection, not nuts and bolts. Rewrite your dissent telegram Bob, make it a memo, and give it to them," which I did. They were not much interested. They took the memo, and I never heard anything about it since.

I left Colombia, and I was glad to put it all behind me. I left in the summer of 1978. But then, years later, when I started writing the book, Colombia and the United States: Narcotics Trafficking and the Failure of Policy, I wrote to the Inspector General after I retired, and said that I would like to find out what happened to the memo, what the inspection report was, because I had left before it was published. The Inspector General, Mr. Funk, wrote back and said that there was no mention of meeting with me on narcotics in the inspection report, nor any notation that my memo, with the dissent, had been handed to them, or that anything had been done with it. A copy of it could not be found, the inspectors themselves had retired, and could not be contacted. But the Inspector General assured me that nothing like this could ever happen again. Then I learned that this Inspector General himself was doing an assessment of our worldwide narcotics program, and having his own doubts about what we were doing in Colombia. So I sent him the chapter of my book, which covers what I've just been talking about, in even greater detail, thinking he might find it useful. He did not thank me for it, nor even acknowledge its

receipt. So it was rather hard for me to remain convinced that the disregard of my first memo was not something which could happen again, because as far as I know, the second record that I gave him was also ignored.

There is one other thing I should mention, because it had some political significance going beyond Colombia and drugs. After Ambassador Sanchez left, a few days later, a Lieutenant Colonel, who was the Executive Officer of our Military Group, came to see me, and said that he had been contacted by a young Colombian who had worked at the Residence. This Colombian had previously worked for one of the many American officers in the Milgroup, and when the officer had been reassigned, he was out of a job, and they arranged for him to get employment at the Residence, with Ambassador Sanchez. As soon as Ambassador Sanchez left, the boy came to the Colonel and said that he wanted out. And he made certain accusations against the Ambassador. These were of such a nature that I had to call in the Regional Security Officer and the Security Office in Washington sent down a team of investigators, who conducted an investigation lasting many weeks, of many people in Bogota, including the entire Embassy Residence staff. As a result of this investigation, I fired the complete staff of the Residence, and sent back the butler, who I had kept on hold all that year, and told him to reorganize things and get everything ready for the new ambassador, which he did.

The report of the investigation, a very lengthy one which I saw, was shocking. And I asked that the Department bring it to the attention of Mr. Sanchez, who of course was then out of office. The Department declined to do this, saying that he was then a private citizen, and they could see no justification for it. I returned to Washington, and in 1980-81, I became the Director of the Office of Recruitment, Employment, and head of the Board of Examiners. And one day, an examiner came to me and with astonishment said that one of the applicants under the Junior Officer Affirmative Action Program turned out to be a former ambassador. And it was Mr. Sanchez. He had taken advantage of the affirmative action program as a minority member, and had taken the oral exam, which he passed, of course. And in the oral exam, the examiners do not know the background of any of the candidates. And it was only after he passed, and he was asked to submit documents, that they found on his curriculum vitae that he had been an ambassador. I asked who it was, and it was Sanchez. So I had to recuse myself from the handling of his case, and turned it over to the deputy office director. We brought this matter to the attention of SY, which contacted Mr. Sanchez on several occasions. He was then at his hometown in Fresno. Security said that they would like to send an agent out to talk to him about this, which I thought was only fair to him, to show him the reports of the investigation. He put them off, and put them off, until one day, many months later, he said he himself was coming to Washington, and would see them then. Shortly thereafter, I received a call from Diego Asencio, who by that time was Assistant Secretary for the Consular Bureau, who told me that Ambassador Sanchez had been nominated by the Reagan Administration, to the Cabinet. He was either going to be Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, or Housing and Urban Development. I think it was the former, but I don't remember. This horrified me, because I was sure that Mr. Sanchez was not qualified for a Cabinet level appointment, and it seemed to me that the Reagan Administration was not aware of his background. At that time my job also involved hiring all the people for the State Department's civil service and recruiting Secretary of State Haig's entourage. And I knew and was familiar with, and was under pressure myself to bring all these people on board before their background investigations were complete, for obvious reasons. The new Administration was

impatient, and if you delayed or took too much time you were suspected of not knowing who won the election. So I thought this had probably happened in the case of Mr. Sanchez, that his record had not been carefully reviewed but that his background would come out, and be an embarrassment to the President. I also had my personal feelings. So I contacted a friend of mine who was a high official in the Central Intelligence Agency, who got through to Mr. Casey, who by then was Director-designate of the CIA, and of course one of the top men in the Reagan campaign. Shortly thereafter, the wire services carried the report that Mr. Sanchez had withdrawn his name from consideration, saying that because of family reasons, he didn't want to come to Washington. So that was the sequel to the Sanchez affair.

He had earlier tried to come back to Colombia, when I was still the Chargé of the Embassy and I had a terrible argument with him on the phone, when I thought he was being manipulated by shady elements in Las Vegas, Nevada, although I don't think he knew who they were, and we couldn't be sure. He wanted to come back to Colombia to help an American who had nearly died in a plane crash, and had suffered terribly from burns. He called me from Las Vegas, from the offices of an air ambulance service, that was going to fly in and take this man back to the states. Such burn victims from small aircraft were almost invariably drug traffickers whose planes crashed in the mountains of Colombia. It was unthinkable that we should spirit such a person out of Colombia from a hospital. And unthinkable that a former American ambassador would come down and do this. And the ambassador assured me that he would come as a private person, and demanded that I issue a passport to him at the Bogota airport and facilitate this. And I flatly refused to do this, and said that we would not meet him or greet him, I would not issue him a passport, nor provide any assistance, and that I objected to his coming, that he should know that his performance in Bogota had been a subject of an investigation, and that the consequences of it had caused serious problems in our bilateral relations, even leading to the difficulty in the naming of his successor, and that he should not come back to Colombia under any circumstances, and that it was fatuous to think that he could come back and pose as a private person. Unknown to me, the president of the air ambulance company was also listening in on the phone, and was rather surprised by this conversation. The ambassador was also surprised, and said that he would formally complain about my conduct to the State Department, which I invited him to do, and which he did, but of course nothing came of it. Much of this could have been avoided if he had been informed promptly, as I had wanted, of the investigation, but he was not, and so we had those sequels. So I left Colombia.

Q: I'd like to go back to one thing, and that is, you mentioned a Peace Corps kidnapping. This is that we didn't want to get too aggressive because of the Panama Canal. I'm an old Consular hand, and my antenna go up, because there is always something why the embassy shouldn't do something about an American citizen in trouble, because there's a treaty, there's a negotiation, or something. Could you talk about this?

DREXLER: Yes. The Peace Corps volunteer was kidnapped by the FARC, Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, one of the most formidable communist guerrilla organizations. He was kidnapped from a site in a remote area of Colombia. Naturally, most Peace Corps people are in remote areas. He was held for ransom. We were prevented from negotiating with the terrorists, of course, but they had him send a message to me through intermediaries, which I then sent on to Washington, and to his mother, who arrived on the scene, and of course pressed us to take all

means to get her son out. She, like the families of other kidnapping victims, wanted us to negotiate with the FARC, which of course we could not do. I could not have anything to do with them, and this presented a certain problem, because we knew that he was not in perfect health, and that he needed vitamin supplements. But I could not send money to where he was being held, because this involved illegal forbidden contact with a terrorist group, nor could I spend embassy money to buy the vitamins for him. But on the other hand I couldn't let him die. So I informally arranged to buy his vitamins with our petty cash, and without any record and this helped him survive.

We were also dealing with the Colombian armed forces on this, and with the Colombian government. We wanted to be sure that they acted with care, because the Colombian police and army were famous for these scenes reminiscent of the movies, "Come out, we've got you surrounded," and they would have them surrounded, and they would find the dead bodies of the kidnap victims so often, that the relatives usually did not report kidnappings. So we had to be very careful that the Colombians handled this delicately, and didn't go too far. But we also felt that it was their responsibility to deal with the problem. They were responsible for the protection of American citizens, and it was up to them to take such steps to ultimately win his freedom, alive. It was this type of pressure that Lopez objected to and he felt that there wasn't anything that they could do, and that it was outrageous for us to insist that it was their responsibility to do something about the boy. And this is what produced the incident over which Linowitz and Bunker apologized.

Q: How did it come out?

DREXLER: Well, the boy was still held in captivity by the time I left, but finally through Jack Anderson, the mother got together, I believe, \$250,000.00 and the ransom was paid. The Colombian government was also opposed to paying ransom, but they turned a blind eye, and they allowed immediate relatives of the kidnap victim to deal directly with kidnappers. The mother, Mrs. Jenson, of course wanted to do anything to deal with the kidnappers, but she didn't speak Spanish. And so I had to try to get President Lopez's permission to allow her to deal with some Colombian as an intermediary, so that she could communicate with the people holding her son. We put this on the agenda when Lopez went to the White House for the signing of the Panama Canal Treaty. I escorted him to the White House for the meeting with Carter in the Cabinet Room. But President Carter forgot to raise the issue, and it was only when we were driving away from the White House that I said to the President, "You know, we have this kidnap victim, and I understand Mr. President, that you would be prepared to overlook immediate relatives dealing with the kidnappers. The thing is, the only relative in this case does not speak Spanish, and I would really like to know if you would object, or if there would be unfortunate consequences if Mrs. Jenson was in fact put in touch with intermediaries, because I didn't want this again to blow up in my face." And he turned to me and said -- he was annoyed, obviously -- but he said, "Well, what you are doing Mr. Drexler, is like finding yourself in the No Smoking car of the railroad train, and being obliged or compelled to light up, and you are trying now to ask the conductor whether it's okay to light up." So I said, "Very good, Mr. President, I think I understand you," and we dropped the matter. I reported this conversation then to my superiors, and said I took it to mean that the President did not wish to know about this; he did not wish to be asked, but it was most likely that he would not look into it any further, and that if he found out

about it, he would not make any trouble. And that's what she did. She went ahead, and she finally got her son out.

ROBERT S. PASTORINO
Commercial Attaché
Bogota (1977-1979)

Robert S. Pastorino was born in San Francisco in 1949. His career included positions in Caracas, Lisbon, Colombia, Nicaragua, Mexico, and Santo Domingo. Ambassador Pastorino was interviewed by David Fischer and Charles Stuart Kennedy in March 1998.

Q: Was Colombia in those days a backwater? Was it considered a good assignment or a mediocre assignment? Palaver

PASTORINO: In terms of Latin America, it was considered a good assignment, especially from the perspective of the Commercial Attaché because Colombia had a lot of money, it was a big economy, and they traditionally bought American goods and services. And, it was an interesting, large marketplace where the Commerce Department experimented with its commercial programs in order to develop new ways to help American business.

For instance, one of the programs I installed in Colombia was a major, large-scale market research program in which I utilized a large portion of the Commercial Section. Three professional Colombian market researchers worked full time on compiling reports on sectors of the economy where we thought exports from the U.S. were promising. The section completed three or four sectoral reports each quarter, sending them to Washington where they were disseminated to American business. So from the Commercial and career point of view it was a very good assignment. Some in the State Department thought it a bad assignment for me, having to report to Commerce, thus again getting off of the classic economic or political track which hopefully would lead to the top of the career ladder. From my point of view, it got me back to Latin America, I wanted to do economic or commercial work, and I gladly accepted it.

Q: What kind of place in Colombia in 1977? This is pre-drug days?

PASTORINO: Right. Drugs were there, but it was basically marijuana growing on the North coast, on the Guajira peninsula. There was very little cocaine, as I remember. Drugs were a problem in that they were exported to the US and it became a problem affecting relations between the two countries. Violence among the dopers and druggers was beginning. I remember Ambassador Diego Asencio putting a couple of locations in Northern Colombia off limits. We had to get special permission to go to Santa Marta and Barranquilla, for instance. I remember, he actually gave me permission, as Commercial Attaché, to go to those places because there was business to be done, whether it be helping Export-Import Bank collect loans from the Barranquilla City Government, or trade and investment interests,

especially offshore in the oil and gas fields. There was no problem at that time going to either Cali or Medellin. The drug cartels were only just beginning to form and were not the powers they are today, but I would be less than honest if I did not say that I could see the power coming to the narcos, just as I had seen it happen in Sinaloa.

Colombia was a violent place, although much less than today. Some of the violence, it's interesting to note, came from the *esmeralderos*, which were the emerald dealers controlling the mining and marketing of emeralds, of which Colombia was a major source. In fact, it still is.

The only precaution I took at that time, is that when I went to downtown Bogota, which I did often, I would only tell my American secretary, so only she knew where I was. The fewer people who knew, I felt was the safer procedure. In fact, once I had a real battle with a new, inexperienced security officer at the Embassy who heard I had gone downtown. She heard there was fighting and demanded my chauffeur bring me back. I was on the spot and saw no fighting and I knew she didn't either speak Spanish or know Bogota, so I refused to return to the Embassy. I think she put me on report with the Ambassador. Of course, nothing happened to me, and there were no problems in the area, which I never let the Security people forget. I thought my job mandated my being out in the street talking to Colombians. As for Cali and Medellin, I went frequently to host trade shows and exhibits and bring trade missions. I never had a problem.

From the political point of view, Colombia was just ending two decades of the long political arrangement in which the Liberal and Conservative Parties traded the Presidency and most other offices every four years. I think that at that time, 1977, during the administration of Belasario Betancourt, the Colombians had opened up the Congress, allowing the voters to choose the majority. The arrangement had been put into place twenty years before to end the tragic period of the *violencia* which had killed 200,000 in Colombia over more than ten years.

Of course, the Marxist guerrillas, the FARC and the ELN, were still in the mountains carrying out their rebellion, and proclaiming their people's republics. So, we shouldn't forget they have been fighting for forty or more years, bringing violence and chaos to parts of Colombia, and not ever winning much support. So, let's not begin to think of them as the "good guys;" they are a bunch of Marxist revolutionaries, long supported by Castro until he ran out of money.

Q: Let me ask you politically, because I never served in Latin America, but I always had the image in the 1970's of the U.S. calling the shots. To what degree was the Ambassador, you said Diego Asencio, was this guy the number three man in the country? What was the kind of political relationship we had with Colombia?

PASTORINO: Most people would have asked actually whether he was the number two man. In the case of Colombia, Asencio was important, but not numero dos. It was not a banana republic like some of the Central American and Caribbean countries. Because he was a strong Ambassador, he certainly made U.S. Government wishes known, but he did not call

the shots. One must never forget that in Latin America, many governments and leaders think they know what the US wants and they may follow that policy without any influence having to be brought to bear. Also, they may want the same things the US wants: peace, stability, and economic prosperity, because they see it as their own interest. Surprisingly to the apologists, they are not being forced into those policies.

On the other hand, in Colombia at that time the domestic political arrangement was fairly cut and dried. There was relative political peace. The US Ambassador did not have to dictate anything. The guerrilla movements had been pushed far back into the jungle. They evidently had not yet made their opportunistic, nasty deals with the drug growers and the drug traffickers, which they have since done. So the guerrillas were not really thought of as a threat to stability.

Of course, one could get into trouble if one went into rural areas. In fact, there's a well-known case of the Peace Corps volunteer who was down south in the jungle, doing research on tropical birds. He was kidnapped by the FARC. He was held for about twelve months. He was kidnapped on Valentine's day and his release was effected mostly by the persistent and heroic efforts of the then Peace Corps Director, Jose Sorzano, a Cuban-American, who later became the National Security Advisor for Latin American Affairs. I was close friends with Jose. I saw him work and struggle for a year during the kidnapping, looking for a way to effect the release of a volunteer botanist who was trying to help the environment. In fact, Jose pulled it off after a year. As far as I know no one paid any kind of ransom and he was indeed released without any harm.

The only other violent political incident I remember was one that I was almost involved in. Ambassador Asencio, thirteen or fifteen other Ambassadors, and twenty or thirty other people were kidnapped while attending a reception at noon at the Dominican Embassy. They were kidnapped by Castro-supported guerrillas, held hostage for several weeks, and finally most of them were released. The Ambassadors were held the whole time, while many of the other people were released in stages. It's all in a book by Diego. It's a case where some of the Ambassadors went through the syndrome of ending up siding with and supporting the guerrillas. On the other hand, in the case of Diego Asencio, he actually turned a couple of the guerrillas and that probably led to the release.

I was out of the country when the Embassy was seized by the guerrillas. I had left two weeks before the hostage taking was effected. But as US Commercial Attaché, I had been invited to the reception, and I almost assuredly would have gone. I doubt that they would have held me very long, being relatively low ranking, but it's the closest I know of that I ever came to that kind of hostage situation. It's ironic of course, that 20 years later, I went to the Dominican Republic as US Ambassador.

Other than those things which I mentioned, I thought it was a relatively peaceful assignment, certainly if one took precautions and remained alert. Colombia continued to boom economically, having a productive economy, prudent policies, and large amounts of private U.S. investment.

Q: What was U.S. investment, mining?

PASTORINO: U.S. investment was in several sectors: mining, especially iron ore; other natural resources; exploration and development of oil; and huge gas deposits off the Northern Coast. But in addition, U.S. investment began to grow in industry and services. And it was predominately those companies that I dealt with, the smaller companies that needed more help. It was those companies that I dealt with as Commercial Attaché and through being an honorary member of the Chamber of Commerce.

The major single US commercial activity in Colombia during my assignment was support for the US color television system. The Colombian Government was going to establish color TV and the system it selected would almost surely be chosen also by the rest of the Andean countries (Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, Chile and Bolivia). So, it was a very important bidding process for the US and US firms. The process came down to three different and basically non-compatible systems: the French system (SECAM); the German system (PAL); and the U.S. system (NTSC, which some wags described as "Never The Same Color twice").

Each country of course was heavily supporting its own system. We went through six or eight months of hearings in front of the Colombian Congress, a whole series of trade missions and seminars, and a public relations campaign through which we described the technical aspects of our systems and hoped to convince the Colombian Government to select ours. Finally, we went through a national, real-life test, in which the three color systems were demonstrated to the President.

The U.S. clearly out smarted the other two countries because we demonstrated our system through a direct line from the Congress to the Colombian equivalent of the White House where President Betancourt was awaiting the transmission. We ran a closed circuit transmission from the Congress, where we were testifying about the system. The President saw our NTSC system in perfect, living color, especially those shots of Olivia Newton John riding horseback down a beautiful beach, apparently in the nude.

The other two systems, especially the French transmission were badly screwed up because they tried to transmit through the airwaves. I was actually accused by several people of having sabotaged the French system, the signal of which as I remember, never got to the Presidential Palace. The President evidently gave up and left his television set after waiting a half an hour. The French Commercial Attaché appealed for a second test transmission and it was granted. That signal arrived at the Palace, but not in full color---everything was green. To this day I really don't know what happened. I didn't have anyone on my staff doing dirty tricks but you can be sure we took advantage, telling the Congress and the whole world about the "Green System".

I actually thought the German and French systems were in some ways technically better than ours. In those days, as today, the clarity of the picture depended upon the number of lines on the screen. The more lines, the clearer the picture. We won the bid because we had a better educational and public relations campaign. We took advantage of several facts. The U.S. was already the major seller of almost everything else, especially electronic and communications

equipment. Most Colombians felt more comfortable in buying American products.

We also won because Asencio was extremely astute. One day we went to call on the Minister of Communications who had a large say in the ultimate decision, together with the Congress. We noticed about six VCRs in his office, all of them of course using the American NTSC system. Asencio in his wonderful way, offhandedly remarked that he hoped that the Secretary wouldn't have to get rid of the six VCRs because they probably wouldn't work with the French or German systems. The Minister incredulously asked whether we were serious? He asked about all the other Colombians who had VCRs, using the NTSC system. I assured him that they might work if a separate black box were attached to them, but of course the picture might be somewhat degraded. Of course all of his VCRs were made in Japan but programmed to operate on the NTSC standard.

To make a long story short, the U.S. won the bid, not by political influence or pressure, but through a successful marketing campaign, run by the Commercial Section. We won it legitimately. And, as we expected, the other Andean countries adopted the U.S. system. The importance of the campaign ultimately was not so much the money that we made, because most of the cameras, taping equipment, and VCRs were supplied by Sony and other Japanese firms. But the important fact was that U.S. programming could be shown directly from the U.S., and any programming taped in the US could be shown directly in Colombia without a black box or other mechanism which may have put our programming at a disadvantage. That was a major Asencio interest in the campaign, in addition to supporting American products and services.

Q: Let me ask you, this was before the days of the American Corrupt Practices Act or during it?

PASTORINO: I'm not sure. We did worry a lot that other countries were using unethical practices in general in promoting their goods, and especially with regard to the color TV campaign. We didn't want to use unethical practices and couldn't; I didn't have the funds nor the wherewithal in any case. But, I do remember the French Commercial Attaché had sent seven or eight Congressmen and Communications Ministry officials to Paris for several days to study the SECAM system. He bragged to me that the delegation had been taken care of day and night, emphasizing the night. I'm sure they were set up with girls and any other kind of entertainment they wanted. That type of treatment didn't seem strange at all to the Colombians; some may have expected it. I hope they enjoyed themselves. The U.S. government would not have wanted to be involved in that type of practice and the US firms didn't engage in it. Actually, I thought the German effort was above board.

The closest we came to doing anything unorthodox was a big party for the Congressmen one night at my house. We had hooked up a closed circuit TV system and when we invited the Congressman we made it clear they could bring any of their girlfriends, or anyone else they wanted to bring (they would have anyway). They came and they hammed it up in front of several discreetly placed, but public, cameras with their girlfriends, who all seemed to be Colombian beauty queens. Then we gave each of them a tape of the evening. They loved it although I don't know how important it was to our overall effort.

The biggest problem we had was overcoming the perceived technical deficiencies of our system. I also had to work hard with the Commerce Department in Washington to get the American companies involved; after all, they had the technical expertise and the equipment. The Commerce Department didn't have the budget and couldn't fund most of the program. Finally, through Commerce efforts in the US and our efforts from Bogota we convinced firms like General Electric, AMPEX, and Motorola to participate. They sent down their sales force and their equipment and basically they put on the seminars. I sat in front of Congress as the head of delegation and did all of the political smoozing, noting how honored we were to be invited, and then turning the hearings over to the experts.

We also put on several seminars in the Embassy. All the equipment and technical description was done by the companies. The event at my house which I just mentioned was wired and organized by the companies; I determined the guest list; my wife made sure of the food, drink and other hospitality. American companies did the campaign because they finally determined it was in their interest. It was not a high cost operation; it probably didn't cost more than a couple hundred thousand dollars. But mostly the expenses were funded by the American companies with the Commercial Attaché coordinating the whole effort. Of course, major credit went to my staff, both the Colombians, and the Americans, particularly the two assistant commercial attachés, Jack Orlando and Leon Weintraub. Leon was a junior officer rotating through the Commercial Section; he got some great, hands-on experience.

Q: You mention the Commerce Department, I mean were you working as the Commercial Attaché in those days before the Foreign Commercial Service? To whom did you report, what was the relationship between the Department of Commerce and the Department of State?

PASTORINO: It was a unique relationship but I thought it worked. I had been in the business sector before. I had been in banking. I had no problem working with the private sector. I thought it was good that the US Government was engaged with the private sector trying to sell American products and create American jobs.

I reported to both the State Department, through the Economic Counselor, who was my boss within the Embassy, and directly to the Department of Commerce in Washington by telegram. I received efficiency reports from both. I had two reports in my personnel file each year. Frankly the Commerce report was somewhat silly. I wrote most of it myself and someone in Commerce signed it. It had much to do with accomplishing certain budgetary and promotional objectives established at the beginning of the year. Of course, I took a large role in establishing those objectives. In fact, I had a formula: if I thought Commerce wanted me to sell 2X worth of products and I was sure I could sell 4X, I would establish the goal at 3X. It was not hard to surpass the goal, and then note it in both efficiency reports.

My day to day activity had much more to do with Commerce for those five years as a Commercial Attaché, than it did with the State Department. When I would go home to Washington for consultations, most of the consultations were at Commerce Department. I received instructions for the most part from Commerce in Washington, who also supplied my

budgetary support. Actually, I was one of the few officers in the Embassy at that time who had to worry about budgeting, an activity that later became much more important for State Department Foreign Service Officers. I got good budgeting experience early in my career and it helped later on.

Commerce told me in general terms what commercial interests were to be covered, what industrial sector reports were of interest, which delegations to receive, what kind of projects and products to promote. I really had lots of autonomy and enjoyed it. The Commercial function was also enjoyable because it was fairly easy to determine whether you had been successful, just by measuring sales and other objective measurements, such as trade missions organized, trade opportunities generated, etc. We leased a large portion of a five story building in Bogota where we could participate in the Annual Colombian Trade Show, as well as put on smaller exhibits. We kept the space filled continuously.

The Economic Counselor was Steve Gibson who later on went on to be DCM in Jamaica and other places. Steve had never done commercial work. He gave me lots of autonomy. What I had to do most with State Department while on the Bogota assignment was when Steve was absent or on leave. I was acting Economic Counselor. So I also had to be familiar with the macro-economic issues. Steve was later replaced by George Thigpen, who became a close friend and had a positive impact on my career.

In fact, there were several trade negotiations going on with Colombia while I was there; one was particularly complex and politically sensitive, an anti-dumping case brought against Colombian fresh flower growers and exporters. It was important because it was a trade action brought against a friendly country where political pressures were brought to bear by both sides, regardless of whether or not there might be dumping, which was illegally damaging US producers and employment. I participated in several negotiating sessions in Bogota and learned a lot about GATT and US commercial regulations

Q: Let me interrupt here because I've always been curious about this. I always found in my service that people working in commercial affairs were considered by the Embassy to be second class citizens.

PASTORINO: Neither Gibson nor George believed that at all. They did not want to get heavily involved in the commercial activity but they were certainly interested and saw it as a high priority. Asencio also basically understood the need to do commercial promotion and gave me great support. In fact, Diego would always be willing to open an exhibit, cut a ribbon at a new plant, or advocate for US firms when necessary with the Colombian Government. And, even the political officers in the State Department were beginning to understand the importance to US interests of international commerce and trade. No, I did not consider myself a second class citizen: I certainly didn't act like it, and I don't think I was considered a second class citizen in that Embassy.

Q: Got an interesting question for you just off the top of my head. You were on a first name basis with the Ambassador. When did the custom change from calling someone Mr. Ambassador to using his first name?

PASTORINO: I always called him Mr. Ambassador. He called me Bob. But I could call him at any time and he would take the call. I would see him outside of the office frequently, at his house at receptions or when he would come to what I would consider my events, commercial events. He would come to my house. And he was very responsive. It was a good relationship because he wasn't in there nit-picking but he was there when I needed him. I knew I shouldn't bother him unless it was extremely important. I was and am a great admirer of Diego and I saw him frequently later in my career. Another case of being fortunate in working for a great career foreign service officer.

I also had a relationship with him as acting Economic Counselor so I often went to the staff meetings and I knew him in that context also. But I did call him Mr. Ambassador. Today I would begin a conversation calling him Mr. Ambassador, and then it becomes Diego.

Q: How formal were Embassies in Latin America? How hierarchical?

PASTORINO: It was hierarchical. Most of the Embassies where I worked were in Latin America. There were formal staff meetings, a formal chain of command. I worked for some wonderful gentlemen. I already mentioned Maurice Bernbaum in Venezuela, Diego Asencio, and Frank Carlucci. I later worked for John Negroponte and Ted Briggs. They were all consummate professionals in the Foreign Service sense. I was still a Foreign Service Officer as Commercial Attaché. Asencio knew there was a job that had to be done. It was on his watch and he wanted the job done right. It was formal organization. As it should have been and as it still should be.

It was the kind of formality in my case that was very flexible. I could call upstairs when I needed something. I didn't have to go through the Economic Counselor. I didn't have to go through the DCM, if it was really important.

The DCM in Bogota was Ted Briggs, who became a close, close friend. I worked for him several times. And he replaced me later at the NSC. Ted had never done much commercial work and it wasn't one of his highest priorities in Bogota. He basically said Bob, if you need the Ambassador, go to him. Don't worry about putting everything through me.

Q: That raises an issue. You were in Colombia from 1977 to 1979 and people who are going to be listening to this or reading this live in an age of e-mails, cable television and whatever. To what degree did you feel isolated? Not isolated from day to day events in Colombia but from friends in the United States, even from family. How long did it take the mail to get to you? To what degree did you feel you weren't really part of what was going on in the U.S.?

PASTORINO: To some slight degree but not such that it really made the assignment negative. I do remember we looked forward to getting Monday Night Football films from Pan-American. I remember struggling with my short wave radio to get the Forty-Niners or the Golden State Warriors, for instance. We had no cable TV, not even in black and white. But Bogota was close to home. We always felt we were close enough to Fran's elderly mother so we could get home in case the need arose. I did have one bad experience. My

mother passed away in Italy when we were in Bogota. But the State Department paid my way to go to Italy and help my father do what had to be done. So I didn't feel too isolated.

Also, I was living in a culture that's very close to an American culture and an Italian-American culture. Braniff Airlines flew directly to Los Angeles and we could get home literally in twelve hours. I liked Colombia and I liked the culture and I liked the country. There was an American school for the kids, a pretty good school. We were worried a little bit about marijuana in school. Several Embassy parents had problems with their kids. Shannon and Stephen were there in the lower grades and had no problems. At that particular time in that school, marijuana didn't really begin until the junior high and high school. We had a maid, we lived in a nice house, so there was not a great sense of isolation.

Colombia was a great place to travel with good accommodations, great beaches, colonial and pre-Colombian sites, and good travel infrastructure and we took advantage of the opportunities, both in conjunction with work and on a purely personal basis. And, I liked Colombians very much.

Q: Does your wife speak Spanish?

PASTORINO: Yes.

Q: Was she trained by the State Department? How did she learn Spanish?

PASTORINO: She learned it partially at the Foreign Service Institute and she says she speaks "kitchen Spanish"; she learned it from the maids and friends. She did not do a lot of charity work. We had three kids and the youngest was one year old and the oldest was ten years old. She was busy with the kids. I don't remember that there were a lot of Embassy programs for wives, but I am sure there were the usual ones. I do remember that Nancy Asencio, who was a wonderful lady, was not very demanding of the dependents and wives. Every once in a while she called in the wives, but not often.

Fran did get involved with an orphanage that took in young criminals. One of the things that happened in Bogota and happens to this day, is that criminals would train young boys, eight and nine years old, to be pick-pockets, or to run up and grab jewelry, especially earrings. That happened all the time. There was a priest, an American priest, who set up an orphanage for both orphans and the "*gaminis*," the young criminals. The "*gaminis*" were actually very good, very successful at their criminal activity. The priest bought some land outside of Bogota, built an orphanage and my wife and several of the wives participated there by collecting and donating clothes etc. Basically trying to give the priest the wherewithal to carry on his effort.

Q: Anything else you want to talk about in Colombia, your time down there?

PASTORINO: It was good for my career in that I met Ted Briggs and Diego Asencio. As I mentioned above, the experience with Commerce Department, especially in planning, programming and the budget, was also good for my career. At that time Foreign Service

Officers didn't get this type of experience at State. All that helped me later when the State Department began to adapt some of these hundred page papers and programmatic outlines. As I also noted above, I got very good efficiency reports for two years in Bogota.

I did represent Commerce. I was not torn between the two departments. The rivalries that might have gone on in Washington did not go on in either of the two Embassies where I was Commercial Attaché. So I thought the Commerce program worked very well.

For the record, and I have put it down on the record many times over the years, including by official letters to Congress since I have retired, I don't think the transferring the commercial function to Commerce from State was a bad idea. I don't think Foreign Service Officers have the time to devote to the commercial promotion program. The Commercial program is a technical one in many ways. You've got to understand business, be able to talk to businessmen, and most importantly it is a function that must be done continuously to really learn the markets and the programs. Foreign Commercial Officers can do it full time, not every few years as it was often done when Foreign Service Officers were detailed to the function for short periods of time.

Of course, Commercial Officers should be part of the Embassy Team and subject to guidance about political issues from the Ambassador. The trade promotion function is not entirely technical and the Ambassador and other Embassy components can be very helpful in selling American products and supporting American business overseas. There are times where commercial interests may outweigh other US interests and that should be recognized. I think the commercial function is well off where it is now.

I also want to say for the record that I don't think all State Department Commercial Attachés were failures. I thought some of us did very good jobs. Several of us were recruited by the Foreign Commercial Service when the function was transferred to it. Some of us transferred and several didn't. I didn't because I thought my future was with the State Department, although my negotiations with Commerce reached a point where we discussed a possible assignment in Rome as Assistant Commercial Counselor. In fact, Commerce offered me the position as Commercial Counselor in Madrid, and Commerce officials couldn't understand why I would hold out for the Deputy position in Italy. As the negotiations progressed, I received a Foreign Service promotion and that ended my negotiations with Commerce. Several of my close friends did make the transfer, immediately getting higher level jobs and promotions. But, I did not want to do commercial work all of my career. But, the commercial experience helped me in several ways, including the supervision of the commercial function much later.

The other thing I would say is that Bogota was my first introduction to trade negotiations. In some cases the initial trade talks were done by the Embassy and for some reason the Commercial Officer was tapped to do it.

We negotiated agreements with Colombia on countervailing duties, dumping, and entrance into the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP). In fact, I got a wonderful opportunity to travel because someone got sick and I was picked to travel around to two or three Andean

countries leading a delegation from Washington to explain to these countries what the Generalized System of Preferences was, and how could they get these zero duty preferences for up to a certain amount of each individual product. I got to go to Quito and Lima. And, I took the delegation all over Colombia to five or six places which allowed me to do business, promote American products, at the same time as I was describing a trade policy of the United States which gave these countries free access to the U.S. market.

The GSP was somewhat complicated because there were varying levels and quotas on different products, depending upon competitiveness; if a country was already selling in the US, it certainly didn't need a tariff preference. Plus, some products were not eligible because of domestic political concerns, such as textiles, watches, shoes, etc. But it was free access to the U.S. market for many products, without, I repeat, without reciprocity. GSP was designed to assist in the economic development of developing countries. So it was an economic policy, a form of an aid policy and it was certainly the trade policy of the United States. In fact the U.S. was the first country in the world to have a system of trade preferences, which was then followed up by the European Common Market and Japan. I did a lot of work with European Ambassadors and the Colombian trade people to explain how our policy worked. It helped me in what later became a career as a trade negotiator.

Q: Tell me a little bit about the Foreign Service Nationals, locals as we called them in the old days. Clearly you must have relied heavily on them in a place like Colombia and a job like Commercial Attaché. But what was the relationship, how did they view all of this? Or, were you just kind of an interloper who they had to put up with for two years before they had to train the next guy? What was it like?

PASTORINO: In Colombia the Commercial Section had three Americans, the Attaché and two Assistant Attachés. Then I had twelve to fifteen Colombian Nationals, all had been in the Embassy longer than I had been. All clearly knew more about Colombia and how to do business in Colombia than I did. But the relationship was very professional in that I had the guidance to give them. They did need guidance and they took guidance. I would say: "Okay, Washington wants us to do a industrial sector report on the telecommunications sector. Who are the people we have to interview? What information do we need? This is the deadline; I would like to see the first draft by "x" date, I will go with you on some of the interviews. I will take you to the government". Or, I would say: "An important American firm has some problems with the Government. How do we solve it? Who do we see? What to do we say?" And I would follow their advice. We proceeded on that basis and it seemed to work. I included them in most of the planning; I thought that was a key element.

All of these people were very bright and very hard working. They were paid very well in the context of Colombia. Most of them viewed the job in the U.S. Embassy as prestigious. They were professionals in that they were marketing majors or economists, or had come out of the business community. Some thought of themselves as the elite in the Embassy because they weren't one of the hordes of Nationals in the Consular section or one of the minions in the Administrative Section. They were professionals. Several of them became friends. I had them over to the house not only for official functions but they came to my kids' birthday parties, for instance. In turn, they invited us to their places. I tried to give them credit as much as

possible with the Ambassador. I wanted the Ambassador and the upper levels of the Embassy to know that if I did a good job or if our junior officers did a good job, it's because Joaquin did a good job and Luis did a good job.

I had one suspected corruption problem and had to begin an investigation. There were rumors that one of my National employees was using his position at the Embassy to get outside contracts for himself as a private consultant. It turned out later that he had done that. I think he was fired and may have actually gone to jail. The Colombian court system punished him. I also should mention that I supervised several locals in our consulates in Cali, Medellin, and Barranquilla.

Q: Well I had no idea the American presence was so large in Colombia in terms of numbers of Consulates. What was the relation between Consulates and the Embassy?

PASTORINO: At my level very good. I visited the Consulates, taking trade missions or other types of business. In a certain sense, I was a resource for the Consul. They had no time to do commercial work. There were two Consulates General, Cali and Medellin, and the Northern Consulate, Barranquilla. The Consuls normally had very little time for commercial affairs so they depended on me to make sure the commercial office Nationals were doing what they were supposed to be doing. So I was satisfied, the Consular General was satisfied, and Ambassador Asencio was satisfied. So our relationship was very good.

Q: How many of those Consulates are still open (we are doing this interview in 1998)?

PASTORINO: I don't believe any of them are open now. Two of them, Cali and Medellin, were closed, at least in part, because of drug problems and security problems. Barranquilla was already on its last legs. Barranquilla is a port on the north coast and historically had been there because it was a port for U.S. vessels. I think Asencio kept it open to be a listening post for the drug situation.

During my time, Cali and Medellin were Consular posts with some commercial interests because both locations had significant industry and business. Colombia was not a place with only one business center as some countries. Bogota was more a cultural, governmental, and educational center, rather than a business center. Cali and Medellin were really strong business locations. At one Post, I remember the Consul General was an Economic officer. He didn't have time for much commercial activity but he knew what was going on. The other two Consulates were headed by either Consular Cone or Political Cone officers but they were always cooperative. I didn't get into their consular business and I understood their other priorities. If they told me I could only have ten percent of their time on a trip, I was satisfied.

LEON WEINTRAUB
Rotation Officer
Bogota (1977-1979)

Mr. Weintraub was born and raised in New York City, educated at Hunter College, Brooklyn College and the Universities of Pittsburgh and Wisconsin. After service in Liberia with the Peace Corps he entered government service, first with the Navy Department and then with the State Department Foreign Service. His service in Washington and abroad involved him with a variety of countries and issues including African Affairs, International Organizations, Narcotics and Peace-Keeping operations in Africa. His foreign posts were Bogotá, Tel Aviv, Lagos, Quito and Geneva. Mr. Weintraub was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: Well, how long were you doing this?

WEINTRAUB: I was there almost for two years. I got out a little early because I started, let's see, at the end of A-100 probably would have been maybe May or June of '75; I think I got out maybe January of '77 to go into language training for my next assignment. My first assignment abroad was going to be in the Republic of Colombia, Bogotá, Colombia, so I needed to go into Spanish. So I think I started that language training probably in the winter, maybe January or February of '77 so then I could join the summer cycle and then leave in the summer of '77 for Colombia.

Q: How did major product of your time there come out? Did you start a family?

WEINTRAUB: Yes, as a matter of fact our first child, Aaron, was born in October '75. We - when we first arrived here for the A-100 class we were living in a rented apartment in Arlington near Courthouse Road, a lot of other FSI people were there.

Q: Not Colonial Village or not?

WEINTRAUB: I forget. It was near Route 50 and Courthouse Road. It's now something else. At that time it may have been a Best Western or something, I don't remember. We bought a house in Silver Spring about a month before our first child was born. We had moved in, my wife had the child at Georgetown University Hospital. So I started Spanish training with a toddler, if you will, an infant, and my wife was able to get some Spanish training as well, as we had a daycare facility we put our child in. This was, of course, before the Metro, it was quite a deal for transportation to get around. We, of course, were at the old FSI in Roslyn at the time, in those two tall buildings. So that is how we then began another phase of our life, the language training.

Q: So you took Spanish and you went to Colombia.

WEINTRAUB: Yes.

Q: Is this a good place to stop do you think or shall we go on?

WEINTRAUB: Let me just tell you a little bit about the FSI. I remember the Spanish training; this was my first real immersion in language training. I think I mentioned earlier I studied French in high school and college but high school French and undergraduate French -- I never did

particularly good at it. You know, when you study a few hours a week it was difficult. But this was, you know, the immersion program, the FSI program, audiotapes, the whole bit, the book, and Spanish, I guess, is one of the easier languages for us gringos to learn. I enjoyed it; it was tough but I did well. I got my 3/3. We were very impressed with the Spanish teachers, where each month you had a teacher from a different part of South America because, as I learned, the accents were very different, whether a Colombian accent or Venezuelan, Argentinean, Central American, Mexican and we had them all. So my wife, she took it for maybe a couple of months and then she left to take care of our child and get the house ready for packing out and I stayed with it for the full time, the full five months I think it was, and you know, I got my 3/3, I think I said, and then we were off to Colombia. And this would be August of '77.

Q: Which job did you get there?

WEINTRAUB: I was in a rotational tour but I started in the economic and commercial section. This was the time we still had the commercial activity in the Foreign Service. There was not an FCS, a U.S. Foreign and Commercial Service, so we had a combined economic and commercial section and under the head of an economic section there was a commercial attaché and there were two assistant commercial attaches and I came in as an assistant commercial attaché. Another recent junior officer was also the assistant - we were each one of two assistant commercial attaches.

Q: Well, we can go ahead for a little while.

WEINTRAUB: This may be a good time.

Q: Okay, we'll pick up; we're just getting you in 1977.

WEINTRAUB: Summer of '77.

Q: You're arriving in Bogotá.

WEINTRAUB: Correct.

Q: And we'll take on from there.

This is tape three, side one with Leon Weintraub. We'll start this in 1977 when you're off to Bogotá as a rotational officer. Today is July 26, 2005. Leon, Bogotá, 1977. What was, how would you describe relations as apparent to you between Colombia and the United States at that time?

WEINTRAUB: Well, obviously as a junior officer, even although I had a Washington assignment beforehand, this was my first overseas assignment, and don't recall getting particularly extensive briefing in by the desk. I didn't know what to expect, I didn't know what I was supposed to ask for, what I should have received. I suspect if desk officers then were kind of like desk officers were at any other time, briefing a junior officer going off to work at the visa line and other stuff was not their highest priority, but that's another issue. So I don't recall I had

much of a substantive briefing, but as far as I could tell our relations were quite friendly. I knew, I had learned with certain area studies classes, that Colombia had been one of the oldest functioning democratic republics in South America, and a major exporter to the United States of coffee. Obviously I was aware also there were issues of underground movements, rebel movements going back to the 50s. There was obviously a serious issue of narcotics, of marijuana coming into the United States, a very major bilateral issue between our two countries. But, all in all, you know, I was anticipating a kind of a friendly and welcoming environment.

Q: Well then, who was our ambassador when you got there?

WEINTRAUB: I believe there was a chargé when I came, but then shortly after Ambassador Diego Asencio arrived. My initial assignment was as assistant attaché in the commercial section. This was before we had a commercial service, a foreign commercial service in the Department of Commerce; that function was still in the Department of State, so there was a counselor for economic affairs under whom there was a commercial attaché and he was supported by a couple of assistant attaches and I became one of the assistant attaches.

Q: What sort of work was an assistant commercial attaché doing at that time, or what were you doing?

WEINTRAUB: Well, basically it was to assist in the promotion of exports from the United States, investment by U.S. investors who might wish to invest in Colombia, help U.S. exporters find markets, or to find agents and representatives for their products. This was my first real exposure, as it is obviously for most junior officers, first real exposure to our FSN staff, our Foreign Service National staff. I think in those days they were still called Foreign Service Locals but anyway the local employees there - and I was very impressed, as I have been throughout my career, at the high level of capabilities by the Foreign Service National staff. These people had a business background, an economics background, and they knew the business sector very well. They knew how to find agents or representatives for various types of products, whether it was manufactured products, services, agricultural products; they knew the market very well. So we had to do a lot of work that was done, if you will, on a contractual basis of sorts. As I understood the process, an American businessman who wanted to export to Colombia went into a regional office of the Department of Commerce in the United States, paid a fee, and then we received an instruction to perform a search for agents or representatives or licensors that might work with this exporter and we might find three or four potentials. We'd give them a rating. That was one thing we had to do.

Another thing we did was a specific search, equivalent to a Dunn and Bradstreet report on a firm. If a U.S. company was considering forming a partnership, an alliance or a trading relationship with another company and they were unable to get a Dunn and Bradstreet report in the United States, such as would list bank accounts, number of employees and a whole kind of a profile of a company, we did that type of work as well. And a variety of different reports to support U.S. businesses, for those who may wish to invest, may wish to export, or may wish to establish an agent relationship with someone. So we did that for - I did that for almost a year and a half. During that period we had a trade fair, a large trade fair in Bogotá. The other assistant attaché who had been there before me and was senior by time in country if not by grade had the major

lead on helping us to pull together a good sample of American companies to be represented in the trade fair.

Q: What type of product was- any stick out in mind?

WEINTRAUB: No, it was a variety of manufactured products. For example, there was a very strong agricultural sector. We had agricultural machinery from your typical tractors and other type of equipment to agricultural spraying equipment, harvesting equipment but also manufacturing equipment, tool and die making equipment. And we had to know what the competition was like in Colombia. Although considered a developing country, there was a pretty substantial manufacturing sector in Colombia at the time so we had to know what the market was like and where we could best complement locally-made products.

Q: What was the business climate like? You know, some countries, corruption or payoffs or you've got to get an agent who's well connected and in other countries it's rather straightforward. How would you put Colombia in those days?

WEINTRAUB: My best impression would be that unless you were talking about a very large contract and a contract that had direct government involvement, then for the most part it was a pretty straightforward business and investment sector. I met with a lot of American business representatives who sat across my desk asking about this sector or that sector. Obviously, they also did a lot of work on their own, certainly. I never got the feeling that they were discouraged as you might be in other countries, in that you had to make a payoff to get things out of customs, to get licenses. Obviously it was a Latin environment and we were coming from a different legal environment. It was not the British heritage common law environment such as we had, so things were in fact very heavily licensed and regulated, much more so than in the United States, but I think that was more a reflection of the legal code, of the legal mindset of the profession, and businesses knew that was what you had to operate in. Virtually every kind of establishment needed a variety of licenses and this could be burdensome and difficult for an American investor or businessman to understand, but I never got the feeling that it was manipulated to a great degree in order to be a coercive element.

I learned in this endeavor to have great respect for Foreign Service wives. Just one little story. Over the period of several months the other assistant attaché and myself were working with the head of the Bogotá fair, the fairly senior official in the government, in the ministry of commerce and trade, setting up the fair, where - how many booths there would be per country, what kind of companies they were looking for, what kind of expenses there would be, so over a period of several months we had frequent exchanges with this fellow. And by this time my Spanish had been improving, I had earned a 3/3 in the Foreign Service scoring system before I left for Bogotá; obviously I was hesitant at first but my proficiency was gradually improving.

Kind of near the opening day of the fair there was a reception for all the investors and embassies who had been working and I went with my wife and discovered, I don't know precisely how, that this fellow who was the head of the Bogotá trade fair, in fact was a fairly fluent speaker of English. I had never known this because my fellow assistant attaché and I had always been eager to speak the local language, of course, and we did so in our reasonable Spanish and we

conducted our business this way. But my wife, who had taken some Spanish but not as much as I did -- since by this time we had a child to take care of -- she, after the initial introductions, she went into English and was quite pleased that he responded in kind and carrying on quite well. So I never failed to, I hope I don't, underestimate the capability of spouses to find out information that could be very important to officers.

Q: Oh yes. Often, they have, the wives often in those days would have contact with the wives of people who were fairly far up in the society of the political system or military, what have you, and they would get information that just we wouldn't get. I mean, we were more trapped in the office.

WEINTRAUB: Exactly. Number one, trapped in the office and number two, trapped in the hierarchy of things. You know if you're at a reception and you are a junior officer or a lower grade officer you just don't go up to the minister of defense and start a chat with him. But, for example, if his wife was somehow next to your wife and neither can recognize by any symbols who's where in the hierarchy, the two women might start talking to each other and one can find out, you know, what the family is like, how many children they have; the wife might venture that the son of the minister is going to university in the United States, which might be a little interesting bit of information. So, right from the start I learned that these could be valuable, in a positive sense, obviously not in a covert way, but a positive source of information.

Q: Was commerce being affected during the time you were doing commercial work by guerrilla movements because I assume that Diego was picked up while you were there or not?

WEINTRAUB: No, that was the - that occurred in the fall of '79, shortly after I left there.

Q: Okay, but was this - were guerrilla movements and all a problem commerce-wise?

WEINTRAUB: It was a factor. There had been at least one Peace Corps volunteer abducted while I was there. The guerrilla movement known as the FARC was active when I was there. That's F-A-R-C, excuse me. Of course, most of the people seeking to invest were talking about investing in safe areas in the cities of Bogotá, Medellin, or Cali, or Barranquilla, the major urban centers, each of them had, in fact, a pretty good manufacturing center. One thing that worked to Colombia's favor -- because of the mountains and the difficulty of land transportation, you had separate urban centers arising and functioning somewhat independently of each other. So you had Bogotá, Medellin, Cali and Barranquilla, each of them with a really vibrant business, industrial and commercial sector, so unlike a pattern you saw in many other Third World countries where everything was focused in the capital, the government, the business, the imports and exports, so Colombia was fairly diversified geographically, sectorally and economically. But it obviously did -- the fact that there was this movement, for example, it probably had a pall on investment in the petroleum sector where you had to get people out into the field building a pipeline across large swaths of land. Anything that involved exploration for natural resources where you had to have people outside of built up and safe areas -- definitely I would say that hindered investment.

Q: Speaking about the development of cities there, I interviewed a lady who died not too long ago at age 101 or something at Barrington, and she was the first woman commercial officer working for the Department of Commerce and talked about in the '20s going up to Bogotá and it took her a week; she went up by paddle steamer part way and, you know, I mean, this was-

WEINTRAUB: From the Pacific, probably.

Q: It was a real problem.

Well then, you, after a year-and-a-half what did you do?

WEINTRAUB: Well, I was all the while hoping that I would somehow escape the, you know, the junior officer's nightmare of serving on the visa line. This is, you know, what we'd all been prepped for, and obviously you've heard a lot of war stories about service on the NIV line, the non-immigrant visa line, the bane of all junior officers. So, typically one served one year in one section of the embassy and one year in another section. Well, meanwhile I arrived in the summer, approximately August of '77 so now around late '78 we're approaching a year-and-a-half and I haven't even heard about anything, I'm pretty happy to go along.

Q: Keeping very quiet.

WEINTRAUB: Keeping very quiet, a low profile, doing my job in the commercial section. Well obviously this was not to continue. I get a call from the consul general named Richard Morefield (in fact, who later became one of the hostages in Tehran). So he invites me to his office and said well, as you probably know, it's time to enter the consular section. You've been busy in the commercial section, we've had a trade fair, and the ambassador let you stay there a bit longer, but now it's time to pay your dues, so to speak. So I mention in a kind of futile attempt to delay or maybe even avoid the inevitable – "But I never had ConGen training in Roslyn." This was typically before people went out for their first assignment they had the consular training program where they did mock interviews, visit "the prisons," so to speak, in Roslyn, and I said "But I never had the ConGen training in Roslyn." So he patted me on the back in a kind of avuncular fashion and said, "Oh, don't worry young man, you'll learn."

So the next week I started and it was a whole new world for me. Whereas before I had interacted with the business sector at all levels from business executives down to small entrepreneurs, here I was, if you will, dealing with the masses of Colombian society eager to get visas one way or another to get to the United States. And I don't know if technically if it would qualify as a visa mill or not, probably not as harried and overworked as some others like in the Dominican Republic or other places, but there were crowds, obviously. There were never enough interviewing officers around, but between the senior Americans and the local staff we had in the embassy they had a pretty good system worked out. People would start lining up early in the morning, you'd get numbers to be interviewed, there was a - I think there was a teletype system—this was all before computers and internet, of course—I think there was a teletype system, I believe it was called the AVLOS system, Automated Visa Lookout System, and the Foreign Service Nationals, the local employees, would take the passports of the applicants, make sure the application was completed in full, and then enter the data on a teletype. It would, I

presume, go up to Washington or somewhere and then a code would come back if this person had been entered for lookout for any one reason or another. And then you conducted the visa interview from there. And obviously in those days we weren't looking so much for terrorists, but it was the people who were seeking the non-immigrant visas who would then, you know, seek to go underground and join the underground economy in the United States. So there was a lot of watching over the shoulder, real on-the-job type training, watching over the shoulder of more experienced visa officers, people who'd been doing it for six months or more, talking to Foreign Service nationals, talking to our security people. Obviously our security people had legitimate concerns about physical security because of the guerrilla movement in Colombia but also they were the ones who had to investigate fraudulent attempts to get visas so, you know, you kind of put all the resources all together and then you were thrown into the breach, so to speak.

Q: Well, how did you find- what- I mean, you've got your normal, I assume, even in those days, there was a pretty solid trade of business people and well-to-do families heading to Miami or to Disney World in Southern California.

WEINTRAUB: Sure.

Q: But what about, where were they, in a way your problem cases going and what-

WEINTRAUB: Well the problem cases were probably not, I wouldn't imagine, in any way unique to Colombia. People of limited means, these people had to show their -- I don't know whether it was income tax returns or bank documents, whatever we had set up. And obviously, as you said, a lot of cases were people with considerable resources, much more than I would ever personally hope to see as a junior Foreign Service officer, certainly. There were limited amounts of visa processing through agents, but most of it was in person on the spot and there were -- people came for student visas, often well-to-do young men and women, high school people going up to university in the United States. They often arrived on the scene with a mother or father. You don't have to be a detective to tell by dress or comportment or bank account that these are people of pretty good means and why would they want to be absorbed into the United States; they have a pretty good lifestyle here in Colombia.

As in a lot of Third World countries, once you get a certain amount of wealth, you can afford to hire a pretty good sized household staff, so people of middle income, upper middle income certainly had maids and cooks, nannies, occasionally a driver, so it was a lifestyle that they would be hard to meet in the United States. But it was more challenging to decide for people of more limited means who were going to visit a family member in the United States or may have had a student visa to, for example, a stereotypical hairdressing studio in the United States. In fact, we learned, the documents were all quite legal. This stereotypical hairdressing studio, in fact, was a legitimate organization. It was authorized under U.S. law to issue the documentation that a student could use to qualify for a student visa. So that was legitimate, but if we had our doubts about the ability of a student to pay the fees and certainly about the likelihood of the person coming back to Colombia we had the right to refuse. The visa law as I saw it and as other visa officers had it explained to them was that the law was written in our favor, it was kind of stacked against the visa applicant. In other words, we did not have to prove anything. It was the onus of -- the responsibility was on the applicant to demonstrate that he or she, after the

conclusion of his or her visit in the United States, would in fact return to his or her country of origin. So the onus of that was on them, and there were a lot of things that one learned to look at: the size of assets, size of income, number in the family, was this person a family person, did the applicant have children, have a spouse, what was the age, what kind of future was the person likely to face in our best estimate.

Occasionally there were people who complained and sought a higher review in which case it could be reviewed by a more senior officer in the visa section, but for the most part our decisions went unchallenged and people just accepted it that the vice consul of the United States laid down the law.

I also learned about the - all the congressional correspondence that we had. This was a new issue for me. A number of visa applicants did come with a letter of support from a congressman. Of course, one learned it didn't take much to generate a letter of support. Typically a family member or a relative who already was in the United States, legally or not, we wouldn't know of course, but they obviously would reside in a district, a congressional district, and they would say that their family member in Colombia had been unfairly denied a visa, could you investigate? So they would write a letter either to the State Department or directly to the American ambassador and obviously very carefully - without asking us to break the visa law, which obviously was an act of Congress signed by the president - ask us to give all due consideration. And you know, in the first few cases, these really get the attention of the visa officers but then you realize this is just a process and typically the member of Congress has no idea who the constituent is who wrote the letter, certainly not who the applicant is.

But you just learn, you begin your history in the State Department of learning to document every decision you make in case it comes back by a congressman again or a congressman for a first time. What were the grounds upon which you refused this person the visa? You have to go back to the visa application, which were on file for a certain period of time, and look over your handwritten scribbled notes and be able to construct something and based on looking at the picture attached to the application and whatever notes you had you had to prepare a letter that might be signed by the consul general or the ambassador to defend your decision. So one learns fairly early on to document what you do and make sure you have the ability to stand behind that decision.

Q: Were you concerned - you, I mean, the section at all, about drug traffickers and connections in the United States at that time? Was this a factor?

WEINTRAUB: Oh, certainly. We were aware of drug trafficking and part of the automated lookout system was in fact to come back with a code if someone was suspected and as far as I can recall the way the law was written then we could refuse a visa if we had suspicion. We might ask for the backup information if it was available and we didn't have to give a long story about it to the applicant. If the applicant persevered we might, I believe, have a one-on-one conversation with the applicant and say this is the information we have and - obviously it was not a trial, we're not going to convict someone - but we have these suspicions and it was up to the applicant to refute that information. But certainly it was something that we were concerned about. Typically

once something did return back from the lookout system with such a code it was often given to a more senior officer in the visa section.

Q: How did you and your wife find life in Colombia?

WEINTRAUB: Well, I'd say it was enjoyable. At the time security obviously was a concern but not oppressively so. We were fairly open in where we could live. I believe -- well, I know when I made a trip back there in later years in connection with some other work, people were restricted to living in multi-story apartment dwellings and they had to live above a certain floor. We didn't have that problem at the time. We rented a home -- kind of like a townhouse adjacent to some other homes -- in what was a reasonable area but not an overly affluent one. Like almost all the homes it was protected by either a stone fence or an iron gate, but that was typical for people in middle-class homes at the time. We didn't have, I'm pretty sure we didn't have, a guard as you know a lot of embassies didn't have at that time, but we had in other assignments. There were occasional roving security patrols by the embassy, but it was a light type of a presence.

Typically, I recall I took public transportation back and forth to the embassy, a bus service - I don't remember if it was a large kind of a municipal type bus or these mini buses that rode down the street - it may have been a large bus but it was on a regular bus route and I was just using public transportation, something which became unheard of in later years. So you're aware of security, and I think we had good security people in Bogotá and in other embassies where we just learned to become vigilant about which cars are parked on your street and which cars are parked near the embassy; do people appear to be loitering, etc. Even to this day my wife is much more alert, even in our neighborhood in Maryland, than most of our neighbors are to when is a car parked on the street for a long time, what is it doing there? I mean, it just becomes a sixth sense that we started to develop in our first assignment.

Q: How about, were you able to make friends, contacts with neighbors or Colombians?

WEINTRAUB: Well, to a certain degree we did make some contacts with Colombians. We managed to develop a friendship with one family. The husband had been working here in the Inter-American Development Bank as a representative of Colombia and we met him through other people. His wife was taking English lessons, I think, and we had a friend who was a foreign language instructor for her. They were moving back to Colombia about the same time we were. I think he was in the central bank, so we had several nice visits with his family and his extended family. We also became friends with other people in the diplomatic community.

In the business sector, there was not a great deal of personal contact with the people we worked with. Essentially, business was typically transacted over lunch without families - and as a junior officer one does not have much in the way of representational funds, but we tried occasionally to have functions of our own. But we did find it very helpful to join a local synagogue in Bogotá. There was a Jewish community that had been there probably maybe a little bit less than 100 years, mainly from a lot of the same population that had immigrated to the United States. A lot of people who were unable to get visas to enter the United States went to South America.

Q: This was as the result of Hitler.

WEINTRAUB: And even earlier, even before, when the numbers coming into Ellis Island were such that all applicants couldn't get in, people were turned away from the U.S. and went elsewhere. There were pretty sizeable Jewish communities established in Cuba, in Panama, in Mexico, in Venezuela, in Colombia, in Argentina as well. Then obviously this was expanded during the 1930s during the period of Fascism in Europe, when a lot of people were fleeing from Nazi Germany. So there was a fairly sizeable community, several thousand members of the Jewish community, in Bogotá, Colombia.

We had arrived in August, I believe, so this was shortly before the high holidays, the period of Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. Typically, if you're going to go to services at all during the year, this is when you'll go and we were able to locate a synagogue not far from our neighborhood. We found the Jewish community there to be exceptionally, exceptionally friendly and welcoming. And we started a relationship and actually became very good friends and stayed in touch with these people during our whole period there, our entire period there. We shared holidays with them, holidays that were very family oriented, such as the high holidays, the Passover celebration, the Hanukah celebration for the children and in fact we stayed in touch with some families for some period of time after we left.

Q: You know, I realize they are focused on different things but there's always been a considerable Lebanese community in the area very much involved in commercial work. Is the Jewish community concentrated in any particular sector?

WEINTRAUB: As far as the Lebanese community, I was aware of that at a later assignment in Ecuador. Not so much in Bogotá, not so much in the Andean. I think the Lebanese entrepreneurial sectors were primarily focused on the coasts, import-export and that kind of business. In the Andean cities of Bogotá and later in Quito I was not aware particularly of any significant Lebanese type of -

Q: Was the Jewish community working in any particular area or how-

WEINTRAUB: You mean economic sector?

Q: Yes, yes, was it across the board or not?

WEINTRAUB: No, I think - some were in import-export, some were manufacturing textiles, some were manufacturing in steel and other manufactured products. One was in leather products. There was a good export community of leather goods from Colombia -- handbags, shoes, that business. So they were involved in a variety of businesses, I would have to say, typically in light and medium manufacturing and import-export, some in jewelry; it was quite a mix. Some were in the professions, law or medicine. Yes, and there was a community in Bogotá, and I think smaller communities in Medellin and also in Cali.

Q: Well then, did you continue consular work until the end?

WEINTRAUB: Yes, then I finished up my assignment in the summer of '79 with visa work. It's high pressure, but I did my best to enjoy it. I remember, often, one type of visa applicant I saw was a high school girl, escorted by her mother. The student was going to be either an exchange student in the United States or she was going to go to university in the United States. And these were people who were quite well off, they had the bank accounts to prove it and you could tell by the dress, by the language, by the pronunciation. And Bogotá women of the upper middle class typically looked very well; they knew how to take care of themselves. And I remember I would often - the applicant was there with her mother - so I would often say to the applicant with her mother standing by, I'd say, "Well, you look like a very good visa applicant, I'm sure you'll be able to get the visa but let me ask you a question. Why did you find it necessary to bring your sister along with you?" So the mother would often smile and blush, saying, "Oh señor." But they were, you know, very, very nice people and it was a pleasure to be able to assist them in what they wanted to do. So that made up for all the difficult cases when you felt people were going to just get on the ground in the U.S. and merge into the underground economy and be a dishwasher or something else illegally. So yes, we did that until the summer of '79.

THOMAS D. BOYATT
Ambassador
Colombia (1980-1983)

Ambassador Thomas D. Boyatt was born in Ohio and was educated at Princeton University. He then earned an MA at Fletcher in 1956. He served in the Air Force for two years prior to joining the Foreign Service. His first post was in Chile in 1960. He then served in Luxembourg, Cyprus, and Chile. He served as Ambassador to Upper Volta in 1978 and Colombia in 1980 after which he retired from the Foreign Service and entered the private sector.

Q: Well then we get you off to ARA.

BOYATT: Yes.

Q: How did that come about? This is still the Carter Administration, and you went to Colombia where you served from 1980-83.

BOYATT: Yes

Q: Did this come as a bolt out of the blue?

BOYATT: Yes. You have to remember that my predecessor had been kidnapped [Diego Asencio had been taken hostage by the M-19 guerrillas when he was attending a cocktail party and the Embassy of the Dominican Republic in 1980.]

Q: Yes, Diego Asencio.

BOYATT: And held in the Dominican Embassy, and had gone through all of that. And as you also remember from my earlier career, I was hijacked by the Palestinians once. And I think to some extent they were looking for somebody with counter-terrorist experience, which I had, and I had served in Latin America, spoke Spanish fluently, why not? But again, it was not a political job, it was an inside job as the Director General, Harry Barnes, had gotten me that position.

Q: What was the situation in Colombia while you were there?

BOYATT: It was a case in which the entire policy focus of the U.S. government was shifting from the usual concerns to the drug problem, and that wound up being our primary goal to disrupt the flow -- first of marijuana, and subsequently cocaine, from Colombia to the United States.

Q: What sort of weapons did you have during the time you were there?

BOYATT: Well, we had training programs. We brought in a batch of helicopters that we gave to the Colombian army for use in counter-narcotics activity. In those days we were fighting to get the Colombians to spray the marijuana with paraquat. One of the problems was, of course, we couldn't use it in our own country because the EPA wouldn't let us. So we had the delightful proposition of trying to convince the Colombian government to do something that our own government wouldn't do. It made it very difficult. In the end they did agree to the spraying, and in the end we pretty much took out the marijuana production in Colombia, but while we were doing that, unbeknownst to us, Colombia was very rapidly becoming a major transshipment point for cocaine. By the time I left, while one could have legitimately declared, if not an end to the war, at least several victorious battles in the marijuana war, we had almost no victories in the cocaine war.

Q: What was your impression of the Colombian government during this period? How did you deal with them?

BOYATT: Colombia is like Chile in the sense that they have a very capable leadership level. European originate, well educated, and invariably it is indeed elite, and we dealt very well with the elite. The further down the line you went, the more difficult it became. This is to say, in my judgment there were no corrupt ministers, but could the narcs corrupt a regional general? Not to mention the captain in charge of an airport detail? Yes, of course, they could, and did, and do.

Q: At that time were we involved in trying to get intelligence, paying informers and all this, to find out what was going on?

BOYATT: The DEA was there, and their essential MO is bribe and bust, so in that sense we were. The CIA in those days didn't want to have anything to do with the drug problem, neither did the Defense Department. Now, of course, they're falling all over themselves to participate in the drug war because . . .

Q: . . . the Soviet Union's gone . . .

BOYATT: That's right, and they've got to justify their existence, and their budgets, and so on. It's really funny because literally I could not get the CIA to focus on it. I came back two years ago and did a survey of the narcotics reporting for the Under Secretary for Political Affairs, and in the process of doing that I went out to the CIA. They took me into an office, and said, "This our narcotic office." And I'm telling you, Stewart, you know those little glassed-in cubbyholes, as far as I could see . . . all I could see was God damned cubbyholes, with people in them working. There must have been hundreds of people down there, in the Drug Task Force.

Q: With mixed results. What about the terrorist role? The M-19 -- this was the group that had kidnapped Asencio. What was life like there?

BOYATT: Life was horrible. I mean everybody in the damn country was trying to kill, kidnap, the American ambassador, or his wife, or his children. We lived a very confined, tension-filled, life. Our youngest son was 8 weeks old when we got there, and neither he nor Maxine, much less myself, ever went anywhere without guards, drivers, the whole nine yards. In my case, a follow car, sometimes a lead car and a follow car.

Q: Your concern was not the drugs lords at this time?

BOYATT: They were a concern too. One of the reasons people say, "Well, it's worse now than when you were there." Well, yes and no. The drug lords are stronger, but the M-19 is now a political party, instead of a terrorist organization. A lot of the left wing has come in from the cold, and they were very much in the cold when I was there. So my feeling is that the left wing threat was greater when I was there. The narcotics threat existed, but wasn't as great as it is today.

Q: On the policy level, you were there at the end of the Carter and the beginning of the Reagan administration, and all hell was breaking loose in Central America, El Salvador and Nicaragua at that time. Did you find yourself getting involved in this as far as pushing an American view?

BOYATT: Yes. Naturally we wanted Colombian support for what we were doing in Central America, and we had two things going for us in that regard. One was that the Colombians occupied, and held an island called San Andres which the Nicaraguans claimed. So there was a territorial conflict between Nicaragua and Colombia. So in spite of their desires not to line up with the gringos, there was a built-in self-interest reason why they could identify with us against the Sandinistas. That was on that side. The other interesting thing was, I guess sometime in my first year, year and a half there, the army captured an entire M-19 column. They caught the guy that had led the take-over in the embassy, and lots of others. And they caught them with all of their equipment, and with a lot of their information records, and so on. And from those records it was clear that the Cubans had financed, and facilitated, this invasion, and of course the Colombians had no choice but to sever relations with Cuba, which they did. We sort of had a helping hand in Central America from that regard, too. So it wasn't too hard, even though there was a liberal government in power, it wasn't too difficult to get them to support us, at least verbally, in the Central American arena.

Q: What about the coastal island treaty? Did you get involved in this?

BOYATT: Yes . . .

Q: *Yes.*

BOYATT: Yes, it was finally signed during my era.

Q: *What was our position?*

BOYATT: We were trying to get rid of these silly little islands, but the problem was that . . .

Q: *You were talking about the . . .*

BOYATT: Yes, the islands. Stuart, to be perfectly honest, I can't remember how we came to have possession of them.

Q: *Probably some whaling ship, or something like that.*

BOYATT: Yes, it could have been a whaling station, or it could have been the Spanish American War, it could have been the Panama thing, because Panama was a province of Colombia. But for whatever reason, we had sovereignty over the damn things which we were prepared to cede to the Colombians but to get it done legally was very involved, and it required legislative action, and the Senate had 8 million other things to do, other than worry about de-assessioning these little islands. But eventually we got it done.

Q: *I assume something like that played well within Colombia, didn't it?*

BOYATT: Yes, of course.

Q: *What about the appearance on the scene of Ronald Reagan? I gather that at least in ARA, it wasn't Reagan, but the people who came over there particularly with support by Jesse Helms and all, it was a pretty nasty take-over . . .*

BOYATT: Yes, it was.

Q: *Somewhat akin to your problem in Chile, but this one was even worse because it got personal.*

BOYATT: Sure, because they cleared out the people.

Q: *How did that impact on you, and what you were seeing there?*

BOYATT: I didn't get to Bogota until early November, and by that time Reagan had already been elected, and although I was appointed by Carter, and got advice and consent while Carter was still in the White House, for the first few months Carter was still the President until January '81. It was a lame duck administration, so I didn't know what they were going to do with me, whether they were going to keep me, fire me, or what, But what you say is true. When the

Reaganauts came in they cleaned out the ARA Bureau. I can't remember who was Assistant Secretary . . .

Q: Bill Bowdler. He was given no time, I guess.

BOYATT: Yes. He was told to clean out his desk, and they were equally abrupt with the Deputy Assistant Secretaries, and I'm trying to think who was brought in as Assistant Secretary?

Q: Tom Enders. Did this have any particular repercussions on you? Or were you off watching these lobby?

BOYATT: Right, I was a spectator to this war.

Q: You had been there, and obviously were reading the previous cables to see what our policy was as far as Colombia. Was there any change in our policy towards Colombia?

BOYATT: There wasn't a lot of change in our policy toward Colombia. We were still interested in getting their support . . . I mean Central America was a problem for the Democrats too. The Republicans became more active, our policy became more aggressive, therefore it became more difficult to get Latinos to side with us, and we were pushing Latinos around. But the drug war remained; our desire to have Colombian support, international (inaudible) remained. Our desire for Colombia to be a functioning democracy remained. It was not earth shaking like it had been in Chile.

Q: A couple of things. I note that the Colombians have a force in Sinai.

BOYATT: Yes, that one of my great coups.

Q: How did that come about? You might explain what the Sinai legal force was.

BOYATT: With the Peace Accords at Camp David, the peace between Egypt and Israel provided for an international force in the Sinai to interpose between the two parties, and to perform certain functions out there. They sent an "All Diplomatic and Consular Posts" cable, "Would your country be interested in participating in this force?" And they had a hell of a time getting countries to do it. But I had a very good relation with the Defense Minister and I met with him one day and asked him what he thought about that, how he would view that? He said, "Let me discuss it with my generals." And the terms were really very generous, we paid them more than they were paying their soldiers. It's good training, it's rotated every six months, and the long term and short of it is, I sold it. We were the first serious country. . . Samoa agreed to do it, but we were the first serious country that agreed to participate.

Q: Also, Colombia is rather proud of its role in the Korean War, weren't they?

BOYATT: Yes, and the chaps that were in charge of the army at that point, had been junior officers during Korea, so I was able to call on all of that. They had served with the Americans, and the Brits, and the Turks, and Iraq, and South Korea, as lieutenants, and they all remembered

that. You know how recall is, very happily. And I said, "Here's a chance for this next generation to do something similar."

Q: The Falklands? What's the Spanish term"

BOYATT: Malvinas

Q: This was a crisis that came up in 1982 between Argentina and Great Britain over who owned possession of the islands, and the Argentines invaded the islands, and the British responded, and putting us sort of in the middle between this firm ally and Latin America. How did you all handle that?

BOYATT: Well, we were lucky, Stuart, because we took the position with the Colombians that it would be very difficult for them to support the acquisition by force of a distant island, by the country that claimed that island, that was closest to it. The message being, if the Argentines can get away with it with the Falklands, maybe the Nicaraguans can get away with it with San Andres island. It's only 20 miles from Bluefields, Nicaragua, and its 700-800 miles from Colombia, whatever it is. Emotionally they were very much on the Argentine side. This is Anglo versus Latino. This goes back to Elizabeth and Philip, Sir Francis Drake, and all of the competition in the new world between Anglos and Hispanos, and they emotionally lined up with "the Ches", but very, very difficult for them to be aggressively overt in their support of the Argentines because of their own situation. The result was, that they did the minimum necessary they had to do. It seems to me we convinced them to abstain on a couple of votes in the OAS, and the UN whereas everyone else in Latin America was voting with the Argentines.

Q: Just a couple of other things. Did you get involved with Garcia Marquez, who got the Nobel Prize? What was the situation?

BOYATT: The situation was that Gabriel Garcia Marquez received the Nobel Prize, and the issue was "Are we going to issue him a visa , or not."

Q: He's a Colombian, and very popular by the way, unlike most Nobel Prize winners, he was really read in the United States. In fact he was sort of one of the gurus of the 70's and 80's generation.

BOYATT: Yes, and the first of the Latin American authors to make it big. The problem was, and that he is, a Castro supporter, a Marxist, and we had good evidence that he had carried messages for the M-19. Well, as you know, it's against the law to send someone in to the United States that's involved in terrorism. And we had pretty good evidence that he was involved in terrorism, so we turned the visa down, as I recall. And there was a great hue and cry about censorship. Of course, the issue didn't have a damn thing to do with censorship. Anybody who wanted to buy and read his novels, was free to do so. The question was whether he had a right to travel to the United States under the law, or not. I suppose we must have eventually given him a visa, grudgingly.

Q: Were we calling the shots, I mean initially we turned him down in Colombia, or . . .

BOYATT: That's my memory, or at least stalled on it and then got turned around in Washington.

Q: *President Reagan came through there, didn't he?*

BOYATT: It was a disaster.

Q: *Could you explain?*

BOYATT: Why?

Q: *How it went?*

BOYATT: By this time Belisario Betancur had become President, conservative, and a Hispanic nationalist, chauvinist, in extreme degree. The conservatives are a right wing party in Colombia, but very nationalistic. I sent a cable once the title of which was, "Belisario Betancur, Latin populist, or Peron without the jack boots," or something along those lines. Anyway, Betancur was very emotionally on the side of the Argentines in the Falklands conflict, and we clearly supported the Brits all the way. And when Reagan came in late '82, after we had worked out that he was going to come, but before he got there, he made some statement wherein he said that in the Anglo-Argentine conflict, clearly Maggie Thatcher was the best man in the fight, or something like that, and Betancur went up the frigging wall.

Meanwhile, we had agreed to the trip, and we've got these advance teams out there, and you know how they push everybody around, an incredible combination of ignorance and arrogance. They know nothing about the country, but they have to have things their way. Again, we're in the middle, we're trying to mediate between the advance people and the Colombians, and the advance people are . . . you know, Deaver's crowd, are pushing everybody around, and demanding this and demanding that, and the Colombians are getting madder and madder, and we're trying to do damage control in the embassy, and it's clear that this thing is very close to being out of control.

One of the jobs that I had was to relay the content of Reagan's remarks on all public occasions, toasts, and whatever there happen to be, and the major public remark was what Reagan would say in his toast at a luncheon hosted by Betancur. Seven or eight days before the trip, I delivered a text of Reagan's remarks, and asked for the Colombian text in return. I didn't get it, and I didn't get it. and I kept pushing, and I thought, "Oh, shit." I knew it was trouble, I didn't get it. Reagan took off on the first leg of his trip, which was to Brazil, I still hadn't gotten it. The night before he was to leave, I got a copy of Betancur's remarks which were literally insulting. I didn't even send this text to the party because I knew they would have canceled the trip. I went to the Foreign Minister, - - , and I said, "If my President is making a toast which is friendly, non-substantive, and brief. Your President is making a toast which is unfriendly, hits on all policy points, and is long. Unless you can get this changed, I'm going to recommend that the President not come to Colombia. I cannot have him here and have your President saying this. That's just no go. I don't want to do this, but I really have no choice. You're putting me in an impossible situation." He knew I was right. He's the one that had been putting me off under pressure from

the president, so he went back, and he got it changed significantly, but not totally.

So I cabled it off to the party in Brasilia, and I said, "You'll find this hard to believe, but what you're receiving here are the significantly toned down remarks of President Betancur." Then I got back another instruction to get it changed further. Anyway, that's about an 98 percent downside potential, and about a 2 percent upside potential by this time. Everybody in the Colombian bureaucracy is pissed off, they're really pissed off at the Secret Service for insisting on this, and insisting on that.

One of the things that really galled the Colombians was, they didn't want a Secret Service guy following Reagan around while Reagan and Betancur were reviewing the troops on the arrival and departure. And at the end of the pre-trip process, we all thought that we had gotten the Secret Service to agree to that. Anyway, Reagan arrives, and we're all worried as we can be about security. In Colombia security is always a challenge, and it was a challenge then, and here's this 70 year old guy sailing in at 8-9,000 feet, in day's planned activities, and then out the same day. I think he got in about 11:00. Well, 11:00 comes, the plane lands, Reagan pops out of the door, super Ronnie, and he looks great, and he bounces down the steps, all smiles and Betancur, and they review the troops, and as they review the troops this frigging Secret Service guy sneaks out and follows Reagan, step by step. The Colombian were fit to be tied because they figured we had double crossed them. We'd said that the problem was solved, and the problem wasn't solved. From that point on logistically, the trip was a nightmare. Everything the Colombians could do to screw us up, they did. And I'm there with Shultz and the President, and there's not a lot I can do, the DCM and everybody else in the embassy is trying to make it work as best they can, but it's not easy.

I remember at one point, when we went back into the palace after laying a wreath, and we were going up some stairs - you know, there's always the question of who's going to sit in on these high level meeting -- and I was going up the stairs, and I heard this voice behind me saying, "Hey, Tom," -- and there's Baker and Deaver standing there, first I couldn't see him in this mass of people, meanwhile Shultz and Reagan, and Betancur, are going up the stairs and I was supposed to be with them in the meeting, and Baker said, "Hey, Tom, if we can't get in, the President isn't going in," which I think was a frigging bluff. But anyway, I came back and I convinced the two policemen there, in Spanish, to let Baker and Deaver through and they came up with us, although they didn't go into the meeting. But that was just an example. That kind of stuff was going on all over town, at all levels.

Reagan, meanwhile, was having a great trip. He was having a hell of a good time. He thought it was tremendously successful. Every other briefcase carrier in his group thought it was a disaster, and from an administrative point of it was a disaster because they didn't get in, they didn't get everything they wanted. Anyway, we did what we had to do. We got through the toasts, they weren't too bad. Ronnie was very satisfied with the trip, we're flying in helicopters back to the take-off at 3:30 or whatever it is, and we can see some fires down below set by rioters who were rioting because of his trip. We get out to the airport, he reviews the troops on his take-off -- this time, I think with the Foreign Minister, I can't remember -- and as he starts to review, this same Secret Service guy leaves the crowd and starts to walk behind him. As they're walking along this Colombian colonel comes in at an angle, and literally throws a body block into this guy, and

knocks him right o his ass. And then he sits on him until the review is finished. Can you believe this? Sits on him until the review is finished, Reagan still thinks he had a great trip, and from his point of view he has. And he bounds up the steps, everybody gets in the plane, they close the door, and they go home.

The bureaucrats, in this case Deaver, Baker, and all the staff types, are furious because they weren't well taken care of from their perspective. Reagan subsequently, and Shultz, think it is a very successful trip, and that's my experience along those lines. Boy, if I had to do it over let me tell you I'd tell him to stay home. It was a mess.

Q: Did you leave shortly after that?

BOYATT: That was in December, I left in May.

Q: Is there anything else to cover?

BOYATT: On Colombia?

Q: Yes.

BOYATT: No, I don't think so. There were always these difficult human issues, I closed the consulate in Medellin, and in Cali, because we couldn't protect our people. We had two or three officers down there who were very exposed. We couldn't afford to put enough muscle in place to keep them safe. That was hugely unpopular, as you can imagine, because it meant the people of those two cities had to travel to Bogota to get their visas, and I was damned if I was going to risk American lives to facilitate visa issuance. I closed the USIS libraries for the same reason, very unpopular. Established a policy that people had to live in apartment houses for the same reason. You could put one guy guarding the doors of an apartment house much easier. That was hugely unpopular. It was no fun, Stuart, believe me, and it was even worse for my successors because they eventually wound up eliminating dependents.

Q: You retired from the Foreign Service after this?

BOYATT: I did.

Q: Just to complete the picture, obviously you were young, why did you do it?

BOYATT: Well, the jobs that they were coming up with were repetitive. There's not much difference being Ambassador in Colombia, and Ambassador in Venezuela, much less Guatemala. My wife was opposed to going back and taking the children back to a totally militarized, terrorist environment, I was myself beginning to question the career for the first time, because short of becoming the Director General, or an Assistant Secretary, or an Ambassador in some plush place like Spain or Denmark or whatever, which wasn't likely, I really began to look, and ask myself, it I had a future in the Foreign Service. I mean a real future. A future that would be as exciting, and as rewarding, as much fun as the past had been.

And about the time I'm having these kinds of thoughts, Frank Carlucci called me up. He had become president, and chief operating officer, of Sears World Trade, and was just organizing a trading company. I couldn't refuse. So I accepted the offer, and I went into the Director General, who was then Roy Atherton, to resign, and he said, "Oh, don't do that. Go on leave without pay. Who knows whether you'll like the private sector, or what it will be like a year from now." So I did that, I went on leave without pay, and worked for a year at Sears World Trade, at the end of that time I was even making more money, and the Foreign Service, if anything, was looking worse, and less fun than it had been before. So I just made a strategic decision to stay in the private sector, and make a lot of money, and have a different kind of fun for the last 10 or 15 years of my career.

And you know Stewart, you know I love the Foreign Service. I loved it then, and I love it now. My AFSA time, and so on, but for everybody there comes a time to quit, and you should do it when that time comes, because otherwise you're going to be very sad, and disappointed.

Q: Amen, amen. Thank you very much, Tom.

ALEXANDER F. WATSON
Deputy Chief of Mission
Bogota (1981-1984)

Ambassador Alexander Watson was born and raised in Massachusetts and was educated at Harvard and Wisconsin Universities. In 1962 he joined the Foreign Service and was posted to the Dominican Republic, the beginning of an impressive career specializing in Latin American Affairs. His other overseas posts include Spain, Brazil, Bolivia and Colombia, serving as Deputy Chief of Mission in the latter three countries. He had several Washington assignments, the last being Assistant Secretary of State for Inter-American Affairs. From 1986 to 1989 he served as United States Ambassador to Peru. Ambassador Watson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1997.

Q: You left Bolivia when?

WATSON: September, I think it was the 4th, 1981.

Q: Where did you go?

WATSON: Directly to Bogota as DCM.

Q: You were there from '81 to?

WATSON: '84.

Q: Okay. What was the situation? This is a rather difficult period again, too.

WATSON: Yes, I had several difficult, but fascinating assignments. Colombia is in more trouble now than even it was then, although then we thought it was pretty troubled.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

WATSON: Tom Boyatt, a Foreign Service Officer, was the ambassador when I arrived there. Tom Enders was the assistant secretary of State at that time. I had suggested to Tom Enders that it might be good for me to go to Brazil as DCM rather than Colombia. He listened to me very nicely and he said, "No, you're going to Colombia." I had nothing against Colombia, but Brazil was a bigger place and all. It turned out to be, once again, a fascinating assignment. Tom was there for a while. I don't remember exactly when he left, but he was replaced by Lewis Tambs, a professor from Arizona State University who had been a member of the conservative group called the Santa Fe, which drafted some policy prescriptions for Latin America should... because of Reagan winning the presidency. Once again, all those guys received appointments or positions.

Q: Let's talk about... when you arrived in '81, what was the situation in Colombia?

WATSON: Remember that, not too long before it would have to be '80, Ambassador Diego Asencio, my good friend, is among those that were kidnapped in the Dominican Republic embassy there by M-19 guerrillas. He subsequently has written a book about it called Our Man is Inside. So there was that kind of attention. There was a lot of violence in Colombia, as there is today, perpetrated by the guerrillas on the left. There was a lot of violence perpetrated at that point by the narcotics traffickers who were just starting to feel their oats and to put together the huge national cocaine cartel that the Colombians ran and still run. It was also a time where a lot of marijuana had been shipped to the north coast of Colombia and onto the United States and elsewhere. Many people think that the marijuana phenomenon was even more important than the cocaine phenomenon at that time. There was virtually no poppy cultivation, so virtually no heroin coming out of Colombia at that time as there is today. You had sort of a lot of kidnapping for ransom for money being done by a variety of groups and some of them affiliated with one or the other of the cartels, the active narcotics criminals. Some of them were just gangs who needed money. There you have this beautiful country, spectacular beautiful geography with great variety and sophisticated and nice people, embroiled in a country whose economy, up until the last two or three years, has always been one of the best in Latin America—the only country in Latin America that didn't have to reschedule its debt, etc. Fiscal management and steady growth and a wealth of natural resources in a difficult situation caused by the guerrillas and by the drug traffickers. The embassy was an active place, sort of in the center of things—particularly as we were trying to work with interested Colombians who deal with the narcotics issue. That meant a lot of things. It meant, first and foremost, raising the Colombians' awareness of the seriousness of drugs. They had to view it as a real problem, to stop the demand. Failing to understand the maxim that any country that is a drug producer or a drug transit country is becoming drug consumed. To a considerable extent they just didn't want to admit it. I must say the faults of Colombians for all their virtues is the incapacity in probably some of the most intelligent people to understand the gravity in the situation you're in and to perceive sort of minor problems to their profound illnesses and therefore not deal with them as they should.

Another dimension of the embassy work that was very important was the consular work. Bogota was one of the so-called visa mills. Hundreds and hundreds of people every day were in lines for visas at that point. Of course, everything was complicated by security conditions that I talked about, but the reaction in the embassy is complicated, too. You're trying to give people as much security as possible without totally paralyzing them. So those are among the things that I had to deal with. As the deputy chief of mission, I was the narcotics coordinator. I was also the security coordinator who had to deal with this all the time.

Q: What was your impression of the Colombian government? You've been in a number of countries, how it operated and how we dealt with it at that time?

WATSON: We had lots of dealings with it on a variety of issues. At the same time we also had, the three years I was there, I think, two visits by Vice President Bush and one visit by President Reagan. We had a lot of those kinds of activities and each one of those is a story that is either extremely depressing or extremely humorous, depending on how you hear it and how our own folks behave sometimes in getting these things done. When I came there, the government of Colombia had been governed by two parties, the liberals and the conservatives, who are ancient parties in Colombia. They go way back to the 19th Century. You're almost born to one or the other. It's almost ethnic. Not quite, but almost, and there were lots of civil wars in the 19th Century and a huge civil war that broke out in 1948— *La Violencia*, where a major political figure was assassinated. An inevitable war broke out between the conservative and liberal parties and the allies, which was finally patched together in the '50s. The agreement included the system whereby the two parties would rotate the presidency and each one would have cabinet ministries in the government led by somebody from the other party. This wasn't very civilized and sophisticated, but what it tended to do was monopolize power in the hands of a few people. All the state governors were appointed and the mayors... some mayors were elected, some were even appointed, so you had a system that was democratic superficially, but not very functionally. During this time you had these guerrilla groups which were never quite taken into consideration at the time that this great deal was put together. They were marginal players out in the countryside and they were problematical, but they were not the same ones who came on later. Life sort of went on smoothly. Now when we got there, the president was President Julio Cesar Turbay Ayala, a fellow of Lebanese Maronite Christian extraction who ran a rather conservative government over some of the liberals' party. Then there was an election in '82 when former President Lopez got there, the liberal party nomination, and wanted to come back as president. Turbay's predecessor once— and this was at the end of this period where you had alternating presidents in a wide open election. New parties split when a young fellow named _____, or something like that, was assassinated much later on. He was a more liberal faction than of a liberal party. It was exactly what _____ had done the first time around and he ended up taking the liberal party and became elected, so it's a tradition, but by splitting it, it allowed Belisario Betancur, who was from the conservative party but was more a liberal in attitude on a lot of things in the Latin American sense of the word than Lopez was, to become the president.

Our relationship with the _____ government was quite a productive one; straightforward. We got along with his people well, a lot of very intelligent and highly educated and sophisticated Colombians to deal with. We worked closely with them on quite a number of issues, including

the narcotics questions. Basically, that was sort of the driving issue. Our relationship with the _____ administration was a little more problematic because he had in him a streak, which included tweaking Uncle Sam's nose from time to time; being sort of perversely provocative. It gave him political mileage.

Q: He took lessons from Pierre Trudeau in Canada.

WATSON: Yes. That sort of gratuitous thing. It got to be so bad that when President Reagan was coming, some people on his staff were _____ to Colombia because remember that _____ was sort of giving a speech at a luncheon and sort of _____ Reagan and tell the Americans how badly he was in a variety of ways. Reagan was a good judge and he decided to come anyhow and behaved himself perfectly and, I think, wowed the Colombians. Colombia was a place where... our son was in high school there and he still has a lot of friends there. It was a place where we... remember when Tom Boyatt left and he was still working on whether or not the Colombians could actually spray chemicals on marijuana plants and it would kill them. When Boyatt left he said, "Now, you'll never get this done, but we did." It was a very complicated issue. People probably don't recall this very well. The best chemical to spray on marijuana to kill it and do no damage to anything else and not spread around in the soil is something called paraquat. Paraquat was used in Mexico for spraying marijuana. Then only in America could this happen, then the idea gained force and Joe Califano was one of the leading people in this.

Q: The former secretary of health, education and welfare.

WATSON: Education and welfare; and was very close to Lyndon Johnson. The idea was that paraquat might be harmful, it might be a carcinogen, it might be harmful to people's health if they inhaled it in any way, including by smoking. So, if you used it to kill marijuana then somehow, though completely illegal, it is brought into the United States and then was smoked. Once again an illegal act by people in the United States, those people might be negatively affected by this and the U.S. government had the right to protect them from the falling of these two illegal acts that they're engaged. Therefore, we could not be party to any program which would put paraquat on marijuana that might come into the United States.

I mean, I think most countries around the world are scratching their heads at this. So, you couldn't use paraquat and it became all of a sudden a devil word in the phrase that they use now. Of course, the narcotics traffickers were all over this, the headlines and all this stuff, and they paid journalists to write stories; you know all the things they do. So paraquat became politically impossible to use although it was by far the best product; remember in the health standard we couldn't use it. Then we had to work to find substitutes in the U.S. Department of Agriculture. We did all kinds of experiments up in Beltsville and elsewhere and found that _____ was really the next best thing, and it was fixed in the soil, and it wouldn't go into the streams. We had to persuade the Colombians. It filtered in some certain kinds of plants and doesn't get everywhere and it's not toxic to humans and all that stuff. But still, getting them to... once it is universally accepted as true that spraying something on marijuana is bad, it's kind of hard to overcome all that. That was what Tom was betting— that we wouldn't be able to, but we eventually did, and we even started to make one of the arguments the narcotics people would use. And their allies, some of them witty and some of them unwitty, said that the spraying was environmentally

catastrophic and we started to make the argument that, wait a second, what is really environmentally catastrophic is chopping down all of the natural growth on the very steep hills in northern Colombia and planting them with rows of marijuana and the rains come and erosion comes and you have bare hillsides in a very short number of years. We also were talking about coca; we talk about all the chemicals dumped into the streams by the cocaine stills, the laboratories, were far more damaging than spraying the stuff on coca plants. In any case, this was really different.

We did some very interesting things here that probably have disappeared in the midst of time, but in order to bring to Colombians' awareness the dangers of all this, the narcotics stuff to their own people, we sponsored a conference here at USIA, who organized it; they're good at that stuff. We brought experts from all around the world, not too many from the U.S. and other Latin American countries. We had, at that time, a justice minister who is a good friend of mine and who understood this and gave the keynote address at this... this conference which got a lot of hoopla in the press and on TV and people talking about the dangers of these things and about the inevitability of a producing country, becoming a consuming country. Even the people in Colombia who actually did know about this, and quite a few really courageous, were these people talking about how much drug use there already was in Colombia. All this was a bombshell to the Colombian society. It really opened their eyes. It really got them to say wow, maybe we have been turning our backs and planting our heads in the sand like ostriches instead of dealing with this in some way that we should.

Meanwhile you had... marijuana was scandalous, a guy who ended up being complicit in running marijuana through Cuba at the time into Cuban waters and, of course, the Cubans denied it and the Cuban allies among the guerrillas denied it, but this guy was nailed in Mexico and there was no doubt about it and it was a long complicated story, but a lot of stuff on marijuana. Meanwhile, the real serious problem was developing, and that was the cocaine traffic. In those days, the CIA could not be involved with anything to do with this at all.

Q: Was this by congressional order or was this they just wanted to keep away from it?

WATSON: Yes, no, well, the argument was at the time that the way the Central Intelligence Agency works is that it pays people to give them information. You could not retain anyone who was involved in narcotics; then you'd be seen as complicit in the narcotics trade and therefore you couldn't be involved. That was the argument, now that may have been a sensible argument, and more have been that this is not realistic and all this stuff.

Q: It's kind of messy.

WATSON: Messy, and it's just for the law enforcement creeps, not for us super sleuths and all that sort of thing. But in any case, they overcame that in a matter of years. I remember that was one of the real things. We had people who were frustrated in their own organization because they saw it, how important this was.

Q: Well, the DEA was paying like mad.

WATSON: Well, but they don't have the same restrictions.

Q: Yes.

WATSON: Of course, the ones with the most money in some ways in the State Department. You always forget DEA helicopters, they're all State Department. In any case – and this was getting violent – _____ was walking around holding up this passport saying "I've got an American visa," and he was the noisiest of all. He got himself to be a called _____, which is sort of a deputy member of congress. If a member of congress leaves for some reason, he would fill his place. He would hold this passport out with a U.S. visa in it and say, "I can go to the States."

Another guy who eventually was director and was still in the United States now built a huge statue of John Lennon in the town square in _____, where he was from, and the _____ brothers. My son told me the other night, something that horrified me and _____ fight these guys got into it, the _____ brothers in a nightclub, high school kids. The _____ pulled a gun on them and everything else. I didn't know anything about this at the time. It was a wild, wild place. But one of the things I wanted to mention was _____, the justice minister, was really a close ally of _____, who was the dissident presidential candidate. These guys were really sort of the future of the country in a way. He really took courageous positions on this and it cost him his life. We knew that he was under heavy threat and we had arranged for him and his wife and his kids to come to the United States in protected status until things cooled off. We had this all set to go and I remember at the national day reception the Dutch Embassy, I was talking to him and I said, "We're all set to go, we're expecting to go this week or so. When do you want to do this?" He said, "I can't go yet, I've got so many things to do. I can't go right now. In a few weeks we'll go." On that night, on the way home, he was blown away by cocaine cowboys, as they call them— the guys on motorcycles. He was killed. It was a tragic but explosive demonstration by the Colombia public about what was going on in their country.

Q: I remember sometime later there was a lot of talk about how the justice system really wasn't designed to deal with this. I mean, was this basically true of any justice system in the area or did it just happen with anyone with a gun or were we seeing any problem?

WATSON: I would say that any justice system faced with the kinds of threats that this one was faced with would collapse, even in this country. I have my own little two-bit theory about which, I haven't thought about this a lot, so it gets down to bare bones. It was more sophisticated once, but what I see as what was happening in Colombia was it goes all the way back to that agreement in the '50s and the civil war issue, conservatives and its consolidation problem in the hands of a few and ignoring everything else. Things ran along well, the economy ran along well, upper classes were doing well. Colombia is not a country of as much abject poverty as a lot of other places. It's a country with a series of large cities, it's not all concentrated in one city. A lot of the agriculture was coffee, which produced quite a lot of income for small farmers. It was a reasonably successful, reasonably middle class economy and of course there were exceptions to that. Compared to everybody else down there, it looked pretty darn good. It just sort of rolled along. They didn't pay any attention, attention to the guerrillas. Whenever something really bad would happen, the army would chase them down. They didn't try to wipe them out; they didn't seem to want to. Meanwhile, the narcotics thing began and, way back when I was a

undergraduate, I read a book by a guy named Hagen, a professor at Harvard, who wrote books about entrepreneurialism and case studies of certain places. One of the places – why I remember this I don't know – one of the cases was Colombia, a place that was just more successful than any other place in the general area. Singapore might have been another; places like that all over the world. Places where some combination of factors, where the people are more entrepreneurial, they are more successful, they take more risks, they overcome those risks and make more money and create more business and they do more things and Colombia was one of them. That's what happened with cocaine. These guys put together a very impressive operation. Society essentially ignored them as I said before. It was sort of a gringo problem until it was too late. The country's institutions were not ready to handle this. The institutions, they were really brittle rather than flexible. They were designed for this kind of static situation that they had and all of a sudden you have this powerful force with unlimited resources, billions of dollars, unlimited greed, unlimited thirst for power and influence and they couldn't handle it. Then it's even more complicated when the guerrillas, some element of the guerrilla forces, end up cohabiting with the narcotics people. When we discovered a cocaine laboratory in southeast/south central Colombia that was discovered, we were tracing the chemicals. That was an eye opener. That was the first really clear evidence. Marijuana, there was some M-19 being involved in the marijuana stuff. This was really serious stuff and a huge laboratory, bigger than any laboratory that has ever been found and guarded by soldiers of the revolution, the revolutionary armed forces. The biggest guerilla and one that is still, the one that has been negotiating with president _____. Then the idea is that the narco guerrillas and narco terrorists and all that stuff. Then you had all of a sudden income from the narcotics thing flowing into the hands of the guerillas. All of a sudden an overnight a threat that was probably more serious than people saw it, but probably not life threatening to the regime.

Q: Were we seeing this?

WATSON: Oh, yes.

Q: We were.

WATSON: We saw this, but it didn't matter. The Colombians had to see it, the final analysis. Americans have this fault of always somehow thinking that what we decide here in this wonderful capital city is somehow going to determine things and we even talked about that with a sort of, "we won the war in El Salvador" and stuff like that. Give me a break; sort of naive. In the final analysis, the local folks do it and we provide sometimes resolve, guidance, support, resources, etc.

Q: Yes, it depends on the people who live there.

WATSON: We always look at it through our own way and see ourselves as sort of big on the stage and the local people as small, where it is completely the reverse.

Q: We lost track.

WATSON: Yes, it's ridiculous. This was transforming this discovery, really endangering, we

could see it was giving even more power to the narcotics guys who were becoming increasingly sophisticated.

Q: One of the things I've heard about the Colombians— even the Colombians in Miami or something are more prone to reach for their machine guns or something. Could you talk a little bit about the violence in the Colombian psyche? Was it really different, or was this opportunity or what?

WATSON: I have never figured this out and I've always tried to avoid leaping at the superficial explanations because I don't do that and because I don't really know. I don't have any true understanding. There is no doubt that Colombia is more violent than other places. It's absolutely relevant and the facts are there. My wife saw people getting in a fight at a traffic accident and pull out guns and killing each other, right in the middle of the street. I mean she was right there. This stuff happens there. It happens other places too, but it happens more often in Colombia. Exactly why that is, I don't pretend to know.

I read books on this when I lived in Colombia. I can't remember them anymore, but it's something the Colombians themselves try to analyze. Although some Colombians still deny it's the case. It's no doubt that more violence occurs there. I had experiences that I don't want to go into here, but I had experiences. This conversation was information I had not, from any sources in the embassy, my own Colombian sources, about how these kidnapping rings worked and who they were and exactly how they negotiated that would make your hair stand on end. The kidnapping rings knew virtually everyone who had kidnapping insurance. They knew how much that insurance was, so they know that the negotiations begin at that point. They don't end, they begin there. We know you have \$10 million in kidnapping insurance, so we want all of that now. We want another \$20 million. They had people in the most sophisticated, they moved them out of the country, they had them on the ground, unbelievably sophisticated stuff. They had ways. A friend of mine was kidnapped and held in a house for a long time, but finally he persuaded them. He is still there, a businessman, in carpet, a Colombian businessman. He managed to persuade one of his kidnappers that he should be released. The kidnapper went out and went to a pay phone and called in the police, said where he was. The police came disguised as telephone repairman and went outside the house and cut the wires with the boom on a crane and had people stationed other places, all workers, street cleaners, something out of a movie. At a pointed moment they swung that crane over, burst through the window, subdued the guard, protected him, ran down the stairs, caught the rest of the guys, pulled my friend back out the window and got him away. It's hard to believe whatever goes right. Some guys are good at that stuff. That was just, that was one that turned out where a person was not killed.

Society, everybody lived within their means with lots of security. In the embassy we had our people go in different routes to work everyday, picked up in armored vans, all that stuff. I had to do all that. One of the most difficult things – maybe I mentioned this when I was talking about Bolivia, but – I always found dealing with security issues difficult. At one point, the four most dangerous places in the world were considered to be Bogota, Lima, El Salvador and Beirut and I was in both Lima and Bogota. I also had been in La Paz back when it was dangerous. It was never as dangerous before or after, not even close, not even 10%, but it was dangerous. We had bullets flying over our heads, chipping off the cement in La Paz when the military coups were

taking place. It was a wild time, but the trouble is when you have a large mission and you're dealing with security issues, you have to take every threat seriously. There are all kinds of threats and some of them are bogus and some of them are just misinformation. As soon as you decide that a threat has to be dealt with, you have... I always figure you have about 20 minutes with which to come up with a solution. Around the embassy the word will run that a threat had come in that we're going to be bombed or someone's house is going to be hit or one of our vehicles is going to be mortared on the way home or someone's going to be kidnapped or whatever it is. If you don't get your team together and you don't have a solution in about 20 minutes, you lose everyone, the panic sets in and you lose the confidence, the leadership, you've got to move. I had a five person group, it didn't matter where they were from in the mission and whose judgment I thought was good, smart and cool, level headed and think about this. We would sit down and within 15 minutes come up with some way to deal with this. Then we would call a meeting of the country team, security watch committee as it is now called to discuss this. We went into that room. We were all ready it looked like. We were in most cases dealing pretty confidently before the panic can set in. You've already got the action you're taking to do it. Then sometimes the discussion in that meeting would actually be good and some really good ideas better than the ideas than we had and we'd work it out. The whole point is rather than going in there and saying, Jesus Christ we have this threat, now what do we do? We'd go in there and say, we've gotten this threat, this is how we analyze it and what we're doing, at least we'd get some structure to the conversation. That never gets easy.

Q: What about families?

WATSON: Oh, yes, there were people. I remember there was one military wife who never left her apartment; she was so terrified. She would never leave her apartment at all for any reason. I had to ask – I think that family was in the military group that was supposed to be with the attaché – and I think I had to ask the commander of the MIL group, I said, “maybe they should transfer this fellow because it wasn't doing him any good.” Casting no aspersions on him whatsoever, should not affect his career negatively at all. But this was truly an inhuman situation for this woman and probably her whole family. He doesn't know what to do. He's got a wife that's scared to death and he doesn't want to look like he can't handle the job and so you've got to help him out.

Q: What happened when Ambassador Tambs came in because, I mean, Tambs has a reputation. He was a professor with all sorts of very strong conservative ideas. Later he went elsewhere, but you caught him first hand. How did this work and what was... can you talk about this?

WATSON: I'll talk about it. It's obviously a pretty tricky subject. There were some amusing aspects to it. After the Reagan visit, Tom Boyatt left and Lew Tambs was coming down. I'd heard all sorts of stories about Lew Tambs. I've always considered myself to be sort of at the liberal end of the political spectrum and he was obviously ultra conservative. I was trying to behave in a way in which I would be perceived as being pragmatic and respectful of ideology. Lo and behold I heard from Washington that Tambs was thinking seriously of getting rid of that guy Watson down there, because he had heard he was too pragmatic. I went up and met with Lew Tambs at the army and navy club somewhere in Virginia where we lived; we had lunch together. He was the Indian affairs director at the time. We got along okay. Lew Tambs had just

gotten remarried to a young woman who was extremely nice. If I remember correctly, she had never been out of Louisiana, never been overseas, never been out of Louisiana, never even out of the state. My recollection, maybe it's an exaggeration, but this put her in a very difficult circumstance with this guy who was about twice her age; it was a difficult situation. My wife and she talked; we were in Colombia and they were in the U.S. My wife and Phyllis talked on the phone and when they hung up neither one understood a word the other one had said. My wife was from outside Boston and Phyllis was from Louisiana. They both now joke about it. Neither one understood what the other one was saying. They were just being polite. Tambs came down and I don't want to sound boastful, but I think it's fairly described, you know, I just decided that my job no matter what I thought, ideology, he might not even know. That was not my job. My job was to run that embassy and to deliver it to him as ambassadors do with it as you want. I was the guy and the mechanic running the machine—the engineer in the bowels of the ship keeping the engine going so he could steer it where he wanted it to go. Another part of my job was to give him my advice. He didn't know anything about embassies and to give him my advice and be helpful to him, steer him between the swords and the daggers, but always in private; always be the dutiful lieutenant. Well, after his first few weeks he was still suspicious of me, and you need to remember when the Reagan administration came in after the Carter administration; it was the most violent transition I think everyone has ever seen.

Q: Particularly on the Latin American scene.

WATSON: Bill Bowdler was assistant secretary – mild mannered, absolutely decent career officer, the assistant secretary of State for InterAmerican affairs – and was called up by somebody saying you have until noon to get out of your office. It was that kind of thing. Jim Cheek was thrown out. He was handling Central America. He left the whole Foreign Service.

Q: I tried to interview him.

WATSON: It was the most violent transition you can imagine. So these guys came in thinking basically whatever the Carter administration was doing was wrong by definition. So, we don't know what we're doing, but whatever is the opposite of what they were doing is right. That's how they became. That sounds simplistic, but that's exactly how they were thinking. I have a million examples of that. Finally they got their heads screwed on right. They started to realize that human rights was something actually developed in the congress. The whole human rights reporting required by the State Department was placed on it by the house of representatives during the Ford administration and Carter was smart enough to embrace this. Carter also believed in this strongly. The Reagan people quickly realized that defending human rights is a major way to defend democracy and ,after all, we do stand for democracy and all that kind of stuff. They rather quickly got their bearings in most ways, but at the beginning it was pretty wild. When Lew came in, I'm sure he was suspicious of all this. Very quickly it became clear, first of all, that I was loyal and I was going to do what I said; I wasn't running around his back and saying anything to anybody. I had to be very careful in that regard. Secondly, the issues we were dealing with didn't really fall into any particular spot, on the left or to the right of the American political spectrum. Lew had a way of producing things and he would talk and he'd say, marijuana and Marxists, coonies and cocaine. He had another one, too: democracy and drugs. Those are our issues here. Once you get to that level then your discussions are about tactics, but

not about fundamental direction of what you've been doing in the country and all that stuff. So, the found this, we didn't spend any time on political differences and discussions and those kinds of things. We were trying to find ways to work with the economy and authorities and a list to achieve our objectives.

Q: How did he work with the Colombian government? Was it a learning period?

WATSON: Yes. Lew Tambs talked to the press all the time, and they didn't always appreciate it. Sometimes it was good things, sometimes it helped further the process of awakening the Colombians to the danger they were facing. I don't even know, it might have been resented. I think our relationship, some people may disagree. I think, dealing with the kind of society Colombians are, upper class Colombians prefer dealing with professional diplomats, which may be surprising to some people. They actually think much more positively with professional diplomats than they do with people who aren't; even though, as I said, a rather weak professional service had a whole bunch of people, irrespective of what party they were in, who ended up in high diplomatic posts. It was sort of a virtual career to them. I mean, once again this will sound boastful, but when I left the country, the foreign minister gave me one of the decorations, which they never give to deputy chiefs of mission. They did it because they – rightly or not – they knew that, actually, I was running the embassy. I never said that. Lew was very nice about it. His ego was not such that it was out of control or that he was always insecure. He could handle this kind of thing. He probably knew it and he felt the same. He had things that he was doing and he let me run everything else.

Q: Did you find often with a political appointee one of the great strengths is they can call the right people who are in power in Washington? I mean did he have that or not?

WATSON: Not that much at that point. I don't think that he did. He wasn't really an intimate. He was a guy who was out there on the right wing fringe of things, but he wasn't an intimate part of the Reagan group. He knew a lot of those people up there, but he didn't call them.

Q: Well, you mentioned that George Bush came a couple of times and Ronald Reagan. Is there anything you'd like to say about those trips? What was your impression of Bush as Vice President when he came, was it a business trip?

WATSON: I always liked Bush, still like him; I have seen him a lot during my career. Sometimes in Brazil when I got there, a couple of times. Saw him a lot when I was up at the UN. I've seen him a couple of times since. I thought he did a good job and he's smart and focused.

Q: How about Mrs. Tambs? I would have thought that this, being such both a high position and all the security, it would have been pretty difficult for her.

WATSON: For her, she handled it with great aplomb and should be commended for it. She may have gone to bed with tears in her eyes, but you didn't see it during the day. She talked a lot to my wife about this stuff. They got along well. She had... I think she had a baby while she was there if I remember right. She had two or three kids and she didn't... she wasn't trying to make any kind of big mark on Colombian society. She was perfectly decent, represented the United

States in her position.

Q: Did you see the effects of narco corruption moving in at that time into the society? Well, I take it now it's practically epidemic.

WATSON: Yes, you touched on this earlier. Even in those days the reports were already intimidating. The technique that people talk about now, then the traffickers would go to the judge and put \$1,000 on his table and say, either take this or I'll kill your wife. Once he takes that and they photograph that, the ball game is over, he's in their pocket and that's it. The military didn't want to get in their anti-drug party, because the general who was the minister of defense feared correctly that once the military started to get into that, they would be corrupted; performance of duty of fighting guerrillas or defending Venezuelans or anyone else.

Q: Well, I think today of Colombians and sometime back, we always think of drugs. Was there anything else that we were interested in? I mean, was coffee, the coffee market of interest or anything else or UN votes?

WATSON: Oh, yes, sure.

Q: The Central American situation?

WATSON: Absolutely, all those things. They were part of the contradora group, sure. At that time we had the Falklands and Malvinas war in 1982 and the Colombians were playing a role along with the Peruvians and Brazilians trying to mediate between the Argentines and the Brits and keeping us apprised of what was going on.

JAMES L. TULL
Deputy Chief of Mission
Colombia (1984-1985)

James L. Tull was born in Iowa. After serving in the US Navy from 1951-1955 he received his bachelor's degree and his master's degree at the University of Colorado. His career included positions in Colombia, England, Uruguay, Dominican Republic, Cyprus, and Costa Rica. Mr. Tull was interviewed by Raymond Ewing in May 2001.

TULL: To Bogota, back to Colombia but this time as DCM. Our ambassador there was Lewis Tambs, a professor of Latin American history at Arizona State University in Phoenix who had been active in the Republican party and appointed by President Reagan about two years earlier. His deputy was Alec Watson, who had just been named ambassador to Brazil. We did not know each other, but Tambs selected me and we arrived in Bogota in July, 1984. In the twenty years since we left Colombia, two major new issues had arisen: the first was the rise of the leftist guerrilla groups from a scattering of ex-bandits and disaffected university youths to well-organized and armed rural militia of several thousand whose skilled leadership

usually enabled them to emerge the winner in any of their frequent firefights with the police or Colombian army units; the second was the even more spectacular rise of the major drug lords such as Pablo Escobar and Carlos Lederer and their international narcotics cartels. Worse still, about the time we arrived, a symbiotic relationship was developing between the two, with the guerrillas providing protection for drug laboratories while Escobar and his like paid huge sums of money which bought them arms and equipment.

In Washington, too, the “War on Drugs” was in full bloom and focused on Colombia as the main supplier of illegal narcotics to this country. For his part, Ambassador Tambs was determined not to fall prey to the intimidation the drug dealers had used so successfully against their foes- rather, on every available public and private occasion, he attacked them head on and personably. In speeches and the media, he condemned their ruthless and bloodthirsty ways, he ridiculed their attempts to appear “friends of the poor” by sponsoring youth clubs and building soccer fields, and he demanded their extradition to the U.S. to face persecution and “hard time” federal imprisonment.

Q: Were there threats against Ambassador Tambs?

TULL: Yes, from DEA, police, and military sources we received almost daily warnings of attempts against him. Terrorists- “narco-guerrillas” was the term he coined for them- set one bomb off near his residence and a large car bomb next to the embassy, fortunately without injuries to embassy personnel, but as all too usual in these cases, with the death of one lady waiting outside the embassy for a visa.

Q: Were we giving the Colombian government a lot of support and help then?

TULL: By that time we were doing a lot of intelligence coordination and cooperation; material support especially for the police and Army was on the rise. Years earlier, the government had decided it really did not need an assistance program of any kind, so this had to be rebuilt from zero. But, in addition, I personally believe that the ambassador’s strong, “outfront” approach helped a great deal. Until then, the narcos had the upper hand in the sense of appearing unbeatable. He took them on fearlessly and even over the short time I was there, I could see a stiffening of spine in the police, the ministry of justice, parts of the media, and in the presidency. Certainly President Belisario Betanour, who became a good friend of Tambs, changed from a fairly wishy-washy figure on this issue to one who led the fight for the first successful extradition of one of Escobar’s top lieutenants in the Medellin cartel. But it was a dangerous tactic and ultimately his security situation became so difficult that Washington ordered him and his family back to the States in December, 1984.

Q: You were in charge of the embassy from that point until you left the following summer. Were there a lot of threats against you? You had less visibility.

TULL: I can’t say that I was ever targeted personally in the way the ambassador was. But as we learned in Montevideo with soils specialist Claude Fly, the kidnapping or murder of one American can cause about as much difficulty as another, so we took very careful precautions. Still today, when I’m driving and hear a motorcycle pulling up behind me, I take a pretty

close look. That was a standard assassination method in Colombia- a masked shooter on the back of a motorbike.

Q: Were your wives and families able to stay on there?

TULL: Only those without dependent children. Shortly after the ambassador left, DEA picked up some intelligence to the effect that the narcos, frustrated by our security measures and armed personnel convoys, were beginning to discuss plans to attack the Abraham Lincoln International school, which most of our children attended, and take hostages. I knew we must head off any possibility of that, so over the 1964-65 Christmas break, we very quietly moved the kids back to the U.S. as well as any parents who wanted to accompany them. At the same time, I was glad some wives and “babes-in-arms” mothers decided to stay on. I remembered from our time in Cyprus that a wholesale Beirut style evacuation of dependents can result in a lot of morale problems. I thought if we could keep at least a semblance of community life, it would be easier on all; it seemed to have turned out that way.

Q: The DEA was an important part of the embassy staff. Were they kind of off on their own?

TULL: When I arrived, they had offices across the street from the chancery. But after the car bomb, others in their building grew so nervous about them being there that we decided it best to move them into our spaces, so we reconfigured the vacant garage into offices. And you’re 100% right, they were a vital part of the embassy and it was a very dangerous assignment for the dozen or so agents stationed there.

Q: Anything else about Colombia?

TULL: Only to say that despite it all, we still were able to keep all the usual activities which were important to both Colombia and the U.S. moving along at a pretty normal pace, especially in the trade and commercial areas. The embassy staff was a very strong and resilient group, the kind one needs close by in such situations. Even when we had to send a third of them home, the remainder never missed a beat. Afterwards, Tambs always referred to them as “Los Valientes,” the Brave Ones.

J. PHILLIP MCLEAN
Director, Office of Andean Affairs
Washington, DC (1984-1987)

Mr. McLean was born and raised in Seattle, Washington and was educated at Seattle University and the University of Indiana. He entered the Foreign Service in 1962. A Latin American specialist, his service in the State Department in Washington and abroad, primarily concerned Latin American Affairs. His foreign posts were Brasilia, Edinburgh, Panama City, La Paz, Milan and Bogota, where he was Deputy Chief of Mission. In Washington Mr. McLean held positions

dealing with Latin American Affairs, including that of Deputy Assistant Secretary for South America. Mr. McLean was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1999.

Q: You had been dealing with sort of the major issue of east-west and all that. Coming back to ARA, was there a feeling of this is a side show or not?

McLEAN: Well, in my mind as I came back, I probably had that idea in my mind, because Latin America had come to focus on Central America, and here I was going back to Latin America but to the Andean countries, which were not at the center of things at that particular moment. I wasn't even going back to Brazil, which in my own mind I thought Brazil or Argentina, which I thought were great countries. But humankind is that way. As soon as I got to where I was, I discovered it was highly important.

Q: It was the center of the universe.

McLEAN: In effect it turned out to be. None of us at that time would think that the President, as he has recently in the last few weeks, talked about world policy as one of the most important things that you do in the world is fight narcotics trafficking. In fact, the story I think, part of the story, is how we went from narcotics trafficking being very much of a side issue to being something of a much more concern of American policy.

Q: We'll pick that up, but I was wondering: When you arrived in the Bureau, you had been away, you had Ronald Reagan and he had a major focus, at least his administration did, on Central America. You were somewhat removed. What was the feeling there of the people you were talking with? I can see coming in being a bit skeptical about, you know, this is a bit overblown. Was there that feeling?

McLEAN: Well, the Central American activity was really apart. We lived in almost a different world, though we were down--I guess we were on a different floor even, but we didn't mix a lot, and we did our thing pretty much apart from it. I used to see people going into meetings with the assistant secretary and Ollie North would be coming out and I would go in. We didn't have joint meetings with Ollie North, which was part of the deal. But there was a transference. We had translating of some of the ideas. Soon after I got there, there was a great concern that Bolivia was going to go communist. It really sounded like something antique, but there was in fact a minister or two in the Bolivian government which was communist, a declared communist, and there were those who wanted to do something about. One of the early major things we did in that office was to try to fight that. That was a major early activity, trying to show that this was not a real possibility that there was going to be a communist regime established in the High Andes. Bolivia at that time was very chaotic, and it had an inflation rate of 20,000 percent at one point, and it was hyper-inflation. It was one of the early cases of hyper-inflation, and in fact that's one of the things that I contributed. I brought my economic background to the analysis of the question and tried to show how you dealt with that problem, and also working with the ministers and others that came up in looking at ways we could get international support through a program that would bring this inflation down.

Q: Andean Affairs at that time covered what countries?

McLEAN: It covered Venezuela to Bolivia, so it was Venezuela, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia.

Q: Chile?

McLEAN: Chile did not. Chile was part of the southern cone. Chile, Argentina and the two small states were a separate office. And then there was an Office of Brazilian Affairs. So our major activity of the office was a theme that I had mentioned before when I was in the Latin American Bureau, and that was development. When I hear stories of what this Cold War was all about, I say, well, that's interesting that people think that, but in fact a very large part of our Latin American policy was developing the area, was trying to improve the way of life of Latin Americans. Certainly there was a Cold War motive in it, but it certainly wasn't the only one, and at times it wasn't the primary one. Most of the reason we were giving aid to that region, the Andean region, at that time, specifically to Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia, was to help people. The program was justified mostly on the fact we had an El Niño in the previous years that had been devastating, and as a consequence you had medium-sized aid programs going on in those countries, very traditional aid activities for economic development.

In fact, in those days when we did planning papers, we said that the ranking of interest was democracy, development, and then this third thing which was called anti-narcotics objective, and it was very much the third activity. Early on when I first got to the office, that began to change, because there was a crisis going on in one of the larger and more important countries, Colombia. The narcotics traffickers had just assassinated the minister of justice, which was an incredible event. It was an event that we could not believe that these criminals would have the guts, the sanity, to go out and do this thing, killing, and so suddenly there was a focus on narcotics which was quite different.

Q: How did this manifest itself within the bureau?

McLEAN: Well, at first there was a little reluctance, and I cite an example very early on. I think this must have been June. I had made a trip as soon as I got to the office to Ecuador, Colombia and Venezuela, just a get-acquainted trip, and the embassy in Colombia was the main focus of that trip. I spent a week there, and there were great security concerns, and that became one of my subjects of specialty in the subsequent period. How do you protect this mission? How do you compose the mission? But soon after I came back, the Justice Department, Steve Trott, who was then the Assistant Attorney General for Criminal Affairs in the Department, called what he called a Colombia Opportunities Group, which was a meeting getting all the agencies of the U.S. government together to talk about what we could do, following this assassination of this justice minister, to take advantage of what seemed to be some change in the Colombian body politic and some willingness to go beyond the very small things that they'd been doing up to that point to take on the narcotics traffickers. So he called this meeting. Well, that was a great affront to the State Department and the Bureau, that you would actually have another agency call a country-specific meeting, inter-agency meeting. That was totally against everything that we had done. So as a consequence the lowest level person that you could find to attend such a distinguished

meeting was me. So the Deputy Director of Andean Affairs goes to this meeting, and there I began to establish my reputation for whatever it is. I got in arguments with William Von Robb, the head of the Customs Service at that time, a very well known, colorful figure, and others. I was pushing a certain agenda. And I came back from that meeting and began to say, "Hold it just a second. Narcotics is not just one of our issues and it certainly is not a subsidiary issue; it is a major issue and it is a foreign policy issue, because unless we do something with these countries on narcotics, the foreign policy towards these countries is going to go totally out of control. In fact, then we did something about the narcotics, and one could argue that the problems did go out of control, but that's part of the story of what went on, and so I became one of the advocates, in fact one of the few advocates in the early days, of trying to push the narcotics agenda and working with the other agencies to change the tenor of our relationships with these countries.

Q: Did we have, when we first started out, any sort of fix on who these narcotics lords were in Colombia and all?

McLEAN: We did. I was just thinking of that on the way here to make this presentation, because we have to look back to recall, when you go into a new area, how ignorant you are and how bad the State Department, or maybe the U.S. government, is in giving you a read-in with some structure to it so you can start working with some intelligence. I know it took me a long time to get to know the narcotics traffickers by name and where they were and what was their method. The State Department is so good about giving you a job, and you're supposed to pick up right from where the other guy left off, but, yes, I think there was some sense. But there was then a lack of information, and there is now a lack of information. These are criminal enterprises, and they're very hard to get clear ideas about, particularly difficult when you have several parts of the U.S. government with different views on the subject, and your entire interpretation of what's going on can get very skewed.

Q: In a way did you find that really the Department of State was almost the wrong person, it was either ill equipped to deal with this, or maybe we could act as a mouthpiece for other people. We try to get agreement through the government and the government can't control the narcotics trade, and we deal with the government. It seems like this is not a very good line of communication.

McLEAN: There's a question about who can do it. Every agency of the U.S. government has wanted themselves to do it, the Drug Enforcement Agency or the CIA or the U.S. military or the Customs Service, but in fact I think you eventually revolve down to that in fact the State Department is the best person because we didn't have the programmatic career needs, so you didn't tend to go into a narcotics cone and go up through a service, and you could stand off a little bit. So I think the way that it had evolved, and it clearly had evolved before I got there, was that the State Department had a small budget, whereas every other agency had to go in for their own specific operations, but they couldn't influence things beyond that. So the State Department, I think, at that point had a budget of about \$35,000,000, which meant that they had little goodies they could give out both to other agencies and to local governments to get them to move in a certain policy direction. That budget had to grow enormously as we began to do things that had larger investment cost to it such as helicopters, which began at that period.

Q: Colombia: Let's talk about the non-narcotic problem first. Do we have anything?

McLEAN: Colombia was, like all the other countries, having financial problems at that particular time and had to turn around and nationalize all its banks. But Colombia is the--I think this is correct to say--only country, perhaps with the exception of Chile, that has never rescheduled its debts. It always paid its debts. That doesn't mean it didn't get new loans that in effect were used to pay off old, but they always kept to their contracts. Yet they were in very deep problems in that first period when I first came to the office. What I didn't understand as I came into the office--and I don't think anybody in the State Department did, and I learned about it later--was that Paul Volker, who was the Chairman of the Fed at that time, had his private operation going. He was doing things privately to help pull the Colombians into a program that would save them. It was quite different from the Treasury. The Treasury was looking to force Colombia into a rescheduling program, and Colombians didn't want that. It was against their sense. They weren't going to be just any other developing country. They were going to be a country that kept its debts, and Volker supported them, and that program worked in the end, and Colombia made reforms but really never deviated from moving its debt forward in a very conventional way rather than going through the IMF and being required to take a program of discipline. They did not do that. That was an interesting thing. We eventually found out what Volker was doing, and by that time the program was underway, and part of our job down at the State Department was to hold the Treasury off. I know that I got in trouble with David Mulford on part of my efforts. David Mulford was the Under Secretary for Monetary Affairs and the key guy in Treasury on these things, and myself and others were struggling to keep them from pressuring the Colombians at that point to adopt an IMF program.

Q: On the narcotics side, in the first place, was it difficult doing business there because of the perceived and probably real threat from the drug people?

McLEAN: Yes, there was. Our ambassador at the time was Lou Tambs, who was a very colorful and a very warm person in many ways. He was an academic founder of what was called the Santa Fe Group, which was a group of conservative scholars on Latin America that provided much of the meat for the first policy of the Reagan Administration on Latin America. Lou invented the term narco-guerilla, which was very insulting to Colombia. Colombians always thought of the guerrillas as romantic figures, Robin Hoods, and to hear someone say that they were involved with narcotics was a real heresy and stirred up a lot of hatred. He also made other statements right in the face of the narcotics traffickers, so, yes, he did attract a lot of hostility. He did understand. It was actually when I was making my first trip there that he was beginning to understand that what he was stirring up wasn't just against him but it was hurting the embassy as well. But, I must say, his approach to it was very nervous. One day--I was staying with him at that time--he not only had his Uzi in a holster right in front of him, but he had his hand on a .45, and I must say it made me a little bit nervous. The embassy had begun this practice of driving very aggressively through the town with front and back cars and cutting off traffic and the rest of it. Eventually after some months, when the threats got very personal and very real, we pulled him out, and he stayed out and eventually was given Costa Rica as an ambassadorship. Lou told me in that period, somewhat contrary to what he later testified in Congress, he said, "I listen to you

guys at the State Department. You're my source of instructions, but I really get what I do from my friends over at the White House," and he made a big wink, most of which I think was quite accurate, that he was taking a lot of his cue. But I again in retrospect don't condemn what he was trying to do. He was trying to move this agenda of narcotics to be something of more important concern to the United States, though because of his ideological bent, he put a lot of emphasis on the fact it was communism that was driving this.

Q: Was there a communist movement there that was significant, or was this money?

McLEAN: I think communism, not just there but almost everywhere, had died as an ideological movement. There was one of the groups that was still driven by something almost a Christian communist activity of the ELN (Ejército de Liberación Nacional), but the major movement, the FARC, was a way of life--the *Force Alamadas Revolucionarios Kolombianos* (Armed Revolutionary Forces of Columbia). It's sort of a place where people go to drop out, in Colombian terms--at least it was at that time. And though there was a lot of skepticism--and even today there are arguments about it--people forget that we did... Shortly after Lou began this argument talking about narco-guerrillas, we sent people in who were qualified to look at the information, and we came back convinced that in fact he was right, that the FARC was receiving some of its income--at that time we would not have said the majority of its income, but some of its income--from guarding narcotics plantations or laboratories, and, in some cases, from actually providing it. Eventually we also found that they were involved in arms traffic and there was an international side to it. They were becoming a significant force in the narcotics, they were a factor, they were another cartel in the narcotics activities by the time I left there, by the time I left my time in working on these questions. Today there is no question that a major portion of the FARC is supported by narcotics, its narcotics activities.

Q: I assume we had thrown in our face, "Well, our people are selling the cocaine, but they wouldn't be selling it unless you Americans were buying it." Was this something you had to deal with?

McLEAN: It is something we had to deal with, and we probably should have dealt with it better than we did. I know I tried to deal with it. I wrote an op ed when later, my next assignment after this, I was a DCM and chargé in Bogota, and I actually wrote an op ed piece trying to get USIA to turn its activities around, and to try to make the point and try to put this in perspective for Colombians was very difficult, one, because USIA didn't particularly want to do this job and they were very reluctant, they weren't geared up to do it early on in the period when I first went there and I was in Andean Affairs. But it's also true that Colombians didn't want to hear that. They didn't want to hear a more balanced view of what was going on. They would only hear the United States talking against them and not hearing that in fact we were talking about our own consumption problem. So I think we should have made a better presentation of our case. Perhaps our policy should have been better as well. We should have been putting much more emphasis on demand reduction. It is, in fact, just in this period in the late '80s that, whereas our consumption had been going up rather dramatically, the curve suddenly turns the other way and begins to go down also very dramatically--a fact that is not often noted. It's hard to get good news about anything in the narcotics field. The United States clearly today is a much less druggy country than it was back in those times.

Q: What were we doing? What were our policies during the time you were dealing with Andean Affairs in Colombia?

McLEAN: As I say, we still would cite democracy development. They had no real development program to speak of, so we began to... one, they wanted helicopter--not easy to do but we in fact began to build up a helicopter activity for the police. We also began to look at what the armed forces could do to increase this--pitifully small considering the problem that they had since they couldn't get around the country. Really large parts of the country were out of their touch just because they couldn't get there, they didn't have the forces to do it. So you began to build up, mostly putting our emphasis on, developing a helicopter capability for the police and giving them training. We also obviously began to give them intelligence assistance, both the armed forces and the police, and the police thing was coming through our State Department budget. Some of it, of course, is trying to get them to do for themselves. We tried to get publicity on what we were doing as a way to get them to feel the need to do it on their own side. I'll jump ahead into a time that I was actually serving there, but we began also to work in terms of offshore trying to pick up the planes as they came off of the country, and then a whole series of other. Everything you read in Tom Clancy's book, we at least thought of all of those things but we didn't do any.

Q: What book was that?

McLEAN: A Clear and Present Danger, which was an extraordinary book. It really got into the mind of those of us who worked in it, because people were trying to invent all sorts of different things to do. A big part of our program was to try to get them to extradite their major criminals, and it met with great resistance. They finally did capture one of the three leading traffickers and extradited him, but the number of major traffickers was always held down by the fact that there was great fear that, if they did that, the narcos would retaliate, and in fact that's what began to happen. They began to retaliate. Again I have to skip ahead to the time that I was actually serving there when that became almost a war.

Q: How did we view Colombia at that time about the power of money and corruption and...?

McLEAN: I would say that we didn't see it. We tended to take on face value the people we were working with, because we didn't have specific proof of anything or allegations that would say the people that we were working with were deeply involved in this. In fact, Colombians had that same view, the same view that, of course, if there was any corruption, it wasn't any of the good people that were doing this. I think we know in retrospect that that wasn't true. We tended to accept Colombia's own view of itself as being a victim to what was going on, and we tended to minimize--again I'm talking about the early period--to minimize the impact it was having on the economy. All of our reporting tended to say that this was not a major economic activity. The facts, of course, began to change, certainly the appreciation of the facts began to change as we went through and began to see that the penetration was rather heavy throughout the whole economy.

Q: Did you find that because of our concern, particularly of the Reagan Administration, with

what was happening in the communist versus Western clash in Central America, particularly in Nicaragua and El Salvador, that this meant that the White House and all really didn't have much time to worry about narcotics?

McLEAN: No, but I think it was compartmentalized. They too had--I'm trying to think of his name--but they did have a narcotics specialist who served on the staff and rhetorically, I think, gave it a good deal of attention. The linking of it to the communist thing didn't last after the first period. They began to see it as much more of a... you've got to go after the major cartels. The images of the cartel was something that grew in this period. Little by little, people in the United States began to know who Pablo Escobar was, that these were figures that appeared in their papers. They appeared in the Fortune 500 list of the richest people in the world. So you began to get a sense that the perception of what was going on changed. But I would say it was really toward the end of the Reagan period and through the Bush period that the issues became put on a much more solemn basis and people began to see a strategy. Earlier on, despite that meeting that I referred to in June of 1984, you didn't have a government-wide strategy that attacked all parts of it. And everyone was looking for a simple way out. The State Department, with its money, began to invest in eradication activities. Before I got there, that was first done in marijuana and over the course of this period had a great deal of success. Colombia stopped being a major source of marijuana for the United States, and we began looking at ways that we could use aerial spraying to eliminate the coca crop, and that was thought of as going to be a great solution--because we were always looking for a silver bullet to knock this thing down. Well, in fact, it turned out not to be that easy. Because with something like coca it takes a much stronger chemical to defeat it, environmental concerns were raised and we didn't go forward with those programs at that time. We go back to that later, but at that time that wasn't done. So the issue began to stand on its own as its own program. It became divorced from the communism business, and it became much more of something that people would talk about as a separate issue.

Q: What about concerns as an economist? I mean you have the Escobars and all making billions of dollars, but you have peasants. Raising coca is how they make their money and almost at a subsistence level. Were we trying to make substitutions?

McLEAN: In Colombia, no, we didn't, and one could argue about that. First off, I think, if you do careful analysis, you always come up with the fact that narcotics is bad for your economy in the way it destroys institutions. But it also creates dependencies among the farmers who move off of food crops and into these very lucrative cash crops. That's a very strongly held view in many parts, but I think it's one that, if you really carefully look at it, it doesn't work. These markets didn't exist until very recently. The country would be much better if they moved off and did things that were legitimate crops rather than this. Helping the peasants probably does have that role, once you have a program of enforcement in place. The fumigation program that we did against marijuana--at a particular point after we had harassed them and gotten a reduction in the crop, the final stroke was the government of Colombia itself went in with an assistance program. It wasn't very big, but it was just sufficient enough to lure the farmers away from doing it. The United Nations, for instance, had a program in southern Colombia that was sold under the rubric of being an anti-narcotics program but in fact it wasn't, because it had no enforcement mechanism. You're trying to convince farmers. There is no crop that competes with narcotics, the illegal good. The illegal good by definition is going to be very high priced, and therefore

you're never going to do that. In line with an enforcement program, it can work. That was an option that we always had and always thought about, but that isn't where we put a lot of money in, certainly not in Colombia. Later when we talk about Bolivia, I can talk about that in more detail, where we developed a more structured program of development.

Q: As one gets into these debates of what should we do and all that, was the fact that we had strong political support for the tobacco farmers ever sort of thrown in our face?

McLEAN: No, not really. In recent days our policy of helping tobacco farmers only comes up now because most Colombians who smoke smuggled cigarettes from the United States, manufactured outside of Colombia. In fact, those are the types of things that it took us years to understand, that in fact that smuggling culture, which in fact we were on the import side of, was a very big part of how these entrepreneurs learned to do the opposite, to export, the other direction, export something to us. And I believe it is only now, and I really mean now in 1999, that people are beginning to focus on the illegals, the cigarette trade going into Colombia, and trying to see it as how it functions as part of the money laundering operations.

CHARLES ANTHONY GILLESPIE JR.
Ambassador
Colombia (1985-1988)

Charles Anthony Gillespie Jr., was born in Long Beach, California in March, 1935. He graduated from UCLA in 1958 with a bachelor's degree in psychology. Following a six year term with the U.S. Army, he entered the Foreign Service in 1965 and was nominated by President Reagan as Ambassador to Colombia in 1985. In addition to Colombia, he was posted to the Philippines, Indonesia, Belgium, Mexico, Nicaragua, and Chile. Ambassador Gillespie was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1995.

GILLESPIE: Back to going to Bogota. We'd gone through all of the security briefings. Vivian had to work out the tail end of leaving the Bureau of Public Affairs, doing the paper work, renting the house, all of those things, and generally getting ready to go. I wasn't confirmed by the Senate as Ambassador to Colombia until July, 1985. We decided to go in August.

I had selected a DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission). Maybe we could talk briefly about DCM selection, if you haven't had much on that before. I recognized, and every Chief of Mission going to post has an idea of what he wants as a deputy. The DCM position is an institution. I think that some people look on that job, as I did, as something like the Navy's concept of an Executive Officer. It's someone who really, in a sense, has to be an alter ego to the Ambassador and needs to fill in whenever the Ambassador is away. At the same time he or she probably needs to be the ramrod in an organization. That is, make sure that things get done and are properly coordinated. If there is dirty work which has to be done, that is, if you have to discipline people or do those kinds of things, that's the job of the DCM and the Executive Officer, so that the Ambassador, in his pristine glory, can keep his hands free and be the ultimate arbiter at the post. So the

Ambassador always has that kind of an out.

I was looking for someone who could support me in that respect. I guess that we all look at what we think are our strengths and weaknesses. Some of us try to compensate for them. I guess that others tend to reinforce them. You're never quite sure. I was looking for someone who, first of all, knew something about the region and had area knowledge, who was experienced, and who was considered a capable officer. I had had the benefit of being Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of American Republics Affairs. I had access of computer printouts concerning senior officers, their language skills, assignments, and so on. We were doing this all the time in our own ambassadorial senior selection process. I narrowed my list down to about two or three people. Finally, I selected the person I wanted. His name was Michael Skol. He was the Deputy Director of the Policy Planning Coordination Office in ARA. He is a brilliant Political Officer who, from what I could see, had all the makings of a really good manager and person who could run things. He very much embodied this thing which I value highly, which is thought leading to action. Don't just think about something, don't analyze it, don't draw your conclusions, and then sit on it. What are we going to do about a given issue? So I told the Executive Director of ARA that I had selected Mike Skol.

At that point the selection of DCMs, unlike the Ambassadorial selections, was not institutionalized at the higher levels of the Office of Personnel. Today, in 1996, all of these things must be vetted by a committee, people look at diversity, and this, that, and the other thing.

Q: Recently, it has been designed to make sure that enough women and minorities are included.

GILLESPIE: Exactly.

Q: That's the driving force.

GILLESPIE: So at this point there was a committee headed by Ken Damm, the Deputy Secretary of State, which did the Ambassadorial selections. The DCM selections merely had to go through the Office of Personnel and be blessed by the Director General of the Foreign Service. There was no big deal about it. So I had gotten my list of a potential DCM down to two or three and then decided that Mike Skol was the guy I wanted.

Well, Tony Motley was the Assistant Secretary of ARA. Motley asked me, "Whom are you going to take as DCM?" I said, "I want Michael Skol." He said, "The hell you will! Skol's too much like you. You're both too damned smart and you're both too operational. I don't want you to take Skol. I refuse. I won't let him go from ARA." He just looked me right in the eye and said, "I'm not going to do that." But I had talked to Skol, who wanted to go to Bogota. Skol, by the way, was married to a Foreign Service Officer, which was going to create new kinds of problems, if he were selected.

So it took about three weeks to "work this through" with Tony Motley. We conducted all kinds of guerrilla and trench warfare exercises. He would say, "Take this guy." Then I would figure out why this guy wouldn't do. He would say, "Take this person." I would say, "No, this person isn't going to work," or doesn't want the job or is concerned about the security situation. Finally,

Motley and I were talking about this subject. He asked, "Do you really want Mike Skol?" I said, "Yes, I really want Mike. He's the right guy." So Motley said, "Okay, you've worn me down." He said, "Gillespie, I want the two of you to promise me that you'll do one thing. When you're sitting around, thinking about how you're going to pull the wings off flies, and make us in Washington uncomfortable - whether it's a policy matter or something else - I want you to promise me that you'll wait 24 hours between the thought and the action, damn it! And then decide if you still want to do it." He said, "I'm really afraid that you guys are going to go down there to Bogota and do something crazy." I said, "Okay, we promise." Mike Skol eventually went in and talked to Motley, who made him promise the same thing. So I got Mike Skol as DCM.

Skol preceded me to post by a month. He went down to Bogota on August 1, 1985. I came down at the end of August. Shortly before I planned to leave Washington, I got a call from DS, the Office of Diplomatic Security. I was told, "You're going to go into your security envelope here in Washington. We do not want you to arrive down there without security. So your security detail will be coming up here to Washington. There will be two American Security Officers, Dolan and Moore, who will come up to Washington to escort you down to Bogota. They want to meet you. Then Dolan will go back down to Bogota, and Moore will escort you to post."

So this sounded all right to me. What wasn't terribly obvious was that Dolan was Jim, and Moore was Mona. She was a graduate of Auburn University and had been a police officer. She stood about 5' 8", weighed about 125-130 pounds, and was a very attractive, willowy blonde. She and I met in a DS office, or she came to my office. We went down to the cafeteria at the State Department and were having a cup of coffee. Who should walk into the cafeteria but my wife! I introduced my wife and Mona Moore. She had heard about the woman security officer. She already knew that there was a woman security officer involved but had not seen or met her. You can imagine! When I next got together privately with my wife, she said, "Tony, I'm not sure that I like this. I'm not sure that I trust this at all." I said, "Well, don't worry. They told me that you're going to get your own security people when you get to Bogota, and you can have a handsome man!" We laughed about that a lot.

Well, both Mona Moore and Jim Nolan turned out to be two of the sharpest, nicest, most responsible people that we've ever known. I'll never forget them. Mona and I went down to National Airport in Washington. She was carrying her gun and all of that stuff, going through airport security. At that point we both had First Class seats, flying down to Miami and then from Miami to Bogota. She sat one seat behind me, on the aisle. I was covered all the way. When we got down to Bogota and got off the airplane, there was a miniature army on hand to greet me. There were guys at the entrance to the airplane and guys out around the airplane, with sub machine guns, wearing armored vests. They brought a vest for me and so forth. Anyway, we got in the car.

It was night - 8:00 PM. I got into the Ambassador's big, black Cadillac. Mona Moore turned me over to Dolan, who was in the front seat of the car, and she went into another car. There was a follow car, a lead car, a lead-lead car, and a follow-follow car. It was quite amazing. It was an interesting drive in the dark from the airport. We didn't go into downtown Bogota on the way from the airport to the Ambassador's residence. We went to the North of the city and then over to the East side. So they took all of these routes, and we were speeding along in this black Cadillac.

I had ridden in Ambassadors' cars before and been with Secretaries of State in motorcades and things like that. But believe me, it's a sobering moment when you're it and are in a new place.

We arrived at the Ambassador's residence - a beautiful, big house and very nice. The staff was lined up there, like in the movies. There was the major domo, a wonderful, elegant man. He had been around for years and had been fired by two or three Ambassadors. He was fired by Ambassador Tamb's predecessor because he got too much involved in the expenses. He was trying to cut the expenses. He had been fired by one of my other predecessors before that, because that Ambassador happened to prefer young men and brought them into the house. He didn't want to have Don Jorge, the major domo, around, so he got rid of him. Each time that Don Jorge was fired, the Administrative or the General Services Officer had hidden him away, had taken him on under a contract or done something for him, because they knew that he was the man to run the Ambassador's residence.

Anyway, there was Don Jorge. At that point I guess that there must have been four or five women domestic servants. I was taken up this lovely, winding staircase by Don Jorge. I had never been in the Ambassador's residence in Bogota before. I had never been to Bogota before this. I was shown to the master bedroom by Don Jorge. There were 1/2" to 5/8" solid-steel plates which you closed at night over the windows. The steel plates went over every window in this bedroom. There was a steel door to the bedroom. That door was shut and locked from the inside, and I was sealed up in that cocoon every night! That was the way it was supposed to work. All of this, as you can imagine, was quite something.

The DCM, Mike Skol, had ridden in with me from the airport in the car. He walked me through the residence, and we talked and so on. It was all a bit awesome, I must say, when you arrive under those circumstances.

The next morning I got up and dressed, saw the security people in the house, and all of that. It really began to dawn on me that we were getting into a situation which, despite all of the preparation, was quite remarkable. Whenever I set foot outside the house, there were six to nine men in plain clothes, with their guns visible. There were uniformed guards all around the house. There were outside lights on the house at night. It was a bit like being in a prison camp to be there.

Before getting into our relations with Colombia, let me just say that, over the next several weeks, Mike Skol, Satcher, Don Schoeb the Administrative Counselor, and I got together and set up a system that we hoped would work. Walt Sargent, the Security Officer, was very concerned because the access to the residence came down to a bottleneck, as things always do. Eventually, there's only one way that you can go. There had previously been a major bomb exploded on the corner, just a block away. People weren't sure, but this might have been directed at the American Ambassador. In any event Sargent was convinced that the best security was uncertainty in the eye of the beholder - in other words, unpredictability. So we looked for ways to make my schedule unpredictable. I had to know what I was doing but I had to do it in a way which could not be predicted in advance.

One of the reasons that I had wanted Mike Skol as DCM was that he was one of the few Political

Officers that I knew of in the Foreign Service who was technologically oriented. He likes computers, sound systems, and all of these things. So basically I had cajoled the Executive Director of the ARA Bureau to give me a personal computer, a PC.

Q: This was relatively early in the game.

GILLESPIE: It was very early in the game. I also found that we were carrying on a pilot project, handling overseas and on a classified basis what are now E-Mail connections with the Department. It involved using a Wang computer system, which the Department had. They were just putting this system in at my insistence and with my full support. In Bogota, we could also draft our cables on the Wang computer, push a button, and away they would go to the Department or elsewhere, via modem. We could also send classified E-mail within the Embassy and with the Department, between classified work stations.

We weren't in a position to do that at home, at the residence. However, I set up a home office. We agreed on a schedule that Satcher, the DCM, the DCM's secretary, a woman named Sue Nelson, the Security Officer, and I would maintain. Sue Nelson was a superb secretary. We would kind of alternate - where we were and how we worked. Depending a little bit on what my obligations were, both outside and inside the Embassy, we would, first of all, avoid having a large number of scheduled meetings within the Embassy. Meetings would pretty much be on an *ad hoc* basis. On certain days I would just stay home and work from there. We didn't have a secure voice system then - that came later. Even so, we could do a lot on the telephone, if we needed to. I could do a lot of reading and writing at home, and people could bring me material. I had a more junior officer bring out cables to the residence in an armored van. I could read them at home.

Q: As a matter of fact, some of the old-fashioned, more "imperial" Ambassadors used to use that system. They would almost never show up at the Embassy. Anybody who wanted to see them would go to the residence. This system goes back almost to the 1930s.

GILLESPIE: I had seen that system in operation and didn't appreciate it. I thought that the Ambassador ought to be in the office. I didn't think that people felt that they had to come to work on time. In Bogota, "on time" was according to your computer schedule. Sometimes you came to work at 7:00 AM, and sometimes at 10:00 AM, depending, to some extent, on what your computer told you. However, I felt that it was very important, as far as the Colombian employees of the Embassy were concerned, that they should not get the impression that the Ambassador and senior management officers were huddled somewhere in a bunker. Nonetheless, we worked it out. I didn't stay home all of that often - maybe one morning a week or I would go home at noon and not return to the Embassy that day. This was mainly because I had too many other things to do. The "other things to do" were rarely handled with much advance notice. As Walt Sargent, the Security Officer, used to say, "If your lead time for an irregularly-occurring event is two or three days, it's highly unlikely that anybody will be able to mount a serious operation against you, in that period of time." So, if you're going to go to a luncheon here, a party there, a dinner some place else, or a meeting or conference, if it's been planned three months ahead of time, watch out! If they know that you're going to be the speaker, you have a problem. However, if there is a three-day "fuse" on it, don't worry about it.

We operated that way, and it seems to have worked all right. The psychiatrists in the Department had advised me to get somebody else - ideally my secretary or the DCM, but not my wife - to watch my mood. If they saw me beginning to reflect the pressures of the job, they should be instructed to tell me that. So Satcher, Mike Skol, and I worked it out. I said, "If you see me beginning to 'kick the cat,'- which was the term I used - when the cat didn't need to be kicked, for heaven's sake, tell me."

By the way, at the time the Under Secretary for Management was Ron Spiers. Spiers and I had talked about this. He had had a tour of duty as Ambassador during the Reagan administration. He and the ARA Bureau had both told me, "Tony, we're beginning to understand the pressures of these jobs. If you feel that you need to come out, or you and Vivian need to come out, say so, and we'll pull you out, temporarily. We'll find a reason for you to come to Washington, go to another post, or do something else."

Ron himself had said, "I want you to know that if, at any time, you feel that you've had enough down there in Bogota, all you have to do is tell me, and we can curtail your tour, because I know that this is a high pressure job. Later, I discovered, this was the wrong approach. Nobody ever wants to say, "I quit." I think that I said this to Spiers later on. I told him that I had been comfortable, staying in Bogota for the full three years. I didn't worry about this and would not have asked to have my tour curtailed. I said, "However, if you're really thinking about this, what you ought to say is, 'You're down there for two years. If you want to stay a third year, you may. It's your decision.'" I said, "Don't make the Ambassador say, 'It's gotten to be too much for me.' That doesn't work."

The other part was perfect. As it turned out, we didn't have to pull the string to get out of Bogota very often, because there were other things to do. For example, there was the U.S. Army Southern Command (SOUTHCOM) in Panama. The commanding general there, General Galvin, said, "We would like you to come to Panama and have a full briefing." Well, that was the first trip I took out of Colombia. I had been in Bogota for 90 days. Satcher was saying, "Mr. Ambassador, you're beginning to speak a little loudly, from time to time. Maybe..." I said, "Okay, Satch, I get the message." I called General Galvin and said, "Could we arrange a briefing up at SOUTHCOM?" He said, "Absolutely. When would you like to come? Bring your wife." This was an official trip. General Galvin sent a plane down to Bogota which picked us up and flew us to Panama. We stayed at General Galvin's house. The cost to me was minimal. The cost to the government was - whatever it was. We stayed for four days. We had a tour of the Panama Canal. I had all of the briefings, and they were germane to all that we were doing.

About six months later there was a mini Chiefs of Mission conference in Quito, Ecuador. On this occasion the DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration) airplane assigned to Bogota was available, so I flew down to Quito in it. Now, one of the things that we had in Bogota was relatively full access to aircraft from the Colombian Police. Our need for air transportation kept growing. Basically, we had provided funding to support these aircraft through INM (State Department Bureau of International Narcotics Matters), so I had access to that. Walter Sargent, the Security Officer at the Embassy in Bogota, wasn't always thrilled by this arrangement, for security reasons - not because of safety considerations, but because we had to tell the

Colombians when I was going to fly from one point to another. We were never quite sure how that would work. Then we got our own C-12, which is a Beechcraft King Air. Later, the DEA section in the Embassy got a couple of aircraft assigned to it on a full-time basis. In addition, DEA could always call in a flight, so they flew me and my wife down to Quito for this mini Chiefs of Mission meeting. It was a wonderful flight in a small, twin-engined aircraft.

So we were in and out of Bogota all the time. When I would go to Panama, or into some other place, an American Security Officer would go with me.

Really, I have been talking about getting to the post and doing things. I've mentioned that my wife Vivian stayed on in Washington for a couple of months. She arrived in Bogota in October, 1985. Before she arrived, Walt Sargent, the Security Officer, had told me that she would have to have full-time security protection. He was not thrilled by the idea that she was going to have to go back and forth to work every day. He had expected a more typical, Ambassador's wife who would stay home and maybe go out, in the course of the day, to a luncheon or something like that. Well, it turned out that Vivian was going to do both. She wouldn't stay home but she would have to go to work in the morning. Then she would have to leave the Embassy and go to a *Damas Diplomaticas* (Diplomatic Wives) affair or go to some other meeting, diplomatic reception or luncheon with me - or meet me there. In any event, the Department and Walt insisted that she had to have - and quite rightly - a full security detail of her own. So initially she had a Colombian security agent in a follow car with a Colombian security detail in it. These Colombian security people were employees of the American Embassy. They were mainly former police personnel. They had been through every training program that we could arrange.

My security detail initially consisted of one American Security Officer with me at all times, in addition to a Colombian security agent. Both of these arrangements changed during the course of our tour, after about one year. The security situation began really to get hot and very serious, and there were reports that certain groups intended to get the American Ambassador. Reports of this kind were received sporadically, off and on by my successors. Sometimes, we would get a report that was very serious. The State Department DS people decided that they needed to augment my security protection. They decided first to assign to me a special team from the U.S. Army. These men were superb marksmen, specially trained to deal with terrorist situations. So they were brought in.

The Ambassador's residence is on a six-acre piece of land, up on the side of a hill in a suburban residential area in the northern part of Bogota. It is on a rather steep slope. There is a main road that goes along the eastern edge of the property. Then you come down from that road to the residence itself. On the southern side the front is walled, but then right outside it is a very tall, apartment building, looking right down onto the residence. All of our neighbors had been vetted very carefully with the police. They were constantly checked as to who they were and what was going on. However, we knew that a relative of one of the narcotics traffickers lived in one of the apartments facing the residence.

When this special team from the U.S. Army came down to Bogota, we arranged to rent an apartment on what I think was the eighth floor, the top floor of this apartment building. We put the Army team up there - and that's where they lived. They also used that apartment to cover the

Embassy residence. They had a lot of technical equipment in that apartment to make sure that the people down below, the relatives of a narcotics trafficker, weren't doing something that would be dangerous.

Then, soon after the arrival of the Army detachment, DS decided that they needed even more people in Bogota, so they assigned additional American personnel from DS to me and to my wife Vivian. We ended up having an American security presence in the residence 24 hours a day. This security detachment had an office downstairs, which was occupied at all times. Vivian had a full-time, American Security Officer assigned to her, as well as her Colombian security guards. When the situation got more serious, I had either two or three American Security Officers with me at all times, and this situation continued throughout my tour of duty.

Mona Moore, one of the Security Officers, played an interesting role. I told you that we had gone to the Office of Medical Services in the Department (MED) because we were concerned about the stress aspects of this assignment. We had two cars assigned to the Ambassador, and here's the State Department for you. The residence was at 8,620 feet above sea level. We had a Cadillac Fleetwood sedan, fully armored, which must have weighed, I don't know how much. It had the small, Cadillac engine in it, so it barely crept along at Bogota's elevation. The second car that we had was a fully armored, Chevrolet Suburban, which was silver in color. Walter Sargent, the Security Officer, said, "Ambassador, how do you feel about riding in the 'Suburban'? The other damned car will hardly move." I said, "I don't think there's any choice, is there? We'll ride in the Chevrolet 'Suburban.'" He said, "I'm going to get rid of the Cadillac, and we'll replace it as soon as we can. It was a dumb decision to have it here. If you don't mind..." So that was what we would ride in.

I might say at this point that Ambassador Louis Tambs, my predecessor, carried a gun all the time that he was in Bogota. His predecessor, Ambassador Tom Boyatt, also carried a gun in a holster strapped to his ankle. Both of them were concerned about their security. Having carried a gun earlier in my professional career as a Security Officer, I decided that I didn't want to carry a gun now. I didn't think that that was important. There were professional Security Officers who would carry guns. I wasn't a Security Officer any more.

Soon after we arrived in Bogota, perhaps one or two months later, Vivian and I were riding along in the back of the Chevrolet Suburban. Vivian said, "Gee, Tony, what do you think would happen if we were attacked?" She said, "I'm very worried about two things. What if somebody is shot, and we're the ones who have to do something about it? What if somebody is coming at us, and there's a gun in the car? I don't have the slightest idea about what to do with it." She hates guns, never liked them, doesn't want to be around them, and doesn't want to own them. When we were first married and living in Mannheim, Germany, and I had to go off for four months of temporary duty in Oberammergau, which I talked about earlier, she kept three steak knives and a baseball bat near her bed. That was as far as she would go with armament, and that gave her some feeling of security. But she didn't want guns around anywhere. She said, "I'm concerned about these guns. I don't know how to shoot one and I certainly don't know whether it's safe or not to have around me."

I said, "That's an interesting point." She said, "I'm going to talk to Mona Moore about this." She

did, and Mona said, "Well, Mrs. Gillespie," in her nice, southern drawl, "I think that it's important, if you are around guns, that you should know how to handle them. I'd be very happy to teach you everything that I can about them. Then, if you want to shoot them, that's okay. I can help you with that, too." Well, as it turned out, Mona and my wife Vivian started a program of weapons training. I was told, "All right next Saturday we're going out to the Gun Club and we are going to have an orientation for Vivian." Well, I don't think that Mona could have done anything better to bolster the confidence of this whole security detachment, Colombian and U.S. The Colombian employees of the Embassy felt, "Here's the Ambassador's wife going out to the Gun Club. She's learning how to field strip a weapon, how to put it back together again, how to load it, shoot it, and do all of these things."

So there were Mona Moore and Vivian. The Colombian security guys at the Gun Club were saying to Vivian, "Senora, can we help you with this, can we carry your gun for you?" They just adored her. We then began to practice with a gun, and Vivian learned how to handle one. Then she said, "Okay, I'm comfortable with a gun now. However, I'm still not comfortable on what to do if someone gets shot. I know first aid and I know how to put a bandage on. But what if something really bad happens?"

Well, they then announced from the Department something called the First Responder course. This was for any kind of natural or man-made disaster that might happen. The course, on "What do you do if you're the first person to arrive on the scene?" was given by our Medical Division. MED had told us, "We'd like to send someone to Bogota to give this course." Well, that was all that Vivian needed. She said, "We'll do it" and she encouraged everyone to take part. We held this course at the residence the first time the course was given. It took about two days, covering just the minimum things that you do to keep someone alive, if there is any chance at all, until real help can arrive. This covered sucking chest wounds, bomb blasts, spikes through the eye, and those kinds of things. They're all gory. However, I quickly found, and I think that Vivian did, too, that it took some of the mystery away. At the end of the course we had dealt with these conditions in a simulated situation and thought about them. We realized that we were in a real life situation where they could happen.

You don't know how you'll really react in a real situation. As far as the guns were concerned, Walt Sargent, our Security Officer, said to Vivian, "Look, you can really shoot well." And she could. The guys from the Army detachment loved to go out with her. She could shoot fast and accurately. They and Walt said, "However, there's one thing that you have to understand. If you have a gun, it's no good unless you shoot it. You have to shoot it at a person. That may a very difficult thing for you to do. If there's someone coming at you who intends to cause you harm, you have to be prepared mentally to shoot. Don't start thinking that you're a gunman or a gun woman just because you know how to shoot. There is one additional step." We both very much internalized that.

Walt Sargent is a fascinating man. The DCM, he, and I were all under a lot of pressure to allow Embassy employees to carry concealed weapons. Sargent was reluctant to allow that. In the Department they talk about rules covering the use of firearms. We had "rules of engagement" in Bogota for people who carried guns. They were very basic. The rule was, "In a life threatening situation, shoot first. If it's not life threatening, keep your gun in your holster." This rule was for

the professionals. We went back and forth with DS in the Department and others about this question as to whether Embassy employees, in a dangerous post like Bogota, should carry weapons. Walt was not favorably disposed to that, for two reasons. One, he said, "Put a gun on and walk around with it on your hip. You probably will feel different about this issue," and he was right. You walk in a different way, although I don't know exactly what it is. Secondly, he said, "Then think about whether you are going to pull that gun out and shoot first. It doesn't do any good to have the gun otherwise." Well, he was very concerned about this question.

Finally, the Department said, "All right employees are authorized to carry weapons." However, Sargent insisted that they must be carefully trained, they must know what they're doing, and there has to be some kind of reason for using deadly force. As it turned out, I think that only two or three of our officers ever felt that they needed to carry weapons. They were authorized to do so and they did.

Q: It's funny, you know, that there was all of this policy discussion about carrying a weapon. I was Consul General in Saigon in 1969-1970. I lived in a house, more or less by myself, although there was a maid who lived in the garage. I thought that, if something happened, I really ought to have a weapon. So I just said, "Maybe I ought to have a pistol," and the Embassy gave me a pistol. That was it. I went out to the firing range once and fired it. There was no fancy training program. Looking back on it, it probably wasn't a very good idea to have it, in the long run, and I didn't carry it around with me very often. But it was there, if I needed it.

GILLESPIE: Well, as I say, neither Vivian nor I ever carried a weapon or had a weapon at hand in the car and that sort of thing. We kept weapons under the bed, in our bedroom, since all of our security people told us that we should do so. They didn't think that there was a strong likelihood that the residence would be attacked, but with all of the armor plating on the windows in this really safe haven that we had, we should have some means of protecting ourselves. So we had a shotgun and we had an Uzi (Israeli made sub-machine gun). We also had a couple of handguns. Later, they gave me a night vision device so I could see out at night. This wasn't a sight - it was just something to look through and see things in the dark. The Army security detachment in the apartment building across the street had night vision devices with their weapons, so that, if something happened, they could theoretically cover the grounds of the residence from on top of their apartment building.

Before we get into anything else, another thing I should mention in connection with security is that I have always believed that you manage best by communicating a lot, rather than holding information back. I said this when I talked to the psychiatrist in the Department and to colleagues elsewhere. Obviously, there are some things that you keep in reserve for lots of reasons. However, in a security situation, it seemed to me - and I was supported in this view by those I discussed the matter with - the worst thing that can happen is rumor, uncertainty, and misinformation. So I felt that it was really important to be visible as the Ambassador and to have my DCM and my security people visible. The attitude of Walter Sargent, the Security Officer, was, "We're here to make it possible to do the real work of the Embassy. Security is not the work of the Embassy. The other work is real. This is just a way of making it safe to do the real work."

We needed to keep in close touch with our American and local staffs. So, whenever anything

would happen or whenever we'd get a report of a shooting, I would call a meeting. We would invite the entire Embassy staff to assemble in the little auditorium that we had. I would get up on the stage, usually with Walt Sargent. We would say, "This is what we know. This is what happened. This is what's going on. This is what we're going to do about it. Do you have any questions?" I would say this in Spanish, if it had to be in Spanish, or I would say it in English. There were assassinations every day. One of our Colombian police contacts was the Chief of the Colombian Anti-Narcotics Police, a wonderful man. We knew his wife and children. He was assassinated within days of my arrival in Bogota. We had met him - and then, boom, he was dead. I think that meeting with the staff whenever anything happened was the right way to deal with these kinds of things. This view was reinforced by the people from MED who came to Bogota. The regional psychologist and the people from MED would come to town. It was interesting to see how people reacted to Dr. Smith, the regional psychologist. He would come in and tell me afterwards, "This place is about ready to blow up from the pressure. It's a good thing that I came."

You could differentiate between different groups of Americans. We had a big DEA contingent. The DEA people did not want to deal directly with the problem of stress. As a group, they felt that they were going to tough it out, although there were some differences within this group. Dr. Smith would hold stress management meetings and stress seminars. Sometimes, the military people would come. However, the members of the Marine Security Detachment would never come to these sessions. I urged the Gunnery Sargent in command of the Marine detachment to encourage the Marine Guards to attend. He would always say, "No, sir, it's not necessary." This was typical of the damned, ram rod Marines. Well, that's just not good enough. Dr. Smith would point out that people had diarrhea, people had colds, and people had other problems. He said, "Those are all caused by stress." He would walk us through it and talk us through it. He would say to me, "Could you come to the first session but not to the second session? I'd like to have a session when you're not there." He thought that people would say more if I were not present. He would say, "But it's important for you to be at the first session because people want to know that it's okay to come and that you want them to come." We did a lot of that. It took a lot of time but it was part of the management job.

I'd like to add a quick, personal anecdote. I had been in Bogota about a year. All of a sudden I began to become a little concerned. I played a lot of tennis and golf. One day I realized that I couldn't move my left arm more than a few inches away from my side. It was getting very stiff. The regional medical officer, not the psychiatrist, came for a visit. This was about October, 1986, I guess. He was concerned that it might be a symptom of heart trouble - the involvement of my left arm and pain in the arm. He said, "Maybe this stress is getting to you and it's affecting your heart. I'd like to have you checked out." So I went and saw a local doctor, and the EKG (Electrocardiogram) seemed to be okay. Then our daughter came down to Bogota for Christmas, 1986.

We went off on a sailing vacation. We'd chartered a boat to sail ourselves in St. Lucia in the Windward Islands in the Lesser Antilles. I had literally not been able to move my left arm. Our daughter, my wife, and everybody else saw this. One day we were out sailing. My wife Vivian, who was at one end of the boat, looked down at me and said, "What are you doing?" I said, "What do you mean?" She said, "Look at yourself." I was hanging from the shrouds of this boat

with both arms. My left arm was completely over my head. I'd been away from Bogota for about five days, and the stiffness in my left arm had gone. I checked this later, and it turned out to be totally a result of stress.

Q: One of the things I'd like to ask. I'm going to come back to you and how you conducted your business. But let's talk about the effect of these conditions on the way you worked. Political Officers go out and meet people. Economic Officers pay calls on government ministries. Consular Officers have their own things which they have to do. Many of these things involve getting away from the Embassy. How did all of these Embassy staff members do their job?

GILLESPIE: They did not take taxis. They did not drive their own cars. They were always driven in an Embassy vehicle to official appointments. They were enjoined by Walter Sargent and his security team to avoid doing anything on a routine, recurring basis. There was a judgment made in distinguishing between the level of threat. The status of the Ambassador as a figurehead or symbol of the United States was very important. On the political and the criminal front it was the U.S. Ambassador who was the target first. Really, the DCM, as the number two person in the Embassy, was dramatically less vulnerable. He had a security detail, so he was covered. When I left Bogota and he was Charge d'Affaires, in effect he went into my security envelope. By the way, that envelope was interesting, because we used to make dummy runs. We had people who would dress up and sit in the back seat and pretend to be me and my wife, going to functions of one kind or another. We would send two cars out. There were a lot of things done.

In any event the other officers and employees at the post had to do their business, just as I had to do mine. They were given a level of security which the security experts and all of us believed was commensurate with the threat to them. So they would go out on their normal business. They were urged not to congregate socially. Walter Sargent was remarkable. We had no minor dependents at post, so we had a group of older officers whose children were grown. We had officers who were on separate maintenance from their families who stayed in the U.S. And we had a large number of relatively young or junior officers who were either married and had just their spouse at post and no kids - or were not married at all.

All of them needed to do things, on the weekends and in the evenings. Walt Sargent was superb in handling this situation. He worked tremendously hard to gain the confidence of everyone. Then, to prove that he merited their confidence, he dealt with everybody's situation realistically. So if a group of young officers said, "Look, we want to go camping up in the hills." This was possible. They would say, "Here's where we want to go." Walt would say, "Come to me, not the day before you want to go, but come to me two, three, or four weeks ahead of time. Then, tell me where you want to go, and I'll find out what the situation is there. I'll keep you apprized right until the last minute. If there's any reason why you shouldn't go, you'll know it. However, if you can go, go ahead." Sometimes, he'd send a security team with them. Often, he wouldn't do that, because he knew that they didn't want a security team. He would make sure at the last minute that the Colombian cops and other people he trusted knew that Embassy officers were going to a given place. He was superb.

Regarding business meetings, we'd go to lunch with Embassy contacts. I'd invite somebody to lunch, and a Political Officer would take a contact to lunch or go to the Foreign Ministry. It's

surprising to realize this, but most such events are not arranged with a tremendously long lead time. Usually, they were scheduled a day or two - maybe a week - in advance. The more formal such a meeting was, the more security would be attached to it. So this is the way we functioned. It was not easy, but we all managed to work through it.

I guess that there were two, particularly telling incidents. I arrived in Bogota at the end of August, 1985. Mike Skol, the DCM, had arrived earlier. We can go into more detail on these incidents, because they are fascinating. Two, particularly horrendous things occurred in November, 1985, in Colombia.

In the first week of November 1985 a group later identified as guerrillas from the M-19 Group (April 19th Movement) took over the Palace of Justice in Bogota. We later learned that they were operating at the direction of, and certainly with the encouragement of, Pablo Escobar's Medellin Cartel. As a result, about 120 people were killed - mainly innocent bystanders. Some or nearly all of the guerrillas were also killed. That was a trauma that hit Colombia dramatically. It had political, criminal, legal, and law enforcement overtones. The Colombian military reacted, and we got very much involved, because of the terrorist nature of the event. My contacts with the President and his team of advisers were not suited to crisis management.

A week later, because this sort of set up the situation which developed on the narcotics and criminal side, there occurred what in Colombia is called the Armero disaster. The volcano, Nevado del Ruiz, in central Colombia, a few hundred miles from Bogota, erupted. There was a tremendous mud eruption at about 18,000 feet above sea level, and mud slid down to the bottom of the adjoining valley of the Magdalena River. Armero was the name of the town built right in the middle of the plain below the volcano. The mud slide wiped out the town, killing about 23,000 people. That was a week after the Palace of Justice incident. That led to a major, international response, and we were in the middle of that. That was in 1985.

In 1986 Colombia was involved in elections. There was a March election for Congress and a May election for the presidency. In May a new President, Virgilio Barco, was elected, who was to take office in August, 1986. In June, 1986 - after the presidential election but before the new President was inaugurated - there was a major assassination attempt against the Minister of the Interior, who was driving along a road not too far from the American Embassy Chancery building. According to our intelligence people, it turned out that, although the Minister was not himself killed, two of his security people were. This was really an effort to kill the U.S. Ambassador. The Minister of the Interior rode in a car very similar to mine. Somehow, the terrorists had seen us using that road two or three times and thought that we would use it again. So, when his motorcade came down that way, the terrorists hit it. My intelligence and security people said that they were pretty sure that the terrorists thought that they were going to kill the American Ambassador when they did that. So that sort of tightened everything up. When this incident occurred, we reviewed all of our arrangements.

I mentioned that our daughter came down to Bogota for Christmas, 1986. She was there for a week. She had been studying at UCLA (University of California, Los Angeles). She had begun to race bicycles. Colombians are crazy about bicycle racing. They love it. It turned out that the chief Colombian security official at the Embassy, Major Reyes, was himself a real bicycle racer,

though he was 50 years old at this time. In his view he continued to be a bicyclist. Our daughter wanted to go and look at bicycle equipment, so she went out with Major Reyes in a car, two or three times, just the two of them. There were no other security people with them, because he was a security official himself. So our daughter stayed in Bogota through Christmas. The day after Christmas, as I mentioned before, we got on a plane and flew up to St. Lucia, got a boat, and went sailing. She went back to California.

We did not go back to Colombia right away. We went to Washington, where we spent much of the month of January, 1987. We returned to Bogota in February, 1987. In early March, 1987, an agent of the FBI of Colombia, the equivalent of our CIA, shot and killed three members of the M-19 group, whom they had been tailing for some time in Bogota. It appeared as if these M-19 members had discovered that they were being tailed and were either going to try to get away or attack the people who were following them - I'm not sure which. The Colombian police shot and killed these three people, a woman and two men. In the heel of the shoe of one of the men were some documents. One of those documents included a report on the surveillance of our daughter, Kristin, in December, 1986. This was now March, 1987. A paragraph in this report contained some conclusions which were quite explicit. It said, "Since the U.S. Ambassador and his wife are so well protected, we are not sure how successful an effort to kidnap or kill them will be. However, the Ambassador's daughter travels with only one security person. She is much more accessible, and probably we should concentrate our efforts on her." Well, they were concluding that she would be around more or less indefinitely.

You can imagine how chilling that was when the CIA Chief of Station brought me that document. He said, "I think that you had better look at this. This is the situation." That really drove home the fact that this situation was real and that things were happening out there. That report caused us all to heighten our security and to be concerned about it. I still get kind of chilly when I think about this. It caused us to become, not paranoid, but certainly concerned. I didn't tell our daughter about this until well after we had left Colombia. However, just a few months later, after seeing this - I guess that it was during the spring of 1987 in Los Angeles, where she was living with a roommate in an apartment at UCLA - she said that she was a little concerned about a prowler near her apartment. I didn't hesitate. I told Walt Sargent, the Security Officer in the Embassy in Bogota, "Listen, our daughter Kristin just called and said that there was a prowler who's been hanging around her apartment." He said, "Don't worry about this." He called State Department security, and they called their office in Los Angeles which got in touch with the LAPD (Los Angeles Police Department) and the FBI. They went out and talked to Kristin. They took all of this very seriously, because there were Colombian connections in Los Angeles.

There were other incidents later that year. For example, in 1987 we learned of a meeting of the narcotics traffickers with representatives of the three or four guerrilla groups in Colombia. There was some discussion of how much they wanted to kill the American Ambassador and the head of the DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration) office in the Embassy in Bogota. They were talking about spending millions of dollars to do this. They talked about being ready to pay that much money. But nothing drove it home so much as seeing this reference, in cold print, to killing or kidnapping our daughter. This was totally unrelated to anything else. This was not an intelligence report. For me this implied threat characterized what all of us were facing in Bogota.

I've dwelt on the security aspects of living in Bogota for some time now, but this occupied everybody's attention at the time, from the most junior Foreign Service Officer to the Colombian employees of the Embassy. In other words, all of us. It was a very real threat.

Q: We've talked about the security aspect, but other things may come up. Some of the subjects which, it occurs to me, we should cover are: 1) this terrible incident of the mud slide following the eruption of the volcano; 2) the attack on the Palace of Justice and how we responded to that. Some of the other questions might include your view of the political situation in Colombia, your assessment of it and of the Colombian leadership, and how they worked. This might also include the whole, legal system. Also, could you discuss the minor, little problem of dealing with drugs? (Laughter) You might discuss what we were trying to do and how we were trying to do it. Could you discuss the American business community and promoting American trade, because life goes on. Also, any problems involved in dealing with Colombia on the international scene, particularly on Central American issues. Furthermore, your relations with the front office of the ARA Bureau, as things got much more political in the United States. Perhaps also, your comments on Colombian relations with Venezuela, Panama, Ecuador, and so forth.

Q: Today is October 28, 1996. Tony, where do you want to start?

GILLESPIE: Having dealt with the security aspects of the situation, let me try to set the scene when I arrived in Bogota in August, 1985. As I mentioned before, the President of Colombia was Belisario Betancur. He had been elected in 1982 for a four-year term. Colombian Presidents cannot be re-elected.

Belisario Betancur was an interesting man. There are two large parties in Colombia: the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party, in the classic liberal sense. Conservative in this case means pro-Catholic Church, with the role of the state somewhat circumscribed. It was mainly the party of some of the more established oligarchs, although that may have changed more recently. There are oligarchs everywhere, now. The Liberal Party is somewhat anti-clerical or, certainly, not as strongly clerical as the Conservative Party. It regards the role of the state as helping to manage the affairs of the nation. During the past 50 years or so, the Liberals have been, by far, the largest party. They have the greatest number of members. In Colombia political party membership is a family affair. You are born a Liberal and you die a Liberal. It's like being born into the Catholic faith and remaining in it, no matter what your own thoughts might be.

That circumstance had begun to change. In 1982 Belisario Betancur somewhat surprised people. Against all expectations, he was elected President. It had been the traditional view in Colombia that, if the Liberals stuck together, the Conservatives never really had a chance to win the presidential elections. The country had been under constitutional law since the 1880s. When I was in Colombia, the country was about to celebrate its constitutional centennial. Colombia achieved its independence from Spain in 1810 - during the whole rash of independence movements in Latin America which sought independence from Spain.

In the late 1940s and early 1950s Colombia had gone through what was known as *La Violencia*

(The period of violence), which was, in effect, a political, civil war during which the Conservatives and Liberals did atrocious things to each other, each trying to get rid of the other physically. Then there had been a period of military dictatorship under General Rojas Pinilla. In response to this dictatorship the civilian political party leaders went to other figures in the Colombian military establishment and asked them to take over the country, but "just for a time." I'm abbreviating this whole process, but out of that emerged what was called the National Front Government, a scheme by which the Liberal and Conservative Parties agreed first to alternate and then to share power after a certain period.

Belisario Betancur had a bipartisan cabinet. He had both Conservative and Liberal ministers in his cabinet. I think I mentioned before that President Betancur considered himself capable of involving himself in the Central American situation. That was his foray into the international limelight. Other than that, Colombian foreign policy had basically concerned itself with border problems with Venezuela, involving longstanding issues where Colombian and Venezuelan territory seems to intersect in the Guajira Peninsula and in the Gulf of Maracaibo. Colombia fancied itself as being somewhat internationalist in its outlook. It had always tried to be visibly active in the United Nations since World War II. Colombia was a founding member of the OAS (Organization of American States). Colombia had an internationalist tradition, but this was not accompanied by a particularly coherent foreign policy as such.

In any event, in 1984 the Colombian Government was faced with the first indications that the drug traffickers were really on the rise. Colombia had been the source of much of the marijuana that was coming into the U.S. and going to Europe. It was part of the international market for marijuana. Growing conditions for marijuana in Colombia are about right. The areas where marijuana was grown weren't really under anybody's control, so it was easy to plant and harvest it. The ports were open for its export by sea or by plane. The drug situation in Colombia, I think that you could say, was evolving or deteriorating, depending on your point of view. In roughly 1983 or 1984 Pablo Escobar and the Medellin Cartel began to appear on the scene and became visible.

In 1984 President Betancur agreed to the extradition of Colombian citizens to the United States to stand trial for narcotics offenses. This created a tremendous, negative reaction in Medellin from Escobar and those around him and led to a wave of violence. The Colombian Minister of Justice was assassinated. There were all kinds of problems which I have mentioned in connection with the security situation in Bogota. I think I mentioned that a bomb was exploded near the American Embassy in 1984. Threats were made against the American School, which had all of the consequences that we've described. This really set Colombia on edge.

In 1985 the situation continued to deteriorate. I arrived in Bogota in August, 1985, and spent the month of September getting my feet on the ground and learning a little bit about the lay of the land.

Then, as I mentioned before, in early November, 1985, the first major development occurred. We learned that some group attacked, apparently took over, and occupied the Palace of Justice in downtown Bogota. The Palace of Justice is the site of the Colombian Supreme Court. It is a large building, facing on a large courtyard perhaps two blocks across or 500 meters wide, of open

space. At the other end of this open space is the Presidential Palace. The Presidential Palace is called the *Casa Narino*. An unknown number of people were reportedly being held hostage in the Palace of Justice. Among the hostages were several members of the Colombian Supreme Court. Initially, it wasn't clear who was doing this or why it was being done. As the facts began to emerge, the group occupying the Palace of Justice appeared to be one of the four most active, revolutionary groups, the M-19 Movement, which we mentioned previously.

Q: Is this the same group that had taken our Ambassador, Diego Asencio, prisoner?

GILLESPIE: Yes.

Remember, this was the mid-1980s. The term, "hostage situation," was then very current. In this case it meant the takeover of a Colombian Government building by armed people. There was shooting going on. Nobody knew exactly what was happening. However, this was a true crisis.

Under those circumstances, of course, the U.S. had a very definite, policy position of its own on terrorism, kidnapping, and hostage situations. So we reported this situation to Washington. The Department asked us to stay on top of the developing situation. I was authorized to offer the Colombian Government any assistance that they might need, obviously within reason, to help to deal with the situation. We wanted to know how the Colombian Government was going to handle it, what they were going to do, and then see how we could help them.

I asked for an appointment with President Betancur, who had received me rather well when I presented my credentials. I had met him here in the U.S. several months previously before my departure for Colombia. I met with him and offered him any facilities that we could provide. On instructions, I offered in particular communications or other technical equipment - not armed troops or anything like that, although I did say that we could make available experts in both terrorism and hostage situations - should he desire such help. We were in contact with SOUTHCOM, the Southern Command of the U.S. Army in Panama, which had some people in its headquarters who were quite adept or supposed to be adept at dealing with situations of this kind or training to deal with them.

We entered into a dialogue with the President, which I handled directly. We also dealt with his chief of staff, who was acting as the day to day crisis manager. This was a very nasty situation. Demands and threats were made by the M-19 terrorists within the Palace of Justice. Reports came out that, first, this or that Justice of the Supreme Court had been killed, that another Justice had been shot, and that terrible things were happening. The upshot was that over 100 people lost their lives during the takeover and continuing occupation of the Palace of Justice. This covered a period of three or four days, if I remember correctly. I haven't gone back to look at the files, but it was an extended occupation. It was finally ended when the Colombian military attacked the Palace of Justice through the roofs, the front door, and any available openings in the building. They even used tanks. As I said, over 100 people lost their lives.

It was pretty clear, from communications that were coming out during the takeover and during the crisis and occupation of the Palace of Justice itself that whoever was in the building was, indeed, executing people. This was in a country that was already known for its violence. This

seemed to be a further affront to any standards of decency that you could think of. Colombian public sentiment was very strong about this.

In any event the crisis was eventually resolved. As I said, we offered to provide, and we may have provided, if I remember correctly, some kinds of technical devices. However, my recollection is that they were never used.

Q: It was a very short time.

GILLESPIE: It was a relatively short time. The Colombian Government felt that they could deal with it. This incident indicated, though, this very traditional gap between the civilian and the military leadership. The Colombian military's position was, "Look, this is our problem. Turn it over to us, and we'll deal with it. Don't even watch." In this instance President Belisario Betancur and the civilian, political leadership were saying, "Wait a minute, the world's eyes are on us. This situation can't be dealt with by the unrestrained use of force." All kinds of stories were coming out - almost hourly, in fact - about who was in charge, who was going to do what, and was the Minister of Defense or the President making decisions about what was to be done. #It reflected a very serious disconnect, if you will, between the civilian political leadership and the military. It also reflected badly on the Colombian Government's ability to manage a crisis which in fact had Colombia very much in the headlines around the world. One could see this very clearly.

In any event, the military stormed the Palace of Justice and brought this incident to a close. While the country was still reeling from this shock, a few days later the terrible natural disaster which I have already mentioned took place in the next valley to the West from Bogota. Overlooking that valley, there is a volcano called the Nevado del Ruiz, a snow-covered mountain, as its name suggests. It erupted and caused major mud slides, without much warning. The eruption sent hundreds of thousands of tons of mud down its flanks to the Magdalena River valley below it. The mud slides went right through a town called Armero, which had been built in the delta area below this volcano. This was a town with a population of some 24,000, 23,000 of whom were killed.

The reaction in Colombia to this natural disaster was interesting. There was almost an unwillingness to believe that it had happened and that its dimensions were as great as they seemed. The Colombian Government fell back into a stance that we'd seen over a number of years. Government officials said, "We don't need a lot of help. We can deal with this." Then the dimensions of the disaster became evident, and that attitude changed. The disaster elicited a tremendous outpouring of offers of assistance and concrete aid from all over the world - from Europe, North America, and Asia.

We were then very much in the thick of that. This disaster took place in an area that is not easily reached by road from Bogota, which is the main entry area into the country, or Barranquilla, the main port on the coast. It turned out that there was a military air base at Palanquero, not too far from the site of the disaster. I must say that the U.S. military really showed its capacity for getting into this area and helping to organize parts of the rescue effort.

We were by no means alone in providing assistance. Ecuador, Brazil, Peru, Venezuela, and all of

the neighboring countries in the region sent transport aircraft, field hospitals, and military units to help with the organization of the relief effort. They sent various kinds of rescue units. The U.S. sent in a large number of helicopters. Due to the way the system evolved and partly with our help, we were able to bring a complete air traffic control into the region where this tragedy had happened. The Colombian Air Force, with its base at Palanquero near the site of the disaster, did not have the capacity to control the substantial air traffic bringing help. So I got to see a lot of this, first hand, through the eyes of our officers who were down there and who were keeping me informed about it. Supplies were coming in to take care of the survivors, of whom there were several thousand from the region. I forget the exact number of people affected by this disaster, but it was at least 50,000 or so, about twice the number of those who died.

In any event planes would come in to Bogota International Airport. Then the supplies would be transferred, usually from commercial aircraft, to C-130s, which could fly in to Palanquero. Then they had to be transported, usually by helicopter, out to where they were needed. We had sent several helicopter units from Panama, and the British had sent helicopters from Belize. It was quite an international effort, which went on at least for a couple of months after the event.

Q: Tony, I'd like to ask you something. I've been involved in two, significant earthquakes - one in Yugoslavia and one in Italy. Could you talk about your role as the Ambassador in the context of such a disaster? There was a horrendous, security problem in Columbia, and, all of a sudden, there was a major, natural disaster. What went through your mind and how did you approach this? How did you organize the Embassy to do it?

GILLESPIE: Well, as it may be somewhat evident now, since I joined the Foreign Service, I had been in, near, or around a lot of different, crisis situations. I guess that I had picked up a lot of ideas from watching others. I learned a lot from the evacuation of dependents for political or terrorism reasons and from dealing with kidnapping or other, major problems. I think that I learned a lot from what the Foreign Service had to offer. I had talked to people about these kinds of things.

The first thing that I did was to try to get some information. In other words, take stock of the situation. An Embassy is a gold mine of information, if the people are doing their job. So, to bring it down to the micro level, the first thing was to get the Defense Attaché, the Central intelligence Agency representative, the chiefs of the Political, Economic, and Consular Sections of the Embassy all together and say, "All right let's try to work out, if we can, the dimensions of this problem." As I mentioned, in Bogota we had a special AID office, called the Advanced Developing Country Office, with a very savvy, experienced, and entrepreneurial AID professional. He was the only American AID employee in that office. He knew which buttons to push. The Defense Attaché and our Military Group commander had their connections. They knew whom to talk to. The first thing to do is to try to define the situation, including what has happened, what are the likely requirements going to be, and what is the country's capacity for dealing with this problem. The situation was developing very quickly, of course.

We were in touch with the President of Colombia and the people around him. They were setting up a crisis management organization of their own which, in terms of numbers of people involved, went far beyond and was more open than what had been done in the case of the

occupation by terrorists of the Palace of Justice. Then we asked the Colombians what we could do that would help the most. In doing this you learn that you have to advise, counsel, educate, instruct, and, sometimes, fend off people in Washington who think that they know exactly what is required.

There is a lot of potential help available in Washington in connection with a situation like this, and a lot of people who are willing to help. However, their knowledge of what's going on isn't complete, so they sort of fall back on formulas. This is true not only in Washington, DC, but is also true in Paris, London, Tokyo, and everywhere. We had people, not only in the U.S. but in Europe, who said, "These people have been devastated. They're without their homes and they're going to need clothing." Within a short period of time we learned that some of these people were providing ski parkas, blankets, warm clothing, and those kinds of things for an area where, I think, the mean, low temperature is probably 70 degrees Fahrenheit, with the highs up in the 90s.

What that means is that I think that it is incumbent on the field element, in this case the Embassy, the Ambassador, and his staff, quickly to make sure that the folks in Washington have a sense of the situation. And we did this. We said, "Here's an inventory or catalogue - maybe incomplete, but here's what we know the local authorities have to deal with something like this. Here's what the food supply situation might look like. This looks like what the requirements will be." Fortunately, we had some very quick responses. The Air Section chief of our Military Group in Colombia, Lt Col David Mason, had been a fighter pilot in the U.S. Air Force. David had grown up in Chile and spoke fluent Spanish. David had wonderful connections, both in the Colombian Air Force and Ministry of Defense, as well as in our own military establishment. He was very quickly able to get some quick reaction resources down to us. We had some helicopters very rapidly. They flew down - it was not easy to make the long, overland flight from Panama to Colombia. They had to make sure that they could get fuel on the way. The pilots hadn't flown to this destination before, and they weren't sure of the route. However, they did it. We were able to make quick surveys and go out and look at the situation to find out what was going on. Lt Col Dave Mason went out in a Colombian Air Force aircraft and looked at the area. He came back to Bogota and said, "Okay, this is the lay of the land." Other people, particularly the AID representative in Bogota, were finding out what stocks of supplies were on hand, what would be taken care of by local donations, what wouldn't be, and what was going to be hard to get.

Through the combined efforts of Washington agencies and of our own Embassy, we were able to establish some priorities. In this connection the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance in the Agency for International Development was of material assistance. I think that it still exists, more or less by that same name. They have a cadre of professionals in this area. All they do is handle disaster relief, dealing with crises around the world - natural, man-made, or whatever. They have money available and know where resources are, even if they don't have them on hand. They have experience. They said, "Look out for problems of shelter. One of the worst things that happens in a situation like this is that people tend to worry about food, medicine, and all of these other, terribly important things. But people often forget that there is no place for the people most affected to lay their heads at night."

It turned out that in Panama there were reserve stocks of tenting materials, tarpaulins, and the kinds of things you need which can very quickly be turned into shelter. These materials were

"palletized" - they were all packed, ready to be loaded on aircraft, and sent to where they were needed. So, within a really short time, we were able to get that kind of material into Colombia and turn it over to this developing, transportation chain and start getting it out to where the victims of the disaster were.

Q: A practical question, because I ran across this problem in another place. Who put up the tents? This is a fairly complicated operation. You don't just dump a tent on the ground.

GILLESPIE: We had a lot of U.S. troops who came down with these relief supplies. I don't remember their exact number. They instructed the local people. This was very basic shelter. These were not formal tents. I think that they found that setting up the really complicated, military tent is not the easiest thing to do. What you do first is you just get plastic, tarpaulins, and those kinds of things out at the scene. I think that within a day or two there was the beginnings of a tent city, a community. We did not try to insert ourselves into this different sort of cultural situation and tell people how it ought to be done, and all of that. We just provided the materials and worked with them to make sure that these shelters were set up and used properly. They needed everything from water purification on. You can imagine what it was.

It took quite an effort. You asked what we did. We set up an Armero Disaster Task Force within the Embassy itself. People started to come in from all over. A foreign disaster expert was assigned to the AID office in the Embassy in San Jose, Costa Rica. He was on a plane to Bogota within 12 hours. So he joined my staff and became part of the team and one of the leaders of the Armero Disaster Task Force. He knew what was going on. He had dealt with earthquakes, floods, and hurricanes. Imagine the things that he had worked with! So he knew what to do and had a very good sense of how to do things.

Of course, our government is bureaucratic. There are limitations on authority. The Ambassador can do a lot, but he doesn't have unlimited authority and certainly doesn't have unlimited funds. He has to find the funds or make sure that somebody is looking for them. That's where the experts come into play. We went on what was basically a 24-hour operation basis because so many things were happening, in different time zones. We were getting inquiries from our own Embassies in Europe, Asia, and elsewhere as to what could be done or not done. It was very important to get going.

An immediate rescue effort got under way. That was what took up the headlines and dominated the photo coverage of the disaster - TV and still photographs of babies being pulled out of the mud, some of them alive and others being dug for but not found alive. Real, human tragedies were taking place. We were trying to be as helpful as we could. There, again, we had helicopters, lighting systems, and other facilities that we could make available, together with the people to operate them.

Interestingly enough, the Nevado de Ruiz truly was a volcano. Prior to the actual eruption and the mud flow, which followed a real, volcanic eruption from within, there had been a lot of smoke and volcanic ash which had been visible for quite some time. That was and still is a volcano which, from time to time, gives off plumes of smoke. We found out that at the Colombian Air Force base at Palanquero there was a layer of fine, volcanic ash over the whole

airport. That meant that there was a risk to the aircraft, coming and going, because this ash was like pumice or emery-like material. When this material was stirred up and blown against aircraft, either against the propellers or into the engine intakes, it actually was like sandpaper or whatever you want to call it. It was causing damage, and that began to affect helicopter operations very soon. It was necessary to do special cleaning of the aircraft and to make sure that those things were taken care of, or the problems would have been compounded.

This was a major rescue effort. There were many thousands of people affected by the volcanic eruption, and there were many thousands of people who were trying to help deal with it. I thought that our job should be to be as helpful as we could and to make sure that we were doing everything possible - and not worsening the problem by any of our actions. We didn't want to complicate the matter. In all of this, as you can imagine, people's sensitivities were sometimes affected. There were some people who said, "Well, in effect, you are saying that you can do this better than anybody else." I found it useful to stay in close contact, not only with the Colombian Government, but with the representatives of other governments which were helping. I tried to make sure that we were coordinating with them as well as we could. Our military people seemed to be very adept at this. They were able to deal with the British, the French, and the Germans, as well as with the representatives of the other Latin Americans who were providing help. They did this in a fairly short time, but not necessarily on a smaller scale than the Berlin Airlift of 1948-1950. There were planes coming and going, a mixture of civilian and military aircraft.

At one point, if I remember correctly, in an area certainly no larger than Arlington County in northern Virginia, we had air traffic controllers who were trying to keep some 40 to 60 helicopters from colliding with each other. All of this was in addition to the governmental efforts. You have mentioned business companies in Colombia which were trying to help. Occidental Petroleum Company, the Exxon Minerals Company, Texaco, Shell Oil Company, and other big, multinational companies were all operating, not in the immediate area of the volcanic eruption, but not too far from it. They were involved in oil exploration and extraction and mining. These companies also had helicopters available. They were some of the first helicopters on the scene, because they happened to be right there. So, in addition to government aircraft which were operating, there were private aircraft operating as well. These had to be coordinated and controlled, or they might have crashed into each other, with all kinds of tragic consequences. So there were literally dozens of helicopters moving in the same area, going to rescue someone here, taking people to hospitals there, and delivering medical supplies and food. In large measure the coordination operation was, to a large extent, a combined Colombian and U.S. effort, involving the U.S. and Colombian Air Forces and the U.S. and Colombian Armies as well.

Then there were the civilian helicopter pilots, many of whom were Colombian, coming in. Occasionally, there were some linguistic problems. Somehow, it all worked out, and we never had a real incident or accident. I guess that that speaks well for people's capacities.

In any event, that operation lasted well into December, 1987, and, in fact, well past Christmas, 1987.

Q: Did you have an officer at the site of the mud slides?

GILLESPIE: Oh, yes.

Q: How did that work? What was his and her role?

GILLESPIE: We had people involved in coordinating our efforts. Initially, I relied on my military personnel, because it was that part of it that we were most deeply involved in. Then, we also had AID disaster experts out there. I felt that, as long as they were alert to potential problem areas and would take the initiative to make sure that we, in Bogota, knew when problems were emerging or were out on the horizon somewhere, the rest of their time ought to be spent in making sure that our aid was being delivered as it should be and that we were doing as good a job as we could.

Obviously, in a situation like this, there are all kinds of opportunities for leakage of relief supplies. Almost within hours of the beginning of our efforts, people were saying that supplies provided to help people were being siphoned off and taken away. There were problems with distribution systems in Colombia. My AID chief, Jim Smith, spent an inordinate amount of time, coordinating with United Nations and other, relief people who were there, to make sure that the right kinds of relief supplies were being requested and were coming in.

I went on the U.S. TV program, *Night Line*, twice, to discuss how things were going.

Q: What was Night Line?

GILLESPIE: Ted Koppel's program on ABC in the United States. They did a program live twice from Bogota, to get a sense of it. The reason that I mentioned that is that it elicited tremendous donations of cash. One of our problems or challenges was to make sure that these cash donations got into the relief chain in the right way and were used properly. Of course, in this instance we had nothing better to offer than the services of the American Red Cross. It was quite effective and it worked closely with the Colombian Red Cross and the Swiss-led, International Committee of the Red Cross to channel those cash resources into the overall effort.

Quite frankly, we knew that, at some point, if anything blew up, someone would say, "Well, why didn't you see this coming?" So Jim Smith, the AID chief in the Embassy in Bogota, was watching this situation closely, trying to make sure that this was all going all right. He was not alone - of course, you are never alone in such a situation. Everybody was trying to make sure that this relief effort worked well.

Over a space of three or four weeks, I probably went to the scene of the rescue effort in Armero, on average, nearly every other day. This was mainly because we had people coming in from Washington...

Q: I was going to ask about the visitor problem, because sometimes this causes some difficulty. I've been interviewing Charles Freeman, who was Ambassador to Saudi Arabia during the Gulf War in 1991. He was saying that his real problem is that he was absolutely inundated by visitors, every one of whom wanted to be seen. Many of these visitors weren't particularly helpful.

GILLESPIE: Maybe it was due to a perverse blessing of the security situation in Colombia. However, we did not get a large amount of expressed interest on the part of watchers - for example, members of Congress who wanted to have their pictures taken. There was some of that, but it occurred much later, after the situation was under control and was being managed properly. My most distinguished visitors included the commanding general of the U.S. Army Southern Command, a four star general, General John Galvin, whom I previously mentioned. After graduating from West Point he had gone to Colombia and spent two years in the Colombian Army Ranger School, first as a student, and then as an instructor. He speaks Spanish very well, and his knowledge of the region is extensive. He was wonderful. You couldn't ask for anything better.

Other major figures that we were in contact with included the Army Chief of Staff and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, both of whom were tremendously helpful. I called each of them by phone to make sure that they knew what we needed and how they might help. There was very valuable help from both of them. They never showed any great interest in hopping on a plane and coming down for a visit. General Galvin did visit us because he was a field commander type of guy who knew what needed to be done. He came down to make sure that his troops were being effectively used. He ended up putting hundreds of U.S. military personnel into the region over time, although at any one point the total probably wasn't much more than 150-200 military personnel.

Peter McPherson, was the Administrator of the Agency for International Development. I had dealt with Peter earlier, when I was Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for the Caribbean and Central American operations. Peter is just as solid a citizen as you could ask for. Peter came down to visit us. He wanted to know what we were doing, how well we were doing it, what else we should be doing, and how much more should we be involved. He and I went over to see the President of Colombia. These meetings usually were late at night. They were not social occasions. They were strictly business.

I remember that Peter came back to the Embassy with me after one such meeting with the President of Colombia. He said, "Tony, you put your finger on it. These people, this government, this society is simply not prepared to deal with a crisis like this. It's coming right on top of another crisis that hit them hard. When this is over, let's see whether there is some way that we can help, not only this government, but governments elsewhere in this region and God knows where else to deal with this kind of problem. Everybody has to do things like this. We're not the best at it." We had an Agency called FEMA (Federal Emergency Management Agency) which has been an on again, off again type of operation. However, Peter felt that there ought to be some way for people to talk to each other and deal with some of these issues in advance. So he was looking at the immediate situation and beyond. He was extremely helpful. If my AID people came to me and said, "We need a little help on this," I could pick up the phone, call Peter, and get a quick and nearly always positive response to whatever it was that I wanted.

Yes, we had visitors. There were a lot of relief people coming in. Eventually, within three weeks or so, this situation became something of a routine. I designated a spouse, in this case our Public Affairs Officer's husband, who was himself a Latin American, to handle the visitors. He had been a professor at American University in Washington, D.C. He is very Americanized Peruvian.

I made him the head of the continuing Armero Task Force, because our AID office was small. The people from outside the region, the people who were in Colombia on TDY (Temporary Duty), stayed on, but their numbers slowly dwindled. After a time we had a number of contractors and others who were helping. Finally, after a while, our relief effort managed itself out of existence.

Going back to your original point, this showed that you need to have information and some sense of what might work under the circumstances. I think that you need to have a "translator" who can take the principles of crisis management or disaster relief, whatever they are, as they are known, on a universal level, and bring them down to the local scene. Such a "translator" might say, "Wait a minute, that's a great idea, but let's look at it from this angle. That's not likely to work here in the same way."

We were able to do that. In a tight security situation nothing broke down. We had volunteers: our Consular, Political, and Economic Officers from the State Department. We had CIA officers and people from the U.S. Department of Defense. When there was a job to be done, they basically jumped in and did it, asking, "How can we be of help?" There were also the Colombians from the Embassy staff. Remember, this was a Colombian crisis. The Colombian employees of the U.S. Government were first and foremost - right out there, making sure that the various jobs got done and volunteering to do various things, when needed.

As of this point, it was mid-November, 1986. I had been there for all of September and October. In other words, I had been in Bogota for a little more than two months. It was a hell of an introduction to a job! However, in a sense it was extremely useful. You can never say that it was fortuitous. It was a real tragedy. First, it was murder and assassinations on the political front, and then there was a natural disaster.

As time went on, the events at the Palace of Justice began to become clearer, and there were explanations for what had happened. However, we were not quite sure, at least not initially, what the motivations for the takeover of the Palace of Justice were. Over time it seemed to become pretty clear that this action may have had a revolutionary or rebellious content contributed by the M-19 group.

Nevertheless, there seemed to be very strong evidence that Pablo Escobar and the Medellin Cartel, as well as those who were trying to resist any further extradition to the U.S., had their fingers in that pot. We learned almost immediately from people who were inside the Palace of Justice, and who survived this event, that documents concerning certain people, certain crimes, and certain cases had been taken out of the Ministry of Justice archives and destroyed or burned, before a lot of other things happened. Certain Justices of the Colombian Supreme Court, who were known to favor the extradition of Colombians wanted on narcotics charges in the United States, were summarily executed, within a short period of time.

We saw much of this later on. However, as recently as 1996, 10 or 11 years after the fact, the Colombian Government and other, Colombian authorities, are still trying to deal with the question of how to allocate responsibility and accountability for what happened in connection with the Palace of Justice occupation and the decisions that were taken at that time. In the course

of that process you could never be sure of how much revisionism of history was going on. This was a consideration, particularly as we couldn't follow these events too closely, since we never had enough time to do so. We couldn't be sure of how the Colombian military acted and whether Colombian civilians controlled the situation or not - or wanted to do so.

So this incident was never really over. However, it does appear that the Palace of Justice takeover was probably - at least in part and maybe in large part - orchestrated to serve the ends of the narcotics trafficking cartel in Medellin.

The Armero Disaster did not have any such origins. It was a natural disaster. It was managed by the Colombians reasonably well. Certainly, people would give them a C+ or a B rating on their overall performance - maybe even higher, say, a B+. It was a devastating event. In my view the Colombians did well. I didn't see a lot of pettiness or other problems. I saw people trying to help. The administration of President Betancur was winding down, as the country was preparing for presidential elections in the spring of 1986. As Peter McPherson, the Director of AID, had suggested, this combination of events gave us an opportunity to begin to work with President Betancur and to give priority to issues related to the management of crises, whether of political or natural origin. We could also develop close, personal ties with people in the Government of Colombia. Perhaps we could hope to influence government organizational and decision making structures and institutional approaches to these issues. This could be done in a way which, quite frankly, could help us to deal with narcotics trafficking and with what seemed to be a growing incidence of terrorism, both worldwide and hemispheric. We could hope to learn how to deal with matters of that kind.

These two crises might help us better to define how we ought to relate to the Colombian Government, under whatever administration might be in power, regarding these very sensitive areas. These matters were going to be with us for a while. That is more or less how we came out of these events.

Q: Two questions come to mind. First, during this time, and even later, was there ever concern that Colombia might be taken over by the Colombian military? You have mentioned a tendency by the Colombian military to say, "We'll take over handling these events."

GILLESPIE: The answer to that is, "No."

Q: Then you weren't drawing the conclusion that these events showed that this was the first step by the Colombian military to brush aside the civilian government?

GILLESPIE: No. The Colombian military was in an interesting position. First of all, the Colombian military do not vote. They don't go to the polls. Secondly, if the military votes in the Colombian context, it's done very subtly. By that, I mean that it might try to influence political events indirectly.

You may remember that the Rojas Pinilla dictatorship represented an individual military officer's takeover of the government. General Rojas basically overstayed his welcome as President. I'm abbreviating this process, but basically it was civilians who went to the Colombian military and

said, "Please help us get rid of Rojas Pinilla." In effect, the Colombian military said, "Okay, we'll do it but we're only going to do it for a little while. You civilians have to bear the responsibility for this." That worked.

As much as I could, I tried to use the military-civilian test and I tried to get all of the Embassy officers to apply the same test. This involved considering whether what many people considered an aversion by the Colombian military to military rule of the country was real or not. By and large, this thesis seemed to be correct, although there were always some military officers who reportedly might, under certain circumstances, try to use their military authority to take over the civilian government.

However, first of all, the Colombian military had its hands full. There were four separate guerrilla movements going on in the country. A lot of things were happening. The Colombian military wasn't doing a particularly good or effective job of dealing with these guerrilla movements. The civilian leadership wasn't willing to back the Colombian military 100 percent. There were no indications that the military were saying, "Well, in that case, we'll take over until this crisis is dealt with." As I say, there were a few exceptions, involving a few, middle grade officers, who might have been considering a military takeover.

In a sense, Colombia's military is a very comfortable establishment. They had been living in a state of siege for God knows how long. Basically, what this meant was that there were pay bonuses for all of the professional military. There were very substantial, retirement benefits, as a result of this state of siege. So I always thought that there may have been a view among the Colombian military that having this guerrilla crisis going on was useful to them.

Q: What were the social origins of the Colombian military?

GILLESPIE: First of all, the Colombian military is a self-perpetuating group. A lot of them are traditional members of the military. Many Colombian officers are sons and grandsons of officers. Secondly, they have been subject to Chilean and German influences over the years, so they fancy themselves a professional, military class. They have military academies and they take young men into the military service at a very young age. Then they put them through high school or, perhaps, give them a little more than a high school education, following which they commission them as officers. Over the past 20 or 30 years nearly all of the officers have been given an opportunity for some higher education, particularly those who are deemed to be comers. For example, they may take university courses. They are and have been very much middle class in outlook. They are separated from the rest of society.

During the Colombian government which succeeded the Betancur administration, the Minister of Communications, a brilliant academic figure who is a political scientist more than anything else, set out to try to help the military improve its image in the eyes of Colombian society. Thereby, he sought to give the military the public support for actions which it might need to take in dealing with the various problems of the country. He started a campaign to do that. Prior to that the Colombian military was relatively out of sight, out in the countryside. Often, it was relatively out of mind.

There is corruption in the Colombian military, involving the acquisition or purchase of defense items. It is not rampant. There were, and there continue to be, actions by the Colombian military which violate the basic human rights of a lot of citizens. As the situation continued to deteriorate in the countryside- (end of tape)

Many landowners in the countryside saw their interests being threatened by guerrilla movements. They were able, in effect, to co-opt some of the military - though by no means all, and not necessarily at higher rank levels - to serve their interests, to become enforcers for them, and to drive guerrillas and maybe just peasants off the land. Over the past 10 to 15 years this has been the source of many reports, quite a few of them well substantiated, of human rights violations and atrocities of various kinds. Usually these involved simple killings. Those who carried out these killings didn't necessarily torture people. These were done in the sense of extrajudicial actions to clear land, get rid of trouble makers, and, occasionally, to assassinate leftist political leaders.

Back in the 1970s the Colombian military had consciously been used, to some extent, in an anti-narcotics role, mainly in the eradication of marijuana crops. This involved pulling out marijuana plants by hand. Then it became very evident that some of the Colombian military were being corrupted by the narcotics traffickers. So the military pulled out of this kind of activity and really tried to stay as far away from the narcotics traffic as they could.

You might remember that the Colombian military and Colombia as a country had been closely involved in the international area. There were Colombians who fought in World War II. The Colombians are very proud of their service in Korea in the 1950s. A Colombian battalion went to South Korea which fought alongside U.S. forces. At the office of the Colombian Ministry of Defense there is a large, interior courtyard with a replica of Pork Chop Hill, a well-known battle during the Korean conflict. So the Colombian military are aware and proud of their involvement in Korea.

Many of the officers in the Colombian armed forces are educated and articulate. Many of them are quite honest, although others are not. In our view of Colombia back in the mid-1980s we were always somewhat ambivalent as to whether we really wanted to encourage the Colombian military to participate in the struggle against the narcotics traffic. The Colombian National Police are very much organized on the model of the *Carabineros* a semi-militarized police force in Chile. The Chilean *Carabineros* helped to train and establish the National Police in Colombia early in the 20th century, following the German model.

Early in the 1980s the Colombian National Police had set up a very special anti-narcotics unit, which was called just that - the UEAN, or Special Anti-Narcotics Unit. We referred to it as the SANU, using the English translation of the unit's name. That was composed of a cadre of police who, at the patrolman level, were taken out of their home districts, where they had joined the Police force. They were assigned to areas which grew large amounts of narcotics and were stationed away from their places of origin, so that they would not be under family pressures, either in favor of or opposed to the narcotics traffic. I think that they were only allowed to serve in SANU units for a total of four years. After a year or two they were moved to another area as a matter of policy, in an effort to build some kind of firewall against involvement with the

narcotics traffickers.

Like SANU patrolmen, officers in the SANU could not be assigned to areas where they lived. Once patrolmen had been enlisted in the SANU and then left it, they could never be assigned back to it. There weren't enough officers in the SANU to make it possible to follow the same policy, so they would serve about two years, leave the SANU, and then have a cooling off period of some years before they went back to the Special Anti-Narcotics Unit. More recently, that practice seems to have broken down, but nevertheless that was the way in which the Colombian Government, the police, and the military authorities viewed the threat to their institutions from narcotics trafficking and the corruption that goes along with it.

When I arrived in Colombia, the Director of the National Police was considered to be almost a paragon of virtue and a very hard-working man. Nothing has ever happened to darken his reputation, which seems to have held up over the years. Later, however, this Director of the National Police was replaced by an officer whom many people regarded as quite honest. However, we later learned that he may have been involved in some cases of corruption. In the Latin American context, and without taking into consideration the narcotics traffic, Colombia would probably have ranked in the middle area in terms of corruption - neither the worst and certainly not the cleanest. This flows from the way Colombians have carried on their business over the years. What is perceived to be corruption in the Anglo-Saxon world in the northern hemisphere is not always perceived to be corruption in the southern hemisphere. The realization has increasingly begun to dawn on many observers that corruption has a bad effect on society and the economy.

In any event, with narcotics and especially cocaine, added to the marijuana traffic, Colombia's levels of corruption, both public and private, are dramatically up. It's a very sad situation. Interestingly enough, when I was in Colombia, the belief was very strong that the people in and around the Executive Branch of the Colombian Government were, for the most part, quite clean of corruption.

By contrast with the situation in Mexico and certain countries of Latin America, Africa, or Asia, a Colombian President serves for four years and comes into office as part of the educated, political elite of his country. He probably has spent his whole life in politics. He probably has a law, medical, or engineering degree. In Colombia people engaged in political life are almost all involved in the law. After a Colombian President completes his four year term and leaves office, in most cases he subsequently does not behave or show any of the signs, including big Swiss bank accounts and lots of money, that he has had tremendously successful or large investments or that he has a luxurious life style. He generally moves back to a fairly modest, upper middle class existence. A former Colombian President might have a nice apartment in Bogota. Maybe he has a country estate that's not very big but has a few cows on it. Former Colombian Presidents usually live as elder statesmen in a manner befitting an ex-President, but not in a grand style. They don't get around to places...

Q: Unlike the situation affecting former Presidents of Mexico.

GILLESPIE: Unlike Mexico, yes. When I was in Mexico, everybody knew that people like

former President Echeverria and his successor, President Lopez Portillo, had Swiss, Miami, and New York bank accounts, properties in California and Florida - all of these different things. Their net worth had increased exponentially, while they were reaching the top of the political structure and then moved beyond it. That didn't seem to be the case, and still doesn't seem to be the case, in Colombia.

Up until fairly recently, in the early 1990s, ex-Presidents of Colombia, not always acting collectively but viewed as a group, really constituted a very special, national institution. They were called on by their successors as President to address key issues. They could be called in and talked to, regardless of their party affiliation. This flowed from the idea of the National Front of the 1960s and the idea that they could alternate in power. That institutional character has dramatically diminished and may no longer exist. This may be a function, quite frankly, of longevity, age, and the way events have developed over the years.

However, I know that one of the best pieces of advice that I got when I was leaving for Colombia was from people who knew the country. They said, "Get to know the ex-Presidents. Meet with them." I forget precisely who told me this, but one of the best introductions you can get is to go and meet with each of the ex-Presidents and ask each of them how he thinks an incoming American Ambassador ought to comport himself and what he thinks the issues of greatest concern are in the bilateral relationship between Colombia and the United States. Also, how does he see the current situation in terms of U.S.-Colombian relations?

I did that religiously. I prepared a set of questions and asked each of the ex-Presidents those same questions. I received dramatically interesting and helpful answers from them. They were quite willing to give me their views and they were thoughtful. I forget now how I got off on this side track.

Q: We were looking at the role of the Colombian military. You moved over from that subject, but, in a way, it's all part and parcel of the same matter. Could we follow through on the war against the narcotics traffic? When were you in Colombia?

GILLESPIE: August, 1985, to September, 1988.

Q: Could you stick to that time and talk about what we did? One comment that the Colombians might make, and I imagine that it was thrown in your face, was more or less, "Yes, here in Colombia we have a narcotics problem, but it's your damned people up in the Colossus of the North who are buying this stuff. Can't you control your own people?"

GILLESPIE: I had talked to past American Ambassadors to Colombia, including Pete Vaky, Diego Asencio, Tom Boyatt, and my immediate predecessor, Lewis Tambs. Ambassador Tambs was President Ronald Reagan's initial appointee to the Embassy in Bogota. He is the American Ambassador who put his finger on the narcotics problem in the firmest possible way. In fact, he didn't miss an opportunity to publicize, in Colombia or in the U.S., the perverse and pervasive nature and the pernicious effects of the whole narcotics traffic. He would say that this was hurting Colombia, could hurt U.S.-Colombian relations and was certainly killing young people in the United States. He didn't miss an opportunity to get that point across, both publicly and

privately.

As you might imagine, that elicited a variety of reactions, one of which was, "Wait just a minute. It is you Americans who provide a market for narcotics." At this point U.S. was one of the major markets for marijuana and probably THE major market for cocaine. Colombians would say, "If the United States didn't provide this market, we wouldn't have this problem. We'd have a much more manageable problem." So that debate had been going on for some time when I arrived. I had just come out of the Caribbean area.

One of my nightmare scenarios was to see Colombians or people from the fertile crescent in the Middle East, in Turkey, where opium poppies were being grown, or perhaps from Thailand or Cambodia, where heroin was being produced, being taken over by narcotics traffickers. My nightmare involved seeing some group or somebody deciding that one of the best moves that they could make would be to take over a government in the Caribbean, in the Western Hemisphere, where there are very vulnerable, little governments. Unfortunately, in some instances these small countries are probably very vulnerable. With a little money you can do an awful lot. A government in the Caribbean might be taken over by drug trafficking interests - or be subject to such influence by these interests that these could no longer be considered honest governments. Imagine all of the problems that that would create, not only in terms of the narcotics trade but political problems - how would we deal with these kinds of things internationally?

When I got to Colombia, I certainly didn't have that fear about the Government of Colombia. However, I could see - and it was certainly evident - what was involved in the takeover of the Colombian Palace of Justice by terrorists. Afterwards, the President of the Supreme Court came to me privately and almost secretly to say, "You've got to get my family out of here. You in the United States must help me. I have nowhere else to go." He brought with him an audio cassette mailed to him by the drug traffickers which included the voices of his wife and daughter, talking on their telephone. The message was implicit, "You see, we know exactly where your family is. If you do not act in our favor, you will not see your wife and your daughter again. We'll deal with them." This was quite different from asking him to step back from issues of interest to them or to be neutral where they were concerned. He said that if he did things for the narcotics traffickers, he would receive fantastic amounts of money. He said that if he refused to do this, and tried to be either neutral or negative toward the narcotics traffickers, then they would kill his family.

So he asked us to help him get his family out of the country. We did. We eventually got him out of the country as well. We helped him to get a post in an international organization. That was apparently enough to move him out of the sights of the narcotics traffickers. So he and his family are still alive.

Others with whom we worked closely and who had come to us for help did not survive. One of these people was the chief of the Colombian Special Anti-Narcotics Unit (SANU), an officer whom I had met in Washington in 1985 before I went to Colombia. I met frequently with him and with the chief of our DEA office in the Embassy, which was called at the time, NAU, the Narcotics Assistance Unit. The chief of SANU was assassinated one Sunday on the highway

while returning from his country home. I went to his funeral with the President of Colombia and held his widow in my arms to comfort her. We were providing armored cars and other help to people in the police and, in the government, to Ministry of Justice officials, and to the Minister of Justice himself.

While the possibility of Colombia's being taken over by the drug traffickers was certainly not imminent in Colombia, I thought that I saw the possibility of the nightmare scenario, to which I referred previously, taking place in Colombia. When I first thought about it, I had assumed that this scenario might affect a small government in the Caribbean. I could begin to see that this narcotics trafficker group made "ruthless" a real word. They just simply were not willing to stop short of anything. The fictional creations of Tom Clancy and others and the way those traffickers have been portrayed in the movies, while ostensibly exaggerated and overdrawn in some respects, basically were not far off from the reality we saw in Colombia. These traffickers were men and women who think nothing of exterminating or snuffing out lives, if it seems to serve their purpose.

A class of assassins has developed in Colombia. They are called *sicarios* (hired assassins) in Spanish. These are kids, often street kids who were basically brought up in small gangs, where they learned how to kill people. They were tested by being given a gun. They would go out and get on a motorcycle, ride up behind somebody, put their gun as near as they could to the back of someone's head or the rear window of the car, and blast away. Or they would do that when the car was stopped at a light. If the car is not armored or does not have some armor plate, that's goodbye to the victim. That's the end of it.

Colombia had democratic institutions and was apparently not under imminent threat of being taken over by the narcotics traffickers. However, you could see the beginnings of such a takeover, if you let yourself think about it, as I did then. I remember talking to my DCM, Mike Skol, about this. I wondered how long the Colombian Government could resist this kind of activity, first on the individual and then on the societal level. One of the big things about Colombia and drugs is the money involved. The narcotics traffic produces tremendous amounts of money.

The Colombian traffickers, the managers of the system, are Colombians first and foremost. I don't think that they would want to live in Davos, Switzerland, or in Miami, Florida. They want to live in Colombia. Their non-business interests are agriculture, raising cattle and horses, and leading a kind of rural, bucolic existence. They want to eat, drink, be merry, watch their kids grow up, provide for their children and grandchildren, and do all of this in Colombia. They would not particularly enjoy having \$1.0 billion, or whatever the amount might be, in Swiss bank accounts which they can go and spend in Rome, Madrid, or some other place. They want their money there, in Colombia, so they bring it back and reinvest it in the narcotics system.

They buy land. If land is selling for \$100 an acre, they'll buy it for \$110 an acre, or \$150 an acre. They've always wanted a big house, so they'll go out and hire an architect to design the house out in the countryside. Well, in the mid-1980s, during my time in Colombia, it was very clear, from talking to my contacts, that polite Colombian society was already beginning to worry a little about this. That is, bankers were a little concerned about where some of the money received in

their banks was coming from, but not enough to do much about it, because it was boosting their balance sheets. Architects and lawyers were a little different. The lawyers really divided themselves into two, distinct groups. There were lawyers who would work with narcotics traffickers, and there were lawyers and law firms which simply would not do that.

The city of Cali is an interesting case. Cali is a city South of Medellin, in the Cauca River valley. It is heavily oriented toward agriculture but it also has some industry. Unlike a lot of other under developed and Latin American countries, Colombia has several large, population centers. Cali has a population of about 1.0 million. Some of the most modern printing and publishing companies in Colombia are in Cali, not in Bogota, which is the administrative capital and a business center. Medellin is a business center, and so is Barranquilla. There are other, large cities in Colombia.

There were narcotics traffickers and producers who were based in Cali. They formed the Cali cartel. In the mid-1980s one didn't hear very much about the Cali cartel. First of all, the violence level in and around Cali was relatively low. The problem there was terrible behavior, which people attributed to the police, more than anyone else. There were drive by shootings and getting homeless kids off the streets by killing them. There were transvestites and homosexuals in Cali. Every so often it was as if somebody said, "Let's go clean up the town," and a lot of these people would end up dead - murdered or shot. However, gang warfare, corruption, and clearly drug-related murder were not nearly as evident in Cali as in the other cities of Colombia.

I remember my first trip to Cali. I spoke to the local Chamber of Commerce and met with a lot of its members. I played a round of golf at the Cali Country Club and stayed overnight. I was told, "Look, we're going to keep Cali 'clean.' We're not going to let these drug traffickers into the country club. We're not going to let them become members of our luncheon clubs, our private groups, and so forth. They will not be able to have their children married in the major churches of Cali. We know who they are and we will keep them out." People I talked to said that, when they put land or houses up for sale, they vetted the people who wanted to buy them. They could tell whether a lawyer was acting on behalf of a narcotics trafficker. They wouldn't sell to that person. This was in the mid-1980s.

Medellin had basically gone over to the narcotics traffickers. Ambassador Tom Boyatt had closed our Consulates in Medellin and Cali. One of the arguments was that it was no longer safe to have U.S. Consulates in Medellin or Cali because the drug traffickers were so strong there. During the three years that I was in Colombia, I made two trips to Medellin but did not spend the night there. It wasn't considered safe. In Medellin there was a large amount of construction of houses and buildings. Cars were being bought and sold all over the place. Television sets were easily available in the stores. There was very little doubt that this was drug money at work. The citizens of Medellin and of the Department of Antioquia around the city were benefiting substantially from the narcotics traffic. They were making lots of money.

This gets back to this idea that people in Colombia were beginning to benefit from the narcotics traffic. Even then, although we talked about this nightmare scenario I mentioned previously, we didn't really think that it was likely to spread and take over the country, because the level of violence was so bad. We thought that, somehow, people would wake up to this situation and

resist a narcotics takeover.

Anyhow, Ambassador Tambs had raised this issue dramatically. Before I went to Colombia, we had a Bureau of International Narcotics Matters (INM) in the State Department. There was a Colombia task force at the Justice Department. The CIA was very reluctant even to come close to the narcotics traffic. Quite frankly, the FBI preferred to stay away from it. The FBI was much more interested in other forms of crime and international police activities (that is, Interpol), some of which got into the narcotics traffic but not all.

Within the Embassy the group of U.S. Government agency representatives was small and was mainly concerned with the eradication of narcotics crops in Colombia. We were testing Glyphosate out in Colombia's eastern provinces. This product is supposed to be a relatively benign herbicide. We had helped the Special Anti-Narcotics Unit (SANU) of the National Police to construct and occupy a camp in San Jose del Guaviare, a little cow town which is hardly reachable by anything but air, although there are some roads out to it. At a base in the Guaviare area the police had put helicopters supplied by the U.S. Government. You could fly into this base in small, twin-engined aircraft, which we had also provided to the police. I think that the aircraft were Beechcraft C-100s, or something like that.

We would fly out to this base, get into the helicopters, and go out to the area which they had been spraying with Glyphosate, to see how effective it would be to kill the coca plants. The Colombian Government had allowed us to conduct some of these tests out there. Our intention was to try to convince the Colombians that the government ought to engage in eradication of the coca crop on a large scale. However, we didn't seem to have an anti-narcotics strategy. We had an anti-narcotics policy - that is, we were against narcotics. We had an objective, which was to end the narcotics traffic. But we really didn't have a strategy to get us from where we were to where we wanted to be. I remember my DCM, Mike Skol, saying, "The only place there's ever going to be an anti-narcotics strategy is right here on Avenida Septima," where the Embassy was located. He said, "Tony, if we don't come up with an anti-narcotics strategy, nobody else will. Nobody is really paying close attention to this." This was in 1985. There would be an occasional story about narcotics, an occasional blurb or flurry of one kind or another - but not a lot more than that.

Ambassador Tambs had been trying to sound the trumpet against drug trafficking in Colombia. However, he had generated a tremendous amount of resentment. Although much of what he said was right, he was probably a prophet ahead of his time.

Q: I assume that he was seen as one of these right wing puritans.

GILLESPIE: He had some other, funny ideas about geopolitics. Some of them were not so funny but a little bit odd ball. He was strongly anti-communist. However, he spoke Spanish very well. He was a very nice, direct, and forceful man. He kept pushing this narcotics button, as I say. Some people listened, but a lot of people didn't. It's interesting that just this year, 1996, editorials have been appearing in Colombian newspapers saying that Tambs was right.

In any event Michael Skol, my DCM, and I sat down and tried to figure out what we could do to

deal with drug trafficking. Remember that I had been in the front office of the ARA Bureau with Assistant Secretary Tom Enders, where we had sort of a restricted interagency group to consider various policy issues. We had never used the word, restricted, but we tried to define who were the people with whom we could talk who could do something in the narcotics area. We tried to identify what the strategic choices were. What could we do here? There was a new CIA chief of station in the Embassy in Bogota and a Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) chief who had been in Colombia for some time. Those people were very sharp.

We had a very interesting fellow in the Narcotics Assistance Unit in the Embassy. He had been a long time Foreign Service Officer who had been a Political Officer. He took all of this anti-narcotics business tremendously seriously, but I'll be very honest. You could see why he was there and was not the Political Counselor. I don't know what had happened to him in his career. He would have good ideas, but they would never see the light of day. He wouldn't push them. He was a little shy in areas when he shouldn't have been shy and he was bold when he shouldn't have been bold. A good man, though, who worked very hard.

We formed a small, core group, an executive committee, to look at the drug trafficking problem. We decided that what we needed to do, particularly with the change of government facing us in Colombia...

Q: When was the election going to be?

GILLESPIE: In the spring of 1986. So we decided to work with the new government, whoever the President was going to be. We had a pretty good idea who it would be. All of the polls and all of our contacts indicated that the Liberal Party candidate, a man named Virgilio Barco, would be the next President. Our Political Counselor, who was very good at predicting elections, said that the new President was going to be Virgilio Barco. I would have done this in any case but I paid special attention to cultivating Virgilio Barco. He had a degree from MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) in economics. Interestingly enough, he was at MIT at just about the same time that former Secretary of State George Schultz was there. They were of the same, academic generation. Barco's wife, Caroline, had been born in York, Pennsylvania, and had spent a lot of time in the U.S. I forget now, but either her father or her mother was a U.S. citizen, an American. She also had a Colombian parent and was and had been a Colombian citizen for many years at the time I was in Colombia. Nonetheless, she was very "Americanized." Barco himself had spent seven years working at the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in Washington. He was also quite "Americanized." His English was quite good.

Anyway, I got to know the Barco's very well. I met with Barco both before the election and afterwards. He shared a lot of his polling data with me, including material on the narcotics traffic. He was using modern polling techniques. The Liberal Party in Colombia was part of his campaign operation. They were no strangers to this. Colombian Liberals had a close, working relationship with people in the Democratic Party in the United States. Interestingly enough, they were in touch with Sawyer Miller, a public relations consulting firm. I think that Sawyer Miller was doing some of their polling, or arranging for it to be done - telling them what questions to ask, helping them to refine their message, and doing all of those things.

Barco shared a lot of his data with me and said, "Look, Ambassador, I know the interest which you and your government have in narcotics. I'm worried about that, too. I feel that, in addition to whatever your demand for narcotics is, we face a demand situation and a use and consumption problem here in Colombia. We know all of the other parts of it. Let me show you this data." He reached over, grabbed some of the papers on his desk, and showed me that, according to his polling data, the Colombian people were not very concerned about the narcotics problem. It didn't show up on the list of their major concerns. Nobody appeared to be concerned about it. It just wasn't an issue. The Colombian people were concerned about their personal security, economic issues, and where they were going in terms of their economic standing. He said, "These are the issues that I have to be concerned about. My priority is to begin to help the process of development in this country and to extend government where it does not now exist. The way I'm going to do that is to build market roads. I'd like to get telephones out to rural communities and spread more widely in urban areas. I'd like to do a lot of these things, which are terribly important, and to maintain our sound economic status and base globally." He was an economist and thought about these things in those terms.

He said, "I will listen to you and, if elected, will cooperate fully. You can count on Colombia. However, narcotics trafficking will simply not be the highest priority issue in my government, if I am elected."

So Barco was elected. I went to call on him. I began with narcotics. He said, "I discussed this matter with you before. The situation hasn't changed." This was May, 1986. He was elected in the first week or so of May, and I went to see him about a week after his election, in his apartment - just the two of us. We spent a couple of hours going over all kinds of issues. Colombia had had, and will continue to have, access to international financial markets. Despite the crash of several Latin American economies in 1982, Colombia never rescheduled its debt and never welched on a payment. The Colombians still had access to the financial markets. They had been negotiating what was called the jumbo loan for the government. They were going to use its proceeds to smooth out their official debt. He said, "We're going to worry about that and the economic progress of this country. You can count on me," and he repeated everything that he'd said before.

A week or so later the CIA chief of station came to see me and said, "Ambassador, we've just learned that President Barco intends to appoint as the head of the Colombian equivalent of the FBI, called the Department of Administrative Security (DAS), a colonel from the Army or the Police. We know that this guy is really bad. He is corrupt, he is taking drug traffickers' money, and President Barco intends to appoint him to replace a man named Miguel Masa, who has been an honest, upstanding man. We have worked closely with him. DEA has worked with him," although the CIA and the DEA groups hated each other, institutionally and really didn't want even to talk to each other. We can go into that later. Anyway, the chief of station said, "Masa is going to be bounced, and that will be bad." I said, "Okay, what have you got on this new chief of the DAS that you can put in writing? If you can put something down on a piece of paper, I will take it to President Barco and make him aware of this. We'll see if we can influence his decision."

Well, at that time I had very good access to President-Elect Barco. I could call him on the phone

and ask, "Do you mind if I stop by?" He was still operating out of his home. He had not yet been inaugurated. So I went over, and we talked. I showed him the piece of paper that the chief of station had given me. I said, "You can keep it if you wish." He said, "No, take it back. I see what you mean. This officer is someone whom I have never been very close to, personally, although I know him. He has always been considered a friend of Liberal Party members and of the Liberal Party leadership. He served as an aide to somebody in the past, although I forget who it was. I see what you're saying. I take that as serious." However, he said, "You people have a problem with Masa." I said, "No, my understanding is that he is pretty good and could be pretty effective." He said, "Okay, I'm not sure exactly what I'll do, but I take your point and I will not appoint this man to be the head of the DAS."

So I went back and thought that we had gotten something done, at least. Anyway, President Barco confirmed Masa in the job as the head of the Colombian DAS. The CIA people later let Masa know that they had saved his job and that I had been instrumental in arranging this...

Q: Which is not good practice.

GILLESPIE: No, but that's what you do when you want to keep someone on your team. Anyhow, later on I saw Masa at some function or another. He made a point of coming up and say, "Ambassador, it's so nice to see you." Well, I didn't want to be known as anybody's benefactor.

We had decided that the best thing we could do would be to convince President Barco that Colombia needed a national drug strategy of some kind, even if it wasn't initially a high priority matter. If they didn't have a way to deal with the supply and demand for narcotics in their own country, then they would be at the mercy of those who did want to do things in those areas.

My objective, as I told Washington, was to try to persuade the new Barco administration in Colombia to devise and implement a national, anti-narcotics strategy, done in a Colombian way. I didn't know whether they should set up a "DEA," a Drug Enforcement Administration. We had begun this idea of having a drug czar in the White House. William Bennett was the first such drug czar. His focus was domestic. He didn't do much regarding drug trafficking in the international area at all.

This was in May, 1986. In July, 1986, here in Maryland, in the United States, a basketball player at the University of Maryland named Lenny Bias, died of an overdose of cocaine. That hit the newspapers. I'm sure that it's not fair to say that narcotics, cocaine and drugs hadn't been part of the already running U.S. off-year campaign for the Congressional elections of 1986. President Reagan had already been reelected in 1984, but the drug issue didn't figure very large in that campaign. There had been some references to it, but not much.

However, when Lenny Bias died of an overdose of cocaine, and that hit the newspapers. In vulgar terms, that was when the shit really hit the fan on narcotics, and particularly cocaine. Colombia, Peru, and other sources of cocaine attracted a great deal of attention. Every politician became interested in narcotics, and especially Congressman Charley Wrangel (Democrat, New York) and Congressman Ben Gilman (Republican, New York), who were the co-chairmen of the

Special Committee on Narcotics of the House of Representatives. They were all over the place. Narcotics had become a major, campaign issue in the United States. It's as if night turned to day or the sun came up.

All of a sudden, everyone was pointing at Bogota, Colombia. Everybody in the State Department was pointing at INM (Bureau of International Narcotics Matters), which was also pointing at Colombia. All of this was beginning to happen. I went over and said to President Virgilio Barco, who was now getting ready to be inaugurated on August 7, 1986, "Mr. President, I think that you should expect that the heat is going to rise here. Things are really going to start to get hot. Maybe, after you're inaugurated, we could talk about this subject and what we're doing to deal with it."

Q: With his American connections, was he sort of following the situation in the United States, too?

GILLESPIE: Sure. He was following it but, like so many, he said, "I see what's happening there, but it's your problem. Well, how did we get that stuff? I know that it's a political issue in your country and I can see that it's going to cause lots of problems here, but I don't have the political backing to go hell bent for election on this issue." It was not a strong negative. He never said, "No, we won't do anything." He said, "I've got to get this balance right. Here I am, about to be inaugurated. I have to move my program forward. I still think that this is the best program for me to follow. Your program may be important, but it's of less importance." He said, "I'm not sure how we're going to do this, but I understand what you're saying."

At that point we had already told Washington what our strategy was - that is, to get the Colombians to deal with the narcotics issue. Washington said, "Go ahead." We told Washington what we thought our narcotics strategy ought to be, and Washington then instructed us to do what we recommended doing.

So basically the inauguration of President Barco came along, and we had that kind of approach to working with him. Secretary of State George Schultz was the official representative of President Reagan at the inauguration. While he was there, he had his first meeting with President Virgilio Barco. It turned out that they had this common background of having been students at MIT at about the same time. They were of similar ages and could talk about lots of different things - which they did. Schultz mentioned the problem of drugs. President Barco said, "Don't worry. We'll be with you on that. I've told Ambassador Gillespie what my views are. We're not going to ignore drugs but we're going to have to keep this issue in perspective." At that point Schultz was very realistic about it. In conversation with me he said, "Well, I can understand that. President Barco doesn't think that he has a problem. He thinks that drugs are our problem." As you know, Secretary Schultz later came out in support of the decriminalization of certain drugs. Even then, I think, he thought that the demand aspect of the problem was important and that it was not just a supply side problem.

Q: He's an economist by training, after all.

GILLESPIE: The strategic approach which we had proposed to the Department had been fully

accepted. We were trying to find ways to move that forward and to achieve that objective.

However, the situation didn't look terribly bright as President Barco went into office. We knew that we would get some attention. We knew that the Colombians were already dealing with the drug issue. We were providing some assistance to them, in this field, which was rather substantial, though not overwhelming. Our aid to the Colombians in the narcotics field amounted to several million dollars. We figured that we would continue with that and try to create the conditions under which the Colombians would make an increased effort in this area.

Just a note on this, and it relates back to the Contadora group and its efforts to bring peace in Central America, President Betancourt had left office without any major movement on the Contadora proposals. If he ever had any hopes of winning the Nobel Peace Prize in connection with the Central American question, and I don't know that he did, those sort of evaporated when he left office in 1986. President Betancourt's Foreign Minister had been Jorge Ramirez Ocampo, a Conservative Party member and a very solid citizen. To replace him as Foreign Minister, President Barco chose Julio Londono, a career diplomat. The Colombians don't really have a lot of career diplomats, though there are some. Not very many of them get to really senior positions. At that particular time Julio Londono was Colombian Ambassador to Panama, where the Contadora group was originally established.

Anyhow, Londono had been as antagonistic toward the United States about Central American issues as you might imagine. I remember that our Ambassador to Panama at the time was Ted Briggs. Ted had been DCM in Bogota, earlier in his career. Ted told me, in reference to Londono, "Tony, you are really getting a turkey as a Foreign Minister. First of all, Julio Londono is not very smart and not even terribly intelligent. He's not very quick, politically. He has a kind of one track mind. He doesn't like the U.S. and he resents the fact that we have never taken this whole Contadora process very seriously. He's been trying to push President Belisario Betancourt and the Colombian line on this matter, but without success." Ambassador Briggs said, "I wish you luck, but it probably should be only condolences."

President Barco chose Londono as Foreign Minister, mainly because of the continuing antagonism and contention between Colombia and Venezuela up in the Gulf of Venezuela and on common border problems between the two countries. Like so many things, the reason he chose Londono turned out to be that Londono was the Colombian Foreign Ministry's expert on boundaries. He had served in the Colombian Army and had also spent time in the field, ultimately reaching the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in the Colombian Army. His father had been a geographer. Then he had been assigned to the Foreign Ministry because of his own experience in the field of geography regarding boundaries. He had then remained in the Foreign Ministry, basically working on boundary issues for his whole career there. He had been promoted steadily, was sent to Panama as Ambassador, and got involved in the Contadora process. All he wanted to do was to help President Virgilio Barco resolve this border conflict with Venezuela, but in Colombia's favor.

He turned out to be just as Ambassador Ted Briggs had described him. He was not terribly intelligent, not very smart in the sense of having his finger tip feelings work very well for him. He was obnoxious and had a one track mind. He did not like me personally and didn't like the

United States very much at all. This led to a very interesting time because President Barco and I had this relatively decent working relationship. Some even thought that it was too close and too friendly. We never did friendly stuff together. We didn't play golf. Barco liked to go and walk on the golf course, but we never did those things together. My wife and his wife talked frequently, partly because of the work that Vivian was doing as a contractor for the Agency for International Development.

I met more frequently with President Barco than I did with Foreign Minister Londono. This practice happens all too frequently in terms of U.S. relationships with Latin American countries. The relationship is with the President. It's a direct relationship on a one to one basis. Sometimes, the Foreign Ministers are included in the meetings between the American Ambassador and the President. It had begun that way with President Belisario Betancourt. I always tried to make sure that Foreign Minister Jorge Ramirez Ocampo took part in my meetings with President Betancourt because I felt that it was not to our advantage to be perceived as having a direct relationship with the President. I had this romantic belief that the day of the American "proconsul" was coming to an end and that it would be necessary to conduct bilateral relations, more or less on a normal basis. That is, the President would receive and listen to the American Ambassador, because it's important to him to do that, but you really can carry on foreign relations with the Foreign Minister. In my view, that's probably a better way to handle it.

However, we also have our contacts in the Office of the Presidency. We were able to handle problems through national security channels. We had a multiplicity of contacts. A lot of my colleagues in the U.S. Foreign Service thought that I was crazy to think that things could be handled in that way. It isn't always easy, but I had begun to do that with Foreign Minister Ramirez Ocampo and with President Betancourt and the people around him. Betancourt's chief of staff was Victor Ricardo. If I needed to do something, I knew whom to call. If they needed something, I would get a call from a member of his staff. The President would tell one of those guys, "Call Ambassador Gillespie and do this or that." He would say, "I don't want to call him." Then he'd save his direct call to me for something else. He played this very smoothly.

Anyway, as it turned out, that process was not going to work with Foreign Minister Londono. We had a very antagonistic relationship. I don't think that I actively contributed to it. He just started out that way, and that's the way it went for the full time that we were there, together. I was told later by people in the Colombian Foreign Ministry that Londono's Vice Foreign Minister, the wife of Fernando Rey, who was an official in the Office of the President, was much closer to President Barco than Foreign Minister Londono was. Fernando told me that Londono's wife had told him that Londono would fulminate because I had responded to a call from President Barco to go and meet privately with him. Londono reportedly said, "Doesn't Ambassador Gillespie know that he's not supposed to do that? He's supposed to come and see me and talk to me first."

I did what I could to improve things. I said to Fernando Rey, his wife, and others that I would like to develop a good working relationship with Foreign Minister Londono.

Then, as soon as I would get that message across, President Barco's private secretary, a woman who worked at the Casa Narino, the presidential office and residence, would phone my secretary,

Sylvester Satcher, and say, "President Barco wonders if Ambassador Gillespie could come over this afternoon at 3:00 PM and meet with him. He didn't say what it's about. Would he make sure to use the garage entrance?" So my security entourage and I would go over to Casa Narino and enter through the garage, thereby avoiding the press. The Casa Narino staff would always have one of President Barco's military aides down in the garage to meet me. Then I would go up the back elevator and meet with President Barco, alone. I would always bring a note-taker unless President Barco asked me to come alone. Barco would never have anybody with him.

After about a year of meetings like this and I felt that it was all right to raise this, I said to Barco, "Don't you think that you should have somebody there from your staff to take notes? I have somebody to help me to remember," because I didn't want to forget anything. Barco would say, "Oh, no, no, I know that your memory is good. You have your notes. I know what I want to tell you." Well, that was the way President Barco operated. It was not always the easiest thing in the world to handle. He never really backed off from a position which he took with me. However, I was concerned because his people weren't hearing him say to me the things that he was saying. That was not good.

So then I made a practice of contacting Fernando Rey in the Office of the President and giving him as faithful a rendition as I could of what had been said. Later on, at these meetings, Fernando Rey was accompanied by another and more senior official who had served as a real chief of staff to President Barco. Sometimes, I would phone Fernando Rey and the other official and say, "I just met with President Barco. Here is what we discussed." I assumed and hoped that, if necessary, they would go and check what I told them with President Barco.

When I would take visitors to the Casa Narino, a Congressman or even an Assistant Secretary or Under Secretary of State or whoever, we would meet with President Barco in a very formal setting. There was a fireplace and paintings, gold leaf, and all of that. They would have chairs all lined up for the meeting. President Barco would sit here, the American visitor would sit here, I'd sit here, and over here would be the Foreign Minister or a senior Foreign Ministry official, as well as an official of the Office of the Presidency. There would be note-takers. All of those things were handled in accordance with protocol under arrangements made through diplomatic notes.

Then I would get a call to come over and discuss really serious business with President Barco. As I said, I would take a Political Officer with me. I tried to take the most junior people available who would be "serious." I did not want to take an officer who appeared to be still "wet behind the ears" and have President Barco ask, "Why are you bringing that kid along?" I'd always take somebody and would ask President Barco, "Do you mind if John or Jane comes in and helps me take some notes?" He would say, "No, no. Come right in. That's fine." He would ask the note-taker, "How are you?" The note taker would sit over on the side, and the two of us would sit there and talk. President Barco would get charts, papers, and maps to show me.

It turned out that President Virgilio Barco had many of both the attributes and failings of President Jimmy Carter. Barco was a micro-manager who got deep into the details of given issues. He knew how to deal in details. However, I think that he got side-tracked on some of these matters. I remember that we got into a long discussion about corruption in the military. On

that occasion I didn't have a note taker with me. He said, "You know, we appropriate millions of dollars for uniforms. Let me show you." And he brought over computer print-outs about this many thousand bolts of camouflage material and that many pairs of boots. He said, "Now, that's all been bought. Here are the delivery records. None of that stuff has been delivered. Where has that money gone?" So I said, "Well, what are you going to do about it?" He said, "I'm going to get these guys. I'm going to figure out how to get these guys." So what did he do? He arranged that nobody could buy anything unless he approved it in advance. It was just the reverse of what he should have done. He should have taken a different approach. He said, "I'm going to control this situation." This meant that the President of Colombia was beginning to deal in this kind of detail.

Well, anyway, that was the kind of man he was. That was the kind of relationship I had with him, within which we were going to try to develop an anti-narcotics strategy. I think that the next time we can go into the transformation of President Virgilio Barco on narcotics.

Q: All right, we'll do that. We've discussed the fact that you didn't get along very well with the Foreign Minister. I would like to put down the usual shopping list that I would like to cover at some point. You'll continue with the drug war and narcotics and President Barco. Then I would like you to talk at some point about whether we had any role in Colombia's border conflicts, the Central American situation, United Nations votes, and so forth. At one point you also mentioned crisis management. The Government of Colombia - and the other countries in the area - didn't seem to be very good at that. You were trying to figure out with the Director of AID, Pete McPherson, what might be done about that, if anything. Also, could you talk about the promotion of American business, consular cases, arrests, coffee, CIA-DEA relations? I can't remember whether it's a Venezuelan or Colombian problem - the flower market.

GILLESPIE: Flowers. That's a Colombian problem, involving countervailing duties.

Q: Also, could you mention working conditions in the flower markets, if that is pertinent, and whether we were concerned about them. That's quite a shopping list.

GILLESPIE: Yes, it is.

Q: Today is November 20, 1996. Tony, let's start with the narcotics problem.

GILLESPIE: I think I may have mentioned but will quickly recapitulate, so it isn't too long, either way. In the 1970s Colombia was tagged as the source of some of the most commercially attractive marijuana in the world. Remember, we used to talk about Colombian gold, and things like that.

Q: I think that somebody even had the name, Colombian gold, trade marked in the United States, ready to be used in case the sale and use of marijuana was decriminalized.

GILLESPIE: right. So Colombian gold, or marijuana, was a very important product. I think that I

may have mentioned this in connection with our own narcotics problem, when we were talking about my time in Mexico. What was once the Bureau of Narcotics and Dangerous Drugs, BNDD, eventually became DEA, the Drug Enforcement Administration. The overseas operations of our anti-narcotics agency, which once came under the Department of Justice, were very much a center of attention.

In Colombia the 1970s were the era of marijuana. However, during the 1970s and into the 1980s we became aware of this other product called cocaine, or cocaine hydrochloride, a distilled alkaloid, if you will. This product was derived from the leaf of the coca plant, a bush that grows into a tree. The coca leaf is otherwise benign, in the sense that it contains some of the alkaloids, but not a lot of them. Coca leaves have been used for centuries by the native Indians of the region since the time of the Incas, and who knows when prior to that? These Indians have used coca leaves either for medicinal or sacred ritual purposes, which are somewhat interconnected. However, my understanding is that, historically, people used coca leaves to gain strength. These coca leaves help the human organism to sustain some of the pressures of high altitude and hard work if they are chewed, and the juices, in effect, are absorbed into the body. If the leaves are mixed with a soda ash in the mouth, which is the way the indigenous people used it, the result is something of a buzz or a kind of high, though I couldn't tell you what it is.

That was part of the ritual and culture of the Andes mountains area, particularly in southern Colombia, although it's known way up in northern Colombia, on the Caribbean coast. The use of coca leaves for this purpose goes South into the higher elevation areas of Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia.

So in the 1970s it was learned that you could produce a substance known as cocaine, which has been around for a long time as a drug. This, so-called recreational drug originally came to the United States in the 19th century. Some people say, and I guess that it's true, that coca - not cocaine hydrochloride - may indeed have been an ingredient in the early Coca Cola formula.

Q: Yes, and many of the patent medicine drugs had both opium and a form of cocaine in them.

GILLESPIE: I'm no chemist and never would pretend to be, but I've learned a lot during my lifetime. What really happened was that in the 1970s groups of Colombians learned that there is or can be a market for cocaine hydrochloride in its commercial form, which is basically a fine, white powder, which was sniffed at this time. I don't know much about the sociology or the chemistry of that, either. In any case, Colombian cocaine came on the market in the U.S.

The commercialization of cocaine was interesting because you had the production of cocaine hydrochloride, through a very rudimentary, chemical process. Coca leaves are collected from bushes and trees, they are soaked in a chemical mixture involving, gasoline, ether, and other chemicals. Then that mass is allowed to ferment, and it is mixed by mainly poor people who stir it with their feet, much as grapes used to be tramped on to get the grape juice out of them. I'm no expert on this, but you eventually draw off a brown, ugly paste. This is then treated further and turned into a nice, white powder. That process takes leaves which, for example, sell for a couple of dollars per hundredweight, as leaves. The cost of producing the white powder, back in the 1980s, used to be around a few hundred dollars per kilogram (2.2 pounds).

At that point it is fascinating to see the exponential kind of price markup that takes place. It moves from where it is white powder to market through a transportation and distribution chain. At each level the cost goes up astronomically, because that is where you get into what are considered higher risk activities. It is still a low risk activity to grow the coca leaves. It is a relatively low risk operation and a very rudimentary operation to produce cocaine paste. It is still pretty low risk to produce the white powder in what are called laboratories. Those were initially in Colombia, in the jungle. When you get a package of white powder, that is where you have to start moving it - and there is where it starts to become risky. The narcotics traffickers put the product on planes or smuggle it to market in some other way. People who smuggle it charge considerably more than those who produce the white powder.

By the time the kilogram of white powder is ready to leave Colombia or South America and arrive on the shores of the U.S. At that point a kilogram of cocaine has cost the owner about \$4,000-5,000 for something that started out being measured in a few hundred dollars, at most, per kilogram. Maybe it isn't worth even that.

Then the cocaine hits the distribution system in a market area, where it is cut or diluted and, in effect, prepared for retail sale. It goes through another increase in price - I think an increase of 15 to 20 times the price, up to \$60,000 a kilogram. I think that the prices now are lower. Maybe it is worth \$35,000 a kilogram. That's both a markup which reflects what the market will bear and what the traffickers consider their risks to be. The rest is pure profit.

The largest producers of coca leaves, the basic raw materials, are still Peru and Bolivia. In the 1980s we did not consider Colombia to be a major producer of the coca leaves. However, geographically, Colombia has the eastern plains or the *llanos orientales* in Spanish. If you look at a map of Colombia, Bogota is more or less in the center of the country. There are three main ridges of the Andes mountains in Colombia, more or less running North to South. There is one ridge close to the Pacific Coast, then a second ridge, and then the third ridge farthest East. From that third ridge of the Andes, against which Bogota nestles, all the way over to the Orinoco River and the Venezuelan border, are what are called the eastern plains. South of that the plains turn into jungle. The plains adjoin the eastern slopes of the third ridge of the Andes Mountains.

In the southern area of the plains you find the airstrips used by the cocaine smugglers and many of the laboratories to which the cocaine paste is flown in from Peru and Bolivia and processed. It was in that area that a lot of the drug processing was going on back in the mid-1980s. The paste would be brought in, processed, and then sold. I would characterize it as drug cultivation, the production of paste, then powder, and then the distribution or trafficking. Colombia was not considered a major cultivation country but was a place where the production of powder went on and where the trafficking started.

The commercial structure which developed in and around this was what eventually became known as the Medellin cartel. There was a similar, trafficking group in Cali, but that was much less important back in the mid-1980s or was presumed to be less important. It probably should not have been considered less important.

In any event, I'm not an expert on the internal functioning of the trafficking networks, but the Medellin cartel consisted of the Ochoa family, people like Pablo Escobar, and a number of other individuals who really came up out of the lower or peasant farmer class in Colombia. These people were not members of the Colombian elite. In my view they were very smart traders and businessmen. They had been used to dealing in cattle or horses and land, as commodities. They brought a lot of business acumen to the narcotics trafficking business. They had been in the marijuana business before. The pressure on the production and traffic in marijuana grew, as the Colombian Government cooperated with the U.S. Government to eradicate or stop its production, either by pulling the plants out by the roots or eventually spraying the plants with Glyphosate, a herbicide. This had obvious consequences for environmentalists, health specialists, and all the rest.

Quite frankly, as we later learned, there is a strongly competitive production of marijuana within the U.S. The U.S. domestic production of high quality marijuana, often from seeds of Colombian origin, is centered in Hawaii, the U.S. Northwest, and the U.S. Middle West. The seeds are even genetically engineered to grow faster and better in different climates. If you look at it, it is scary, and it still goes on in 1996. A lot of the market for marijuana in the U.S. is supplied by domestic production.

The Colombian marijuana traffickers moved away from the marijuana traffic, though they didn't get out of that business entirely. They moved into the cocaine business, which was so terribly lucrative. Our governmental and law enforcement structure to deal with the cocaine traffic grew apace. It's not fair to say that the Colombian traffickers did not take U.S. law enforcement agencies seriously, but they certainly didn't give it the weight that the U.S. did. Their overall position seemed to be, and certainly Colombian public opinion, if there was any, seemed to be, "This is a problem for the people of countries who are consuming this drug. It is not our problem. We just happen to be the place where the coca leaves grow or are processed. So it's a U.S. and developed country problem, where people can afford to buy these narcotics. This doesn't affect us." That had certainly been the Colombian attitude through part of the 1970s and into the early 1980s.

Three of my predecessors as American Ambassadors to Colombia had varying experiences with the drug traffic. Ambassador Diego Asencio was kidnapped by the guerrillas and held hostage, along with other diplomats. Ambassador Tom Boyatt, a career Foreign Service Officer, did a superb job. However, his concern about the drug traffic, while real enough, reflected, I think, a Washington view that we didn't quite know where we were going or what we were doing.

Ambassador Lewis Tambs was my immediate predecessor, to whom I previously referred. He had really focused on the narcotics issue. He was a political appointee of the Reagan administration. I think that he came out of the University of New Mexico and had a long history as a petroleum engineer in Venezuela, next door to Colombia. He spoke Spanish well and was a very interesting man. He had some of the characteristics of an oil field roustabout but also had a very refined approach which went along with that. During the 1983-1984 time frame he had really focused attention on the narcotics issue. He went full bore at narcotics trafficking in the press, in public, and with the Colombian Government. He never missed a chance of shaking his finger at the Colombians for not doing enough. He was perceived to be pretty much a single

issue Ambassador. Interestingly enough, as recently as 1996, *El Tiempo*, one of the most prestigious newspapers in Bogota, had a columnist who was a member of the family that runs the paper. He said in one of his columns, "We should have listened to Lou Tambs back in the 1980s, because what he predicted has basically happened." He said, in effect, "Look, narcotics are going to get you. It may be getting us in the U.S. now, but they are going to get you in the future." And he said, "It's already on the way to doing it."

So, in any event, Ambassador Tambs had pushed very, very hard on these issues and on THE issue of narcotics. Then, during this 1983-1984 time period - and even earlier - the Medellin cartel had shown a viciously, violent streak. First, in terms of their internal discipline. I guess that if you messed up, you were dead. If people on the outside seemed to be interfering with the cartel's business, whether they were police, law enforcement officials, or just about anybody else, the easiest way to take care of them was literally to get rid of them by killing them. So there was a tremendous surge of violence from the people who were running the Medellin cartel.

President Belisario Betancourt was elected in 1982. By this time the United States was very concerned about the whole cocaine business. We had identified people who were running the cocaine game, both the key players and some of the second tier people, one of whom was a man named Carlos Lehder. In any event, back in 1983, I guess, we sought the extradition of several Colombians to the United States. Extradition has always been an extremely touchy point in Latin America, along with nationalism, sovereignty, and all of those subjects, although we have a number of extradition treaties with countries in Latin America.

Q: Extradition is not a problem, particularly if you're getting somebody from your country who is fleeing justice in another country.

GILLESPIE: That's right. When this involves a national of the country whose extradition you are seeking, then it becomes difficult. The treaties which outline the extradition of nationals of one country or another often put limits on it. That is, you can't extradite for what are perceived to be political crimes. The crime has to be a crime in both countries. There are a lot of technical, legal points in these treaties which are terribly important.

In any event, after a lot of agonizing over it, President Betancourt overcame whatever resistance there was to the extradition of Colombian nationals and agreed to extradite several Colombian citizens. He said, "Yes," in a number of cases. These people were extradited to the U.S., where we put them on trial.

That triggered a very strong reaction from the Medellin cartel. There were bombings, killings, and pressures on the Colombian justice system of all kinds. That included the murder or assassination of the Minister of Justice. This murder seemed to ignite Colombian public opinion and stiffened everybody's spine. Everybody seemed to be very tough about this issue. However, the bombings continued into 1984. In my comments on the security situation I mentioned that in 1984 there had been a bomb exploded near our Embassy in Bogota. There were threats to the American School. In effect, Ambassador Tambs had to leave Colombia, and that's why I ended up going to Colombia in 1985.

Then there was a change in administrations from President Betancourt to President Virgilio Barco in 1986. I think that I may have mentioned that during the election campaign and pre-inaugural period Barco shared polling data with me which indicated that narcotics were simply not on the minds of the Colombian people. Development issues and the Colombian economy were the most important subjects for the Colombian people. He indicated that that was where he was going to put his emphasis.

My immediate staff in the Embassy in Bogota and I all sensed that, while there was a lot of rhetoric in Washington about narcotics, there wasn't much in the way of policy guidance. Basically, the policy was rhetorical. I had a very active and energetic DCM, Michael Skol. The Political Section was very active and involved, and there was a very good Economic Section. The CIA chief of station was out to win his spurs in Colombia. The fellow running the DEA office, George Franguli, had been a long-time, overseas operator for DEA. His name also came up in connection with Chile. He was in the Embassy in Santiago in 1973 at the time of the overthrow of President Allende and the military takeover of the Chilean government. George had a large DEA operation in Bogota and another one up on the Caribbean coast in Barranquilla, where we had our only remaining Consulate at the time.

U.S. policy at the time was that, "We're against drugs and don't want them to come into the country." However, there was no clear cut, strategic approach which set out our objectives, what we wanted to achieve, and what were the various ways of doing that. In the Embassy we concluded that if anyone was going to define that strategy, at least as far as Colombia was concerned, we would have to do that in the Embassy.

So we organized ourselves to do that. We set up a sort of Executive country team group which included the people I've already mentioned, plus the head of the Narcotics Assistance Unit, or NAU in Colombia. The NAU was an arm of the still small Bureau of International Narcotics Matters (INM) in the Department of State.

When I got to Colombia in 1985, the head of the INM Bureau was a gentleman whose name I can't remember now. I recall that his first name was John. He was a Republican, political appointee. He had an approach to the narcotics problem which involved interdiction, or trying to stop the flow of drugs out of South America, at the source of the drugs, whether at the production or trafficking end. In any case, he wanted to stop this traffic. But that was as far as it went. He had resources to provide the countries where the drugs were being produced. We were giving the Colombian Government aircraft and support money. At that point our military assistance program was focused much more on national security, military, and defense issues than on narcotics trafficking. At that point we were not trying to get the Colombian military directly involved in the narcotics problem.

I believe that, fairly soon after I arrived in Colombia in 1985, John was replaced by a woman named Anne Wroblewski, another political appointee. In any event, though the INM people seemed to be managing various, anti-narcotics programs, there was no single, strategic point. The Department of Justice had a Colombia task force which brought together a lot of the people from the law enforcement community in the U.S. A State Department representative, the desk officer for Colombian affairs, attended meetings of that task force. I think that the deputy

assistant secretary of state who dealt with South American affairs was also involved with that task force, to some degree. This task force was not set up in the national security, inter-agency, structural institutional approach. It was separate. However, it was a point of contact. There was also a very active Commissioner of Customs, William Von Raab.

Very powerful, a brilliant kind of mind, very articulate, and not at all shy about promoting himself or the Bureau of Customs and the rest of it. He was charging forward, in effect, running his own foreign policy through the Bureau of Customs.

DEA was again under a very solid, former FBI agent who went on to become part of the New York Yankees' managerial structure under George Steinbrenner. I think that he ran the security aspect, or something like that. DEA was global in its reach: Mexico was a major source of drugs, especially heroin, and Colombia was also a major source of cocaine. The DEA was also concerned about heroin coming into the United States from the golden crescent in the Middle East, the golden triangle in Southeast Asia, as well as Mexico. Furthermore, DEA still had its U.S. domestic drug enforcement programs, including control over pharmaceuticals and their distribution.

So there wasn't any, single point of control of our anti-narcotics efforts. At that point the NSC (National Security Council) really had no one involved in anti-narcotics policy or strategy. This area was sort of an orphan. In the embassy in Bogota we concluded that the way to deal with this was to decide what we ought to be doing in Colombia and then tell Washington that that was what we were going to do. We said, "UNODIR (unless otherwise directed), we were going to continue down this path." In my instructions when I went to Colombia, which I had drafted, I covered narcotics. However, I didn't realize in early 1985 how vacant this strategic package was. We were "agin" narcotics, we didn't like drugs, we wanted to stop their distribution and use in the United States. Nevertheless, beyond that there just wasn't a whole lot there.

So in the Embassy in Bogota a little executive country team group would meet regularly. I named Michael Skol, the DCM, to chair that group for me. The idea was that this arrangement left me open to agree or disagree with whatever the committee did, rather than having to sit there as chairman. We started to move forward. We asked ourselves what it would take to get something moving here. What we quickly appreciated was that, if we didn't have a strategy, then certainly the Colombians didn't have one, either. We thought we needed a strategy. I said, "Everybody needs a strategy. Everybody has to have a plan."

First we had to figure out how we could create the demand or reasons for having a strategy in the Colombian mind or in the Colombian Government. Colombia had had these terribly violent incidents. We could see what the violence was doing. We could see the pressures on the Colombian system of justice. We could even begin to see - and this came out rather quickly - the degree to which Colombian youth and others were using drugs. However, many Colombians had a tendency to shut their eyes to that and to pay no attention to it.

Ambassador Tambs had been pushing the Colombian Government very hard on this issue. My conclusion was that continuing along the Tambs' line would not make any sense. The Colombians would just say, "Well, here comes another Lewis Tambs." So how could we

persuade the Colombian Government to become concerned about the narcotics problem? We could not and would not, under any circumstances, disavow anything that Ambassador Tambs had said or done. However, I met with my executive country team group, and particularly with our public affairs people, and said, "How can we draw attention to this problem in a way that will get what we want, which is more attention to resources and activity devoted to narcotics?" We felt that this was important but that we needed to pursue our objective in a way which was not just going to turn the Colombians off.

We started off with trying to find another way of defining the U.S.-Colombian relationship and find another set of policy interests that would allow us to work with the Colombians. Then we would work the anti-narcotics effort into that.

It didn't seem that we would find in Central American political issues an area where we could work easily with Colombia. There was already some antagonism and tension between President Betancourt's Contadora process approach and our own views of that area. President Barco was clearly not as committed to resolving the problems of Central America as President Betancourt had been. Barco did not think that resolving Central American issues should become the keystone of Colombian foreign policy.

Q: We're talking here about the problems of El Salvador and Nicaragua.

GILLESPIE: Yes, the Nicaragua and El Salvador situations. Although President Barco's Foreign Minister, Julio Londono, to whom we previously referred, was very much involved in those issues, Barco kind of let Londono do his thing but didn't give Central American matters much personal attention. That would not be the area to find a new focus for Colombian-American relations. There didn't seem to be a lot of interest in the regional approach to issues of the area. To short cut this discussion, we basically concluded that an area where Colombia really stood out was in its general approach to economics, management, and related areas. We concluded that what we should do would be to work with the Colombians in the field of economics and management, emphasizing what the Colombians had been doing right. For example, they had not had to reschedule their foreign debt after the 1982 debt crisis. They were still in touch with the commercial banks. Foreign banks were open to Colombia. So we concentrated on the economic and trade aspects of the Colombian-American relationship.

That got us into coffee questions. Remember, there was an international coffee organization at this time. Obviously, that is a commodity area where the U.S. has never been of one mind as to how it ought to deal with commodities and how they're marketed, dealt with, and received. However, this is a huge piece of the U.S. economy. There is a large number of coffee buyers, processors, and distributors. I think that Colombia is the second or third largest coffee producer in the world. Brazil is the largest, and the African countries and Indonesia also produce a lot of coffee. So it's a global commodity. However, it was an area of active interest, where we were not always in agreement with Colombia. Nonetheless, it allowed us to engage in a lot of discussion over very tangible kinds of issues which were not perceived as nearly as deleterious to human health as cocaine, the other, major commodity coming out of Colombia.

President Barco found this approach to Colombian-American relations to be quite acceptable. He

was pleased that we were doing this, though I didn't discuss it with him in these kinds of terms. However, he could see that, when I had a chance to talk to Colombians or about Colombia, I would always start with this area. That is, the economic situation and where Colombia fit in the trade and investment area. There was a lot of U.S. investment in Colombia. For several years Exxon had been building a huge installation, the Norte project, up near the Caribbean. It was the largest, open pit coal mine in the world. Some 4,000-5,000 contractors had come in from the U.S. to help to build this installation. It generated a lot of Colombian employment. It was a large operation, and we focused on things like this.

Tremendous oil reserves were being discovered and confirmed in Colombia at the time. So there was a lot going on there. We kept trying to bring the focus of our interest to such matters. Then, from that, we began to talk about how the narcotics traffic was a threat to Colombia, as well as to the people who were consuming drugs. This line of action developed over a period of time, of course. We pointed out that narcotics trafficking was infiltrating and weakening the system of justice in Colombia. Corruption was related to narcotics, and Colombia was already fairly rife with different levels of corruption. We said that that was going to be a handicap, a brake on Colombia's development. There were a lot of things to talk about, and we worked in the references to the narcotics traffic at that point - the cocaine, the marijuana, and other drugs. We tried to raise the consciousness of the perils of drugs, both in Colombia and, frankly, in the U.S. We pointed out that narcotics trafficking was another facet to the Colombian-American relationship. The only news about Colombia that was being printed in the U.S. that one could find, other than in the *Journal of Commerce* or *The Wall Street Journal*, would be stories about narcotics related violence.

Terribly embarrassing situations were coming up which affected honest Colombian government officials arriving in Miami. They had to go through the entry lines and were often strip searched, just because their passports were Colombian. There were no other apparent reasons for doing that.

One of my jobs, and one of the jobs of the Embassy, was routinely to take a blast either from the Foreign Ministry or some other Colombian Government minister, who asked, "Why was I, my wife, or my daughter stopped by U.S. Customs? Why were my employees stopped?" The crazy thing was that, every so often, some Colombian who was stopped by U.S. Customs had a load of cocaine on him or her. So it was not a clear cut case of harassment of Colombians by U.S. Customs. I felt that it was important for us to try to make sure that our handling of these examinations was as professional as it could be, from the point of entry into the U.S. to whatever else had to happen. But our idea was to remind the Colombians that these were the costs which they were paying because they didn't have a visible, positive approach to the narcotics issue.

My efforts to convince President Virgilio Barco of this were not particularly successful. He is a very stubborn man. Occasionally, I would talk to his wife, Caroline, about this subject. She would reaffirm just how stubborn he could be. Once he got his mind set on one thing, he would move down that track. At the time that I knew him, President Barco was a man in his mid-'60s. In the light of what we know has happened since then, after he left office as President in 1990, he went to Great Britain as Colombian Ambassador and almost dropped out of sight. It soon became apparent that he was probably suffering from Alzheimer's Disease. How much that condition

affected him during the time he was still President I honestly don't know. There was certainly no evidence, as far as I was concerned, that he was losing his memory. However, you never know. In any case he kept focused. As I have gone through a case of Alzheimer's Disease in my own family, with my mother, I guess that one could say that he may have locked onto certain things and didn't want to get involved in others, because he wasn't sure that he could deal with them.

In any event, I kept pushing on the question of narcotics in this way. All of our official American visitors kept pushing to persuade President Barco to come up with an anti-narcotics strategy. His response always was, "We'll get around to that. We'll do something about it, but it's not that important right now." Well, that attitude changed suddenly in December, 1987, when the publisher and one of the principal owners of *El Espectador*, the second largest newspaper in Colombia, was brutally assassinated by the narcotics traffickers. They made no bones about it. He and *El Espectador* had taken a position which basically supported the extradition of drug traffickers to the United States and a tough line generally on narcotics. He was well known to President Virgilio Barco. When Barco had to face the fact of the funeral of the publisher of *El Espectador* and the fact that this man had been gunned down mercilessly, that seemed to get Barco to say, "Oh, well, maybe we'd better start thinking again about this issue."

Although President Barco didn't immediately jump onto the line, "Okay, we're going to develop an anti-narcotics strategy," he began to realize that he had a real problem. Well, this was December, 1987. Barco had been President for about a year and some months, when this occurred. That event sort of marked the turning point in Barco's mental outlook on narcotics.

His Foreign Minister, Julio Londono, didn't get it. He maintained his previous view that the narcotics issue was not important, and so on. By this time President Barco had a chief of staff named German Montoya, who was about the same age as Barco and maybe a little older. He was the retired head, if not of Chrysler South America, certainly Chrysler for Colombia. However, my recollection is that he had been the chief Chrysler representative for South America. Montoya was a businessman, though a strong Liberal Party member, and a friend and political ally of Virgilio Barco. He came in and helped to organize the Barco presidency. He brought in a lot of bright young people in their 20s and 30s and got them organized. I found that I could work with Montoya, and he found that he could work with me very easily. It was easy to keep in touch with him.

He would say to me, "The Foreign Minister is a problem. He does not trust you. He thinks that you have too much influence with President Barco." President Barco would call me and ask me to see him. But he wouldn't tell the Foreign Minister that he was doing that. If I really needed to communicate something to President Barco, I would always make sure that I kept the Foreign Minister informed. I felt that it was incumbent on the Ambassador to do that. However, if I really needed to get in touch with the President, I'd call President Barco first, and then I'd tell the Foreign Minister that I had done so. Whenever I tried to call the Foreign Minister first, it turned out that my request to see President Barco was not exactly lost, but it wasn't handled very well. The Foreign Minister would say, "Oh, yes, I'll get back to you." And then he didn't do that. Finally, since President Barco had given me his private telephone numbers, I didn't hesitate to call him directly, when it was really important.

I think that I may have mentioned before that, like his predecessor, and really like so many Latin American heads of government, at least of a certain generation, these leaders are used to dealing one on one. They didn't really have people from their office staffs with them to see how the President handled matters. I would take high level American visitors in to see President Barco. Often, if there were a ceremonial aspect to it, Barco would have his Foreign Minister or someone else with him. However, just as often he would be alone in his office. I'd take the visitor in, we'd sit down, and we'd begin talking with President Barco. I took the notes or prepared the memorandum of conversation for our side, but I don't know who took notes for President Barco. I don't think that there were any tape recorders working in Barco's office during that period. We never heard of them - then or since.

In any event, I had this problem with Foreign Minister Londono. He was a very proud man and, I think, also had a tremendous inferiority complex. I don't think that he ever expected to be Foreign Minister. I may have mentioned that he was the son of a Colombian Army general. Londono had been in the Army. The Army jokingly called him, *Teniente Coronel* Londono, or Lieutenant Colonel Londono, because that had been his rank in the Army. I'm not sure whether he retired or resigned his Army commission to go into the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, where he had been the geographer of the Ministry, in effect. From that position he had been picked to be the Colombian Ambassador to Panama. He was in Panama when the Contadora Process got started, and that's how he became involved in global diplomacy. For whatever reason, President Barco picked him to be his Foreign Minister.

He was a totally unpleasant man, but not totally without a sense of humor. I remember an incident in 1986. This was the first session of the United Nations General Assembly in which the Barco administration was involved. Foreign Minister Londono was up in New York at the UN. We scheduled a meeting between him and Secretary of State George Schultz. By this time I had gotten to know Schultz pretty well because of both Central American issues and the Grenada affair. We were on a pretty easy, relaxed basis. Schultz could call me on the telephone if he wanted to, and I felt that I could call him on the telephone on the same basis.

Before this meeting with Foreign Minister Londono, we were doing a pre-brief at the Secretary's apartment in the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York, where we were going to meet with Londono. Schultz said, "What's this guy like, Tony?" I told him that Londono was "crusty and hard. He thinks that he knows how to speak English, but his English really isn't very good." However, we had Stephanie Van Riegersburg, who was the best interpreter in the Department. There was nobody better on Romance languages than Stephanie. Stephanie and I had known each other for a long time. So she was in the room with Secretary Schultz. We said, "We're going to have a meeting with Foreign Minister Londono." So she said, "Okay, we'll take care of that. It won't be a problem."

We went into the meeting with Londono, who refused to say a word in Spanish. He was going to convince Secretary George Schultz that he, Londono, knew how to speak English. Schultz had a behavioral quirk which, I think, others have probably mentioned. At a certain point you could see his shoulders hunch forward, his neck went down, and his eyes came to half mast. He looked at whoever it was who was the point of irritation. First he looked at Londono and then he looked at me. Then he looked at Stephanie Van Riegersburg. Then he looked back at Londono and kept

staring at him while this poor man tried to express himself in English. At that point he had no control of English at all. It really was unintelligible. I tried everything that I could, and Stephanie tried everything that she could to get Londono to switch to Spanish. We'd throw in a phrase in Spanish, saying, "Would you explain that?" He would just glare at me and then go right on, as unintelligibly as ever. There were syllables coming out of his mouth that were not connected. It was just awful.

Finally, the meeting was over. Secretary Schultz shook hands with Foreign Minister Londono. Then, after Londono had left his office, Schultz beckoned to me with his finger and said, very slowly, "I never want to see that man again, Tony. Keep him out of my thinning hair." There was no humor at that point. Secretary Schultz felt that it had been a waste of his time, and Schultz took that seriously. In fact, it was a waste of everybody else's time. I had to go back and, without any particular reference to that, figure how we were going to do this. Well, I'm a sucker. I kept trying. I knew that Londono didn't like me. Superficially, we had some things in common. He liked to run for exercise. I was a runner. We would talk about running together. We jogged occasionally. However, it was just a waste of time. None of the overtures that I would make had the slightest effect.

Well, this probably compounded the problem, because then, it seemed to me, he seemed to look for opportunities to tweak me or to tweak us. You mentioned the United Nations, and I quickly added the non-aligned movement. For some reason this did not involve just the Barco administration and Foreign Minister Londono, but seemed to involve both their predecessors and successors. Colombians in general have believed that there is merit in an active role for Colombia in the non-aligned movement. They see their role as being what Yugoslavia's role might have been near the tail end of the Tito regime. That is, as sort of a moderator, truly not really aligned. However, in Colombia's case, a little more aligned toward the West than the communist countries in the East. They thought that they could play sort of a moderating role and give the non-aligned movement some merit and get something out of it.

Well, the Colombians just set themselves up to be taken advantage of. Under Foreign Minister Londono this was particularly the case. Colombia fought to be the President of the non-aligned movement. They supported Castro in Cuba and did different things in an effort to moderate the positions of the non-aligned movement, or the NAM, as it was sometimes called.

We would get these crazy instructions from Washington. I felt that Washington's handling of the NAM was often rather flaky. The State Department would remember that the NAM meets every year in a General Assembly. They have this huge kind of orgiastic event. At the time of the Cold War, and particularly the hot parts of the Cold War, the non-aligned movement was nothing like non-aligned. It was essentially taking positions that were antagonistic to the United States and the developed world in general. It reflected North-South antagonisms, from the South position. Invariably, this annual Assembly of the NAM would produce a communique or declaration of some kind. It did everything from condemning Israel, to Zionism, to the United States, to our Cuba policy or anything else that we were doing at any given point. The communique didn't always praise the Soviet Union, but by saying nothing, by being silent, the implication was that the Soviet Union was just fine.

These NAM communiques were terrible diatribes. Weeks before this annual meeting was to take place every American Embassy throughout the world would receive an instruction, saying, "Go in and tell the government to which you are accredited that they should not support this line or should make sure that certain points are excised from any statement the NAM makes.

So we were supposed to approach the Colombian Government, use whatever political capital we had, whether it was by bold force or persuasion, and try to get the Foreign Ministry, in whatever capital, to do something and not support this terrible diatribe, either as a whole or in part. So all of our Embassies would dutifully go into the governments to which we were accredited, in this sort of annual rite. We would use up some chips just to get in the door, just to raise this kind of thing. Many governments would say, "Oh yes, we agree with you completely. However, we think that if we take this position, we'll be able to influence the communique this way. So, even though we're going to say something that you won't like, please understand that it's to prevent something worse from happening." So it cost us something to get in the door. We paid our price to get in the door and we got an unsatisfactory answer.

I don't want to beat this straw horse to death, but I think that Foreign Minister Londono took some glee in making sure that Colombia's position in the NAM would always be at the optimum level of antagonism with the United States. He just had a problem with that. It turned out that he was very interested in, and afterward showed himself to be actively involved in, multilateral diplomacy. So, he was never an easy person to deal with as Foreign Minister. He was also preoccupied with things like the NAM and the UN and what was going on there.

Colombia's approach to its foreign policy over the years has varied considerably. In fact, Colombia has not always HAD a foreign policy because Colombia, in my view, has not always defined what its interests are, in a coherent way. Succeeding Colombian Governments have wanted to keep Colombia on the map. There are some people who say that Colombian culture, at least that which is not indigenous, is highly derivative and that the Colombians tend to turn to France, to Spain, and to Europe generally. They pride themselves on speaking a variety of Spanish which they consider more pure than that spoken in Spain or on the Iberian Peninsula. They are a proud and very accomplished people. As a nation, they have done some very good things. However, in terms of projecting Colombia overseas, you've had everything from its more recent efforts in the Contadora context to opening up to the countries of the Pacific Rim. However, by and large, these efforts have been pretty feeble in that sense.

I think that Foreign Minister Londono wanted to make as much of this as he could. As I said, he had come out of this Contadora process, with his own star somewhat ascendant, because he had been there in Panama at the beginning of the Contadora process. From which, by the way, grew what is now, in 1996, a fairly active institution, called the Rio group. Where it's going, no one is sure. I think that it now includes 14 countries, including observers, in South and Central America and Mexico. At that point, if I remember correctly, it was first the Contadora group of six countries. Then it grew to a group of eight countries. Colombia was active in that. It was more of a political forum. There are those in Colombia and elsewhere who did not trust the OAS, the Organization of American States, because they think that it is under U.S. dominance.

So they've looked for other outlets. This Group of Eight was concerned about Central American

issues. They wanted to develop contacts with European countries and primarily, at that time, with the Common Market, the European Community and then nascent EU (European Union), which was beginning to look at political issues elsewhere.

Londono spent a lot of time on Contadora or Rio group issues. That seemed to occupy him for a time. Then, what he really got involved in, in 1987-1988, was the border dispute with Venezuela. Basically, this was over where the dividing line between Colombia and Venezuela ought to be in the Lake Maracaibo and Guajira Peninsula areas, adjoining the Gulf of Venezuela. There was an awful incident that involved ships and could have come close to armed conflict. President Barco had to be involved in that, and was involved in it. He had to turn to Londono. It was not something that we, in the U.S., wanted to see turn into something more than a discussion of boundaries. I think that, as a matter of support for stability, we would like to see all of these border disputes in South America resolved, in whatever way that they could be resolved, with the least hard feelings and the least effect on regional stability. That was our basic position.

There has always been a certain economic differential between Colombia and Venezuela, which shifts back and forth at one point or another, depending on the rate of exchange between the Colombian peso and the Venezuelan bolivar. There was contraband or illicit trade moving in one direction or another. There was migration to or from Colombia, depending on which way the economic situation worked. More often than not, the migration moved from Colombia to Venezuela because traditionally Venezuela has been the richer country of the two. This is because Venezuela has more actively exploited its oil wealth and has therefore gotten more money out of that resource. More recently, Colombia has begun to exploit its oil resources more actively. However, at the time of which I am speaking, Venezuela was very rich, so Colombians would go to Venezuela to work as maids, servants, and so forth - similar to the situation that we have between Latin America and the U.S.

It was often advantageous to smuggle goods into Colombia which had been originally imported into Venezuela. You could see how the economic situation between the two countries was working at any give time, reflecting which way the flow of goods and people was going.

In any event, that border incident I mentioned was a major issue. The tension arising from it was tamped down but still has not been completely resolved. It continues but does not really come up. President Barco explained to me that the timing of the electoral cycles in the two countries was wrong. Each new President of Venezuela and each new President of Colombia has in his heart settling this border dispute. The trouble is that just as one President is coming into office, the other one was going out of office. A new President is getting ready to enter office, so this is a campaign issue in one country just as it has stopped being a campaign issue in the other. So you could never get the two sides to get together and quietly work it out. There have always been politics involved. That's the problem.

One hopes that, as the process of economic integration of the region continues, these border disputes will be of less importance. This process has already begun to become clear. The movement of trade between the two countries has become so much more open. Under the circumstances the problem may begin to be dealt with and may disappear because it is perceived to be interfering with the ability of people to pursue their livelihoods. Common sense will take

over where the politicians have been unable to work.

However, this is the typical Colombian, and indeed South American view. Everything is a political issue, and there is a feeling that problems should be dealt with politically.

That was the major border problem facing Colombia. Colombia also borders Peru, Brazil, Ecuador, and Venezuela, but the major border concern involved the frontier with Venezuela. Ecuador has an oil pipeline near the Colombian border, and there were some issues involved there. However, they were never matters of great concern.

Q: It's not the way that Ecuador and Peru have been going at each other for many years. We got ourselves in the middle of this dispute back in the 1940s.

GILLESPIE: Up in that same general, northeastern area of Colombia, somewhat South of the disputed border area in the Guajira Peninsula there were continuing, festering problems involving Colombian guerrillas. These guerrillas belonged to the FARC, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or the ELN, the National Liberation Army. They would move into Venezuela or seek safe haven there. Venezuelan troops were either killing some of these Colombian guerrillas or driving them back. Or Colombian troops were pushing these guerrillas into Venezuela.

The problems associated with these guerrillas raised very practical difficulties. Although they could be an irritant in the relationship between Colombia and Venezuela, they were often dealt with as practical problems. The question was, "How can we resolve this problem? Can we have talks between the two countries, and so forth?" Problems like that happened, and still happen.

Today, in 1996, there is the problem of drugs related to the guerrillas. When I was in Colombia, at that time we were just beginning to see, and our intelligence was beginning to show us, how the narcotics traffic and the guerrilla problem were developing linkages. I guess that the way this struck us most directly was in some reports that we were getting. First, we knew that out in the remote areas of Colombia the guerrillas were taxing the narcotics producers. The narcotics laboratories were located in these remote areas, and the traffickers had their landing strips there, where they based their aircraft. The basic image was of guerrillas coming up to the people operating these laboratories and landing strips and saying, "Look, if you want to continue to operate here, you have to pay your share." So the guerrillas just collected tribute from the narcotics traffickers. In return for that tribute, our assumption was that the traffickers were getting some protection. So it was kind of like a New York Mafia protection deal. I'm not quite sure what they were protected against, but the traffickers paid the tribute. If they didn't pay the tribute, they would certainly need protection from the guerrillas.

Even back in the mid-1980s - the 1986-1988 period - we were beginning to get some reports that the guerrillas were finding other ways to make profits out of the narcotics traffic. My recollection of this situation isn't perfect, but at that point I don't think that we had much information which said that the guerrillas were really producing drugs and that they were really running the laboratories. We still thought that there was a connection between guerrillas and drug traffickers, involving the payment of "taxes" and protection money to the guerrillas. We knew that the

Medellin cartel of Pablo Escobar or his lieutenants had had some meetings with the guerrillas. At that point the guerrillas formed something called the *Coordinadora*, or Coordinating Board of activities directed against the Colombian Government. This was an attempt to bring the M-19, the FARC, the ELN, and the EPL, or the People's Liberation Army, together in some way. I don't think that it was ever very formal.

In any event, there were reports that the Medellin cartel was in touch with this *Coordinadora*. In fact, we had one report that the Medellin cartel had met with representatives of the major guerrilla groups and had said, "We want your help in dealing with some of the threats to our enterprise." That is, the narcotics traffic. Specifically, the narcotics traffickers were interested in three issues. There was the head of the Department of Administrative Security, the DAS, which I mentioned before and which was like the FBI in Colombia. This was a domestic, federal intelligence and counterintelligence body composed of plain clothes police. The other people in whom the Medellin cartel was interested were the head of the DEA group in the Embassy and the American Ambassador. In other words, me. The cartel representatives said, "We want to get rid of them. We want to threaten them" and things like that.

One report quoted the cartel representatives as saying, "What would it take and how much money would be required to go after these people? Would you all go after these people, or would one or two of you do it?" I was never quite clear on the gory details, but we knew that there had been discussions of that kind. The first word that we had was that nobody in the various groups was very much interested in that. We knew already, and later had it confirmed, that some of these guerrilla groups were interested in each one of these targets - each for its own reasons. If they were interested in these targets, they were planning to kill the American Ambassador and members of his family, the head of DEA, and the head of the Department of Administrative Security. These three people were always a target, I think. This had nothing to do with the people holding these jobs. It sort of went with the job description.

Later, as time went on, we began to see what seemed to be a closer linkage between some of these guerrilla groups and narcotics traffickers. The FARC was the largest and best organized guerrilla group. Our own estimates, which were derived from figures obtained from the Colombians, primarily through the CIA and our Defense Intelligence Agency people, the military attaches, and other sources, suggested that the FARC had a core strength of 5,000 to 8,000 guerrillas. That was a big guerrilla organization. It covered most of the country, although it was concentrated primarily in the central part of Colombia. The leadership was the same as it had been in the early 1960s, when the FARC was formed. This organization had linkages to Cuba and Fidel Castro, to Libya, and to other parts of the world. It had always maintained a high degree of national independence. They had not become part of the international revolutionary movement.

The M-19, which was a more recent creation, was the group which took Simon Bolivar's sword and did similar things. They were just as ruthless and just as violent as the others, but with sort of a youthful, romantic aura about them. They were often university students who were out to end oppression, defeat Colombia's Government and military, and deal with other problems. However, until this period the Colombian Government and military were not very repressive. The Colombian military, in particular, was quite ineffective in going after guerrillas. The death

squads, the assassination groups going after the peasants and presumed leftists, were just beginning to be active at that point. The linkages to the Colombian military were not believed to be really institutional. There were relationships with individual officers, commanders, and non-commissioned officers doing things like this, at the behest of landowners and private groups. This was not a plan by the Colombian military to do this.

In any event, the FARC seemed to be the group that was, perhaps, becoming more intermixed with the drug traffickers. The traffickers in the Medellin cartel were finding that they could provide arms, equipment, and money, and relationships like that were beginning to develop. Ambassador Tambs had used the term, narcoguerrilla to describe this relationship in Colombia. We started to follow developments concerning the narcoguerrillas. The other reason that we did so was that, quite frankly, we saw the guerrilla movement as a continuing, festering problem. Because we were trying to generate some support in Washington for programs that would deal with both the guerrilla and narcotics problems, we found that this linkage was useful in my conversations with U.S. Members of Congress in our briefings. When we could demonstrate this linkage, we did so. That seemed to elicit some bipartisan or non-partisan support.

Later, I found this even more the case in Chile, when I went there as Ambassador. However, in the U.S. Congress, and particularly with the 435 members of the House of Representatives, there were extremes on the right and left and then this big, middle group. The big middle in terms of foreign policy seemed to be willing to go along with whatever was reasonable. You could get active support if you could approach them in a reasonable way and brief them. There was an active, narcotics approach. There was a special committee on narcotics in the House of Representatives.

At this time the Democrats controlled the House of Representatives. Representative Charles Wrangel from New York was the chairman of this committee. The ranking minority members of the committee was Representative Ben Gilman, also from New York. They were very active in narcotics affairs. Interestingly enough, Representative Larry Smith, from Florida, was a member of this committee. He later went to jail for corruption. He was a thorn in our sides all the time.

Representative Wrangel could be a thorn, and Representative Gilman was like a bulldog. He would get hold of a particular aspect of the narcotics problem and just never let it go. That could get on your nerves after a while. We would say, "But Congressman, we've already dealt with..." He would say, "I don't care. You've got to keep going on this." Representative Wrangel would be all over the lot. He had been a prosecutor and took a very prosecutorial attitude. Actually, we all got along with Representative Wrangel quite well. Both he and Representative Gilman came to Colombia and both of them were very supportive of what we were trying to do. So we didn't have a major problem with them. Anyway, narcoguerrilla was a good term to use with Congress to get the support that we needed.

Q: What type of support are you talking about?

GILLESPIE: First, money for the INM (Bureau of International Narcotics Matters) budget. Then, it was a matter of getting them to come to Colombia, getting them to understand that the problems in Colombia were not unidimensional, that it was not only narcotics but that there was

a guerrilla movement, and that there were economic problems that flowed from this situation.

One of the issues on which you could get superficial acquiescence from Congress fairly quickly was that the justice system in Colombia must be in trouble. However, Congressmen would say, "Oh, no, we're not going to give them any aid for their justice system. We're not going to help them. No aid." What we were trying to say was that the root causes of the problems facing the justice system in Colombia were not well identified. However, we said that we can at least put our fingers on what we think are some of them. For example, the administration of the Colombian judicial system is still in the 17th or, with luck, maybe the 18th century, in terms of scribes writing down testimony and other documents in long hand. That was the only way in which court documents could be prepared which were considered acceptable. You couldn't use a typewriter. The typewriters that they had were old Smith-Coronas - nothing electric. At the time they hadn't seen a computer. During the 1980s the Minister of Justice did not really know how many employees the Ministry of Justice had throughout the country. For example, the Ministry of Justice did not know who the Justice of the Peace was in a particular place in the northern part of the Department of Santander. They didn't know how much money was being paid out in salaries. That's how antiquated and bad the system, which was supposed to be a national justice system, really was.

This is still the case today, in 1996. I just saw a figure today. Out of 4,500 people accused of crimes, 4,402 never came to trial. So the system of justice in Colombia is still bad. We thought that part of our strategy, which would help to resolve all of the problems and particularly the narcotics problem, would be how to strengthen the system of justice. What could we do? Well, it's not our system. It's not based on our system of common law. It's based on civil law, which goes back to the time of the Romans. So we really don't speak the same language. However, where we could speak the same language in the 1980s was in the field of administration, management, and those kinds of things. President Barco was building the computer system in the Office of the President, and the Foreign Ministry was getting computers. Well, we thought, maybe the Colombian Ministry of Justice, their prosecutors, and their attorney general could use computers, too.

The problem was that you could go into the Office of the President. It didn't make any difference how you kept records. The trouble was that the laws said how records had to be kept for the purposes of the administration of justice. So you had to change the law. There was a very inefficient and corrupt National Congress. Voters elected members of the National Congress by lists. There was no individual, constituency responsibility. Nobody was accountable to anyone. There is no exact equivalent to accountability, in Spanish. The nearest equivalent is responsibility. Accountability as a concept has only recently emerged in Spanish-speaking countries.

We had this fellow I mentioned before, Jim Michael, a lawyer who had become the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State in the ARA Bureau. He had really worked on what became the administration of justice program in AID (Agency for International Development). This was an effort to get our Justice Department, the United Nations in Costa Rica, the Canadians, and the different bar groups to come together and cooperate. We would say, "Democracy is a value for all of us. It cannot really function if you don't have a way to settle grievances. You need a system

of justice to settle grievances. It has to work to be effective. So how do you get it to work?"

Jim Michael had come up with a programmatic approach for this kind of problem. We wanted to help to initiate that approach in Colombia. My predecessor, Ambassador Tambs, didn't want AID in Colombia at all, because AID supported, as I think I mentioned, the Tropical Research Center where, in the view of Ambassador Tambs, the commie Sandinistas were allowed to be part of the group, because Nicaragua under the Sandinistas was still a member of the UN. So he didn't want to have any AID office in Colombia. I brought AID back in. We mentioned Peter McPherson, the AID Director.

So that's how we dealt with the narcoguerrilla question. We sought to get support when we needed it. This term was a good way to encapsulate things, it was a good, sound bite for the press, if we needed that. However, it also had an increasing amount of reality to it. What was happening was that there was terrorism - out and out bombings and assassinations. These things were happening in Colombia. They were frightening. They were directed, in part, at the U.S. However, they were being increasingly directed at Colombian institutions and other Colombians.

The M-19 movement was engaging in what we now call terrorism. The Libyans were supporting some of this activity. Fidel Castro, in Cuba, was not at all quiet, even in the late 1980s. He was still involved in the Central American situation. The U.S. Ambassador to Colombia was still being identified in internal guerrilla documents as imperialist, anti-democratic, counterrevolutionary, and all of those terms of abuse.

The Colombians were still no more adept or organized to deal with this kind of crisis now than they had been in 1985, when the Palace of Justice was briefly taken over by the M-19, and all of those killings had taken place. The Colombian military had still not organized itself very well, and the civilian population was not at all organized.

However, President Barco had a team of very intelligent people. Maybe even Foreign Minister Londono was intelligent, although we didn't get along very well. Barco had kept as Minister of Defense General Rafael Samudio, who was the senior military person in Colombia. Samudio was a very intelligent man, whose honesty remains in question, if not doubt, but who, nonetheless, was a very efficient manager in some respects as the Minister of Defense.

I had been in touch with friends like Jerry Bremer, who was the head of the counterterrorism staff in the State Department. I knew a lot of people at CIA and the Defense Department in Washington. I was trying to find a hook which would get President Barco in particular, and those around him, thinking along a particular line. This was, "How do we organize and how should we deal with the narcotics issue, the guerrilla problem, and the threat to the oil fields which the guerrillas posed?" There were big U.S. interests in the oil industry.

Remember, this was the 1980s. We had had the Bhopal crisis in central India. What U.S. company was involved?

Q: It was National Carbon, one of our big firms that produces batteries and chemicals.

GILLESPIE: There had been a tremendous, industrial disaster at Bhopal. Other kinds of disastrous incidents had happened. Increasingly, it appeared to me, and I think that I had seen it during my own career from Indonesia through Nicaragua, and Mexico, with the kidnapping. The better prepared you are for a crisis, the better able you're going to be to deal with it. So setting up something to deal with a crisis seemed a good idea. "Crisis management" was a current term at that time. This was something that intrigued me intellectually and organizationally. I thought that, maybe, I could get President Barco, who had been trained as an engineer, to understand the concept of crisis management and say, "Yes, this makes sense. I'll organize it in some way."

So I said to President Barco, "What would you think if we look at the terrorism and the narcoguerrilla problems as a mixture of things. Then we might look at how different people might deal with this. What does it mean, and how do you deal with it?" He said, "Well, that would be very interesting. Could you put something together on this?"

Well, I spent about four months putting together what turned out, to my knowledge, to be something quite unique. President Barco invited us to the Presidential Guest House in Cartagena, down on the Caribbean coast, for a long weekend - Friday through Sunday. We arrived Thursday night and left Monday morning. He was there, together with the Minister of Defense, General Samudio; the Minister of the Interior, Cesar Gaviria, who was later President of Colombia; his Minister of Communications, Fernando Cepeda, a brilliant intellectual and academic and a political scientist; and the head of the Department of Administrative Security (which was like the Colombian FBI).

I brought along to this meeting Brian Jenkins, a recognized, counterterrorism expert from the United States; Cesar Cereceres, an academic from UCLA (University of California at Los Angeles) who has also been very much concerned with both the Central American guerrilla problems and other politico-military problems leaning toward guerrilla and other kinds of informal warfare; and a woman from the University of Connecticut, whose name I cannot remember. She had looked at the same sort of problems from another angle, including the organizational one. In other words, she had studied how to deal with these things.

We all met for this long weekend. I was able to get the Colombian Government to pay to bring these Americans down for the meeting. We helped a little bit, I think, but not very much. We had three, solid days with the President of Colombia and these, key members of his cabinet. We did nothing but examine the roots of the Colombian guerrilla movement and narcotics traffic. We considered the kinds of activities that might occur which might create a national crisis and how one might deal with them. As a result of this meeting we then developed a program under which the CIA and our counter-terrorism people from the State Department, including Jerry Bremer, brought down to Colombia some exercises. We were able to bring together, for the first time ever in Colombia, civilian ministers and military generals and colonels in real exercises, crafting or gaming various kinds of crises which might occur, particularly on the terrorism and military-guerrilla front. These exercises did not deal with natural disasters.

I remember that Colombian Minister of Communications Cepeda said, "You know, I never knew a general well enough to know what he did. I knew and talked to generals. We've talked about their role, but I never knew what a general really did until we did this exercise. Then I saw that,

at times, generals have to make decisions and how they make decisions. I saw how I needed to relate to what the generals did." It was really quite an eye opening experience for Cepeda. I feel rather proud that we put that exercise together. It really helped define their outlook.

Fortunately for me, Foreign Minister Londono was not in the country. He was on a trip somewhere, when it took place. It hadn't been planned long in advance. Had he been there, he'd have had to be invited. There was no way that this could have been avoided. However, as it turned out, he wasn't there. I think that he resented the fact that this exercise took place without his being there - and that he had not been part of it.

In any case this exercise was very important. I think that it eventually helped the situation, after these assassinations that I've talked about. My successor, Ted McNamara, was able to work with President Barco and to begin to get a narcotics strategy adopted in late 1988 or 1989. However, it took all of that time to overcome the initial inertia and turn Colombian government policy in another direction. This experience got us into the crisis management area. I was still in Colombia during 1987 and the first nine months of 1988. We were doing these exercises. The CIA was beginning to train Colombian military units to be reaction forces. We provided some aircraft which could be used to support these reaction forces.

My idea, however, was always to get the civilians into this, because, at the same time, President Barco and I recognized that the whole issue of human rights was clearly beginning to attract more attention. There were bad things happening, particularly up in the northwest part of Colombia, up near the Panamanian border. There was a lot of land there and a lot of landowners. There wasn't much effective authority exercised by the Colombian Government. What government authority there was, responded very much to local interests. The local interests were saying, "There are communists here." A political party known as the *Union Patriótica*, or the Patriotic Union, perceived as the civilian wing of the M-19 movement, was the leftist party, whose members were being killed routinely. They would have a rally with *campesinos*, peasants, and then there would be somebody who would come in and shoot them up. Well, those responsible for shooting them up weren't really military men in military uniforms, but the assumption was that they were connected to the military. And they probably were - although off-duty personnel. These operations of repression probably weren't ordered out of Bogota or even by the nearest, major command of the Colombian Army. It was probably a local captain, major, or colonel who had been provided money by the landowners, who said to him, "Hey, clean up this problem for us."

So President Barco appointed a Human Rights Coordinator in the Office of the President. We supported that actively. In an institutional sense the human rights coordinator went to Geneva and met with UN Human Rights Commission people. Obviously, he was concerned about what was going on in Colombia. That's where the problem was, not in Geneva. We were making representations to him. He was the man who, each year, would go to the meeting of the UN Human Rights Commission as Colombia's delegate. Well, we were trying to get anti-Castro human rights resolutions passed. We had all kinds of efforts under way there in Geneva.

The Castro issue is fascinating. Even Foreign Minister Londono, before I left Colombia, was very candid about Cuba. I went in to see him, on instructions, to make a major, hard-hitting

demarche. It was friendly in tone, but I said that we really had to come down on Castro, who was supporting the FMLN (Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front) in El Salvador. He looked at me and said, "Do you know how much trouble Fidel Castro can cause us? Do you know what he can do with the FARC, the ELN, and the EPL? And he will do that. So we'll go this far and no further." In the view of Foreign Minister Julio Londono and, therefore, of the Colombian Government in the late 1980s, Castro had more leverage on Colombia than the United States did. Castro was perceived to be, not only capable, but willing to act against Colombia. We might bluster, almost threaten, and orate, but Castro would move. That was the Colombian Government's concern.

Q: The Colombian Government's concern was that Castro would get Colombians killed.

GILLESPIE: The concern was that he would get Colombians killed and would cause strikes. There would be an action that would follow, if he became sufficiently annoyed by something that the Colombians did. If the Colombians took a position that led Castro to threaten action, he was regarded as likely to carry out that threat.

I saw that same tendency later in Chile under the new, civilian government which replaced General Pinochet. The people in the Pinochet Government had said, "Well, we'll kill them. We don't care." I saw that in Argentina, where the government under President Alfonsin also told us, "Wait. We don't want to antagonize Fidel Castro too much, because he still has long arms." He had his supporters in Latin American countries who could do things and cause difficulties for the various governments.

We were not perceived as likely to do that. We might threaten to cut off a pittance of aid or do something else. However, we were not perceived as likely to do something that would really mess them up. But Castro could do that. He was perceived in this way.

Q: I think that this is something that is forgotten by people today who look at Castro. For many years they have considered the Cuban Government as a kind of dying regime. They do not realize the influence Castro can still wield, often through support of groups that can cause death and damage to other countries.

GILLESPIE: I agree. I think that there is a tendency not to understand, right up to the point that the Soviet Union really tightened the purse strings for Cuba, that Fidel Castro was fully capable, and perceived to be willing, to use any means at his disposal to accomplish his ends. And he had considerable means available to him. That could have meant active assistance with weapons, support for guerrilla movements, moral pressures, and other kinds of safe haven support - for Sandinistas from Nicaragua, FMLN guerrillas from El Salvador, and revolutionary, anarchistic people from South America. All of this did not end with the death of Che Guevara on the slopes of a mountain in Bolivia - believe me. That kept going.

When I got to Chile, and we can go into this later, Cuban intelligence was very active regarding me, for reasons that turned out to be wrong. Nonetheless, they were very active.

There is the case in today's press involving Nicholson of the CIA. To my knowledge, Cuban

intelligence was functioning and continues to function very, very actively in South America and in this hemisphere. Anyway, Foreign Minister Londono expressed his concerns to me about Castro. Nobody among the Colombian guerrillas was dependent on Castro, but there were linkages and lines of communications with Castro. There was money flowing from Libya, from Mohammad Qadhafi into the Colombian guerrilla movement.

So, over the short term, this counter terrorism, crisis management approach seemed to serve the U.S. interest. I happen to think that armies are going to be around for a long time and that civilians need to understand the military better, and vice versa. I thought that it was quite an accomplishment to get the Colombian military and civilians talking to each other, on the basis of actual work. It wasn't just an academic discussion. I think that there are still major gulfs in the understanding between the military and civilians in Colombia. However, things are better now. They now have the second, civilian Minister of Defense in Colombia in recent years. The current Minister seems to be pretty good, so who knows where this process will go? However, nonetheless, that was important.

I was fascinated by your observations on the export of Colombian flowers to the United States. We've touched on the coffee situation. In 1985 one of the first things that I was involved in after arriving in Colombia was bilateral trade talks. The Deputy U.S. Trade Representative, Michael Smith, came to Colombia. In that same Presidential Guest House in Cartagena where we had the crisis management session later on, we had the first bilateral trade talks with Colombia while I was Ambassador. They were the first of a series of such trade talks.

Coffee was a key question then, because in Colombia the U.S. was perceived as representing the consumer interest. Of course, Colombia, Brazil, and the others represented the producers' interests. Coffee has a huge role in the Colombian economy. Now, oil is growing. Every additional barrel of oil that Colombia produces now goes to the export market. However, until recently, Colombia was still importing about 15 percent of its requirements for oil. Coffee was THE major money maker for Colombia. They have quite a structure of institutions for dealing with coffee. The Colombian coffee growers all get together in the Coffee Council. That is quite a bureaucracy. It sets the coffee prices, levels of protection, and all kinds of other things. Coffee was always part of the U.S. relationship with Colombia. The question was, "What is the U.S. position, and particularly that of the U.S. Trade Representative, who had action responsibility for developing that position?" That's what got me into the trade end of things, more deeply than I ever expected. If I had gone to another country where coffee was not so important, I would not have gotten to know the U.S. Trade Representative quite as intimately as I did. Coffee raised hot issues and involved many millions of dollars.

So coffee was a big issue. We would often take positions which the Colombians considered antagonistic. We were always trying to get competition into the system, open it up, and deregulate the industry, in effect. The producers of coffee wanted to keep the industry regulated and to control the stocks of coffee on hand. They wanted to ration the coffee and keep the prices high. This was a classic, commodity management position.

Q: As the Ambassador, did you have a personal problem of adjusting your priorities? You understood the coffee situation. You had this major drug problem facing you. The coffee

producers in Colombia are very important. In a way, they were our allies but, at the same time, the coffee consumers in the United States want something different. Obviously, you represented both sides. However, did you ever find yourself getting too involved in presenting Colombia's position? How did you find the coffee buyers' side in the United States?

GILLESPIE: I was fortunate because I never had to sit down at the negotiating table and pound on the Colombian side. These negotiations are very technical and generally take place in London. They rarely take place in either the producing countries or in the U.S. So I was relieved of having to be the bad guy for the Colombians. I had no trouble supporting the U.S. position on coffee fully. I happen to think that competition in the coffee market would be a good thing.

Eventually, it was agreed to do away with the International Coffee Agreement. Colombia's coffee industry has not crashed, though they still have not figured out how to manage their stocks and do various other things. Nonetheless, I never found that to involve any particular conflict. I had no trouble with really explaining the U.S. position to Colombians, publicly or privately with the Colombian Government. I just wanted to make sure that the U.S. had the best intelligence on coffee that it could. For example, this is how the situation is and how it is working out. Coffee is a controlled, regulated industry within Colombia. The Coffee Association in Colombia sits on millions and millions of dollars worth of their resources. Who's to say that everybody wouldn't be better off if the Coffee Association didn't exist, and every grower were on his own? Probably, the situation would not be better, in such a case. However, I don't think that I would support that view, as a matter of principle.

The U.S. position on coffee caused me no problems. John Rosenbaum was the coffee negotiator in the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative. He was about a third or fourth echelon official in that office - pretty high ranking. John came to Colombia two or three times when I was there as Ambassador. He was never quite sure that somebody wasn't going to throw a coffee bomb at his car. I'm kind of joking, but the Colombians didn't like John Rosenbaum. He was a tough negotiator. He took the U.S. position and drove it forward. I supported John in public and in private. However, this didn't rub off on me.

I took the position that it is not the U.S. Ambassador's task, nor does it particularly serve U.S. interests, to seek opportunities to antagonize your host government. Very honestly, I would not look for opportunities to go to the Colombian press and say, "The way you handle the coffee issue is all screwed up." I didn't think that such an attitude would persuade them to change their behavior. I thought that it was much better to talk more generally about trade, opening it up, removing protection, and keeping such discussion about coffee less specific. There was a drug cartel over here and a coffee cartel over there. One product is more benign than the other. However, it is an emotional subject. I don't think that an American Ambassador should go after the coffee cartel the way he goes after the narcotics cartel.

Q: You're raising this issue of what is relatively more benign. There was something in the press today concerning this matter. Did you ever get involved in promoting American tobacco interests? We are talking about the situation in the late 1980s. By then we knew that tobacco was a potentially deadly commodity, probably worse than drugs in many ways and in the sense of the harm it can cause people. In our generation many of those who used to smoke are now dead, and

many of those who once smoked but gave it up are alive. That's almost the way it is. With that in mind, could you talk about that?

GILLESPIE: Yes. I've thought about that and I cannot recall that it was ever brought up as a programmatic issue at any post. Early on in the 1960s, when I was the GSO (General Services Officer) in Mexico, I very clearly remember going over to the *Zona Rosa*, Rose Zone, or tourist area in Mexico City for lunch with American colleagues or Mexican contacts. There would be young, Mexican women there, dressed in the most abbreviated, mini skirts, and with legs that didn't stop till they got to their waists. They went around handing out these little packs of four cigarettes, samples of Winstons, Marlboroughs, Camels, and some of the other brands.

Q: I was getting them all over the world, too.

GILLESPIE: I had stopped smoking the year before this. These young ladies, but sometimes young men, would come up and give you these little packs of cigarettes. I would say, "But I don't want them." Soon, I found that it was just as easy to take the damned things and throw them in the trash later on. I wasn't going to give them to a friend, since I'd quit smoking, although my friends would take them. That's what I remember - a very visible kind of corporate promotion of smoking. I don't think that the U.S. Government was doing very much about the matter at the time.

In Colombia it seemed that nearly everybody smoked. I didn't. My DCM, the Political and Economic Counselors, and the CIA chief of station didn't smoke. So there was no question of smoking at my country team meetings. I wouldn't have allowed smoking anyway. I didn't have ashtrays in my office because I didn't smoke. However, when you went to the Colombian Foreign Ministry, the Foreign Minister, for example, would offer you a cigarette. He would never say, "Do you mind if I smoke?" He just did it. However, I cannot recall any programmatic, Department of Agriculture literature during this period. I would have noticed it if it was there. I never really got involved in this. I didn't have U.S. tobacco representatives from Philip Morris, R. J. Reynolds, and so forth knocking at my door. We had Kodak, Esso, and other companies represented in Colombia.

Q: So you didn't have that sort of moral dilemma.

GILLESPIE: I didn't have that as a dilemma to worry about, nor did I in Chile, as it turned out. So that was not a problem.

However, I would like to go from a potentially dangerous commodity like tobacco to the pleasures of flowers, which you asked about. This is very interesting. The flower industry had been going in Colombia for a long time, and one of the major growth areas in the Colombian economy was flower exports. The savanna or plains area where Bogota was located is a 7,000 to 8,000 foot high plateau of volcanic soil which is tremendously fertile. It is primarily devoted to raising cattle and turning out dairy products. In an East-West direction it goes for miles between two of the ranges of the Andes Mountains. Actually, going from East to West, there is the range of mountains called the Eastern Andes, then the savanna area around Bogota, then a drop off down to the Magdalena River, and then the next range East of there. This is a huge area. There is

plenty of sunshine and rainfall the year around. The growing seasons are wonderful.

Somebody found out that you could really grow flowers there, and there was a major market for the flowers in the United States. I am talking about the mid-1980s. Flower growing was an established but dramatically growing industry. I was interested in it, primarily because the product was so pretty. Furthermore, the U.S. flower industry was very concerned about the competition from Colombia. Unlike the seasonal fruits from Chile, Colombian flowers provided year-round competition for the U.S. flower industry. So it wasn't a seasonal matter - they were producing while we were not, and vice versa. U.S. rose, carnation, and other flower growers were very concerned.

Q: The importers were flying Colombian flowers into the U.S.

GILLESPIE: Yes, all of these flowers moved by air. So the thought arose in Colombia, "What else can move by air in small packages?" The answer was cocaine. So the level of air traffic between Colombia and the United States was growing dramatically. The number of air cargo flights and air carriers involved was also growing dramatically. Opportunities for smuggling drugs into the United States were also growing dramatically. So, from all of these different aspects, I got very much involved in this traffic. Flowers were a nice product - associated with Mother's Day, Valentine's Day, and all of those kinds of things.

Well, we got to know some of the flower growers. I guess that you could say that it was like anything else. There were flower growers and then there were flower growers. Some of the flower growers whom we got to know and got close to, on a more personal basis, routinely invited us to come out to their growing areas, which were outside of downtown Bogota. Most of the growers also had places in Bogota, but some just lived out where they grew the flowers. I don't know whether I mentioned this previously, but one of my cautions to all junior Foreign Service Officers is that it is unlikely, once you reach the Senior Foreign Service, that the friendships that you make then are pure friendships. They are not personal relationships. They are based on your position.

We really got to know some of the flower growers. We saw their growing facilities and got to talk to some of their employees. Some of the growers were really quite responsible. A lot of their employees - not all, but a lot - were women. They used two production methods. One of them was plant ownership. An individual employee, usually a man, was the owner of the plant on this huge facility, which was covered over with plastic and was like a big greenhouse. This one man owned a certain number of rose plants. He was, in effect, responsible for their growth - from initial planting until the plants died. Women employees did a lot of the flower bed tending. They had these beds. Water, humidity, and temperature were controlled. There were also a lot of other kinds of controls.

As you can imagine, everything was geared to get the flowers to be at the right stage of bloom, just before the peak demand period. This was related directly to Mother's Day, Valentine Day, and holidays in the U.S. As we know now, these holidays were established for commercial purposes. Those holidays were not set up by mothers.

Q: Or by Hallmark cards and flower producers.

GILLESPIE: Exactly. This was looking at the flowers as commodities. I've always been captivated by production operations. Producing the flowers was becoming increasingly computerized, scientific, and genetic, with lots of exchanges of information between the Netherlands and the States of Oregon and Washington, where they also grow flowers, and Colombia. There is a tremendous exchange of information and sharing of data. At that point not so much investment from one country to another, but I don't know what the situation is today.

In any case, flower growing was a big operation. I used to take people out to see it. People would often like to see a flower farm. These were people who, like other agricultural commodity producers, make a decision, say, in 1988 about what you're going to plant, because that will pay off, for example, in 1994 - six years later, when those flowers are at their peak. So they predict what the market will be six years from now. Then you try to shape the market so that it will be that way.

There are also the inputs - the chemicals, the fertilizer, and the rest of it. I would say that the flower growers were sensitive to the impact of the flower industry, both in terms of the environment, including pollution, and socially. These were the people whom we got to know fairly well. You couldn't avoid using certain fertilizers, in certain quantities, but they were always looking for ways to moderate the effects on the water system of the area, and so forth. They were concerned about how you get water and how you re-use water.

These were fairly young people, often educated in the U.S. These were usually family operations. They were making lots of money, which they were willing to reinvest in what is called research and development. In other words, how do we produce more flowers, at lower cost, and increase our productivity. At the same time, do the least damage, or no damage to the environment. Then, on the personal or human side, I never had the impression with these people that those working on the flowers were at substantial risk from the inputs - from the chemicals or the pesticides. I don't know how much pesticide was being used, or what kind.

It is entirely possible that they were at some risk. What struck me that, in this family operated industry or business, the women played substantial roles. This is true, by the way, in the Colombian economy. In fact, women play serious roles in the Colombian economy. There are women bank presidents, for example. In the flower industry I remember that the wife of the operating manager was herself very much concerned about the productivity of the workers, many of whom, as I said, were women. She knew that these women needed to be free of worry about what their children were doing. She was concerned about having schools on the property. She was concerned about the diet of the workers - the caloric value and the content of what they ate. Everybody was fed, by the way. As part of the compensation I think that all of the employees got one full meal and one light meal every day. This was a case of enlightened self-interest. These workers, by the way, were not the poorest of the poor. These were farm workers. The employers were very concerned about the health of their workers. They had volleyball leagues and other sports, including soccer for the men. It was quite a setup.

I know that there were other flower growers who operated on a smaller scale who didn't do

many, if any, of these things. I'm sure that there were growers who didn't give a damn about how much and what kind of fertilizer they used and whether that would affect the water supply. Of course, Colombian institutions were not geared up to deal with this. There was no Colombian equivalent of the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) at the time, though there is now. At this point such institutions were beginning to be established in South America. You see this process in Chile, Colombia, Argentina, and Brazil, but all to greatly varying degrees, both in terms of their effectiveness and their impact - as well as the support they get from the respective governments.

So that's my view of the Colombian flower industry. I was always impressed by it. At heart, this is the same thing as producing carrots, potatoes, peas, fruit, or light manufactured goods. Quite frankly, the way you grow these flowers involves setting everything up on a production line basis. The product has to be coming off the line and going into the next phase at a certain time. The flowers have to get to the airplane at a certain point.

Then they get to the United States, and there's where they face the countervailing duties. Frankly, the U.S. industries want to protect their interests and themselves. They are quick to charge dumping when, in fact, it is often not a case of dumping at all. The fact is that when the peak period in the market passes, you sell those flowers for whatever you can get. The market determines the price. It isn't that these Colombian producers are necessarily offering the flowers at a lower price. That argument about dumping gets the U.S. Department of Commerce and the USTR (Office of the United States Trade Representative) all worked up.

Q: To go back just a bit, I would think that anybody who is trying to push our drug policy runs into the problem that we have Senators who are adamant about doing something about drugs. At the same time, they're worried about protecting their tobacco industry. Did you ever have that comparison thrown in your face? I'm talking about the people at the lowest level, the coca leaf or marijuana producers, compared to the tobacco farmer. Did this comparison ever come up?

GILLESPIE: Not to the tobacco farmer as such. I think it did come up - it may have been in the newspapers. However, it really wasn't that sharp an issue. When did Everett Koop enter office as Surgeon General?

Q: He would have come in under President Reagan. In a way, he turned out to be not what Reagan wanted.

GILLESPIE: He's the one who said that tobacco is harmful to you. That was just about this time. My recollection is that there were articles in the press about tobacco and cigarettes, and I'm sure that somebody must have drawn the parallel with narcotics at some point. However, I didn't have to defend the U.S. on that score. What they were really going after at that point were the stories out of Hawaii. We were trying to get the Colombians to eradicate, that is, use herbicides against drugs, and particularly marijuana. They were using some herbicides on marijuana. We were barred from using those herbicides in the United States, and particularly where we grow the most marijuana, which is in the lush, mountain regions of Hawaii. In Hawaii the DEA people can't go onto the land because of legal barriers. We were telling the Colombians, "Go in and get that marijuana trafficker." They said, "Yes, but you can't go in and get that marijuana trafficker in the

U.S., and we can't, either." We said, "Well, we don't care about your laws."

Q: Tony, what's left on our list regarding Colombia?

GILLESPIE: Regarding Colombia? I think that we want to talk a little bit about business promotion and some aspects of consular activities. I'll have to remember that some of Oliver North's Iran-Contra activities spilled over into Colombia and San Andres Island. We can go into that next time. Some other things are likely to come up, but we've really covered everything else on the list we started with.

Q: Then, at the end, we might talk about when you left Colombia and how you felt about what you had accomplished, particularly on the narcotics side, as well as drug relations.

Today is December 16, 1996. Tony, let's start here with business promotion.

GILLESPIE: Yes. During the last couple of decades Colombia has been identified as an area with major petroleum reserves. That's not surprising, given the fact that it has the spill over, or whatever you call it, of the Lake Maracaibo field in Venezuela, which is one of the richest oil reserves in the world. This area is increasingly a source of petroleum for the United States. Back in the late 1970s and early 1980s the Colombians used a contractual arrangement to open up their oil reserves, which were considered part of Colombia's natural patrimony. They were, obviously, state property.

I may have mentioned previously that it was provided in either Article 1 or Article 2 of the Colombian Constitution of 1886 or 1887 that economic activity was a responsibility of the state. Statism was early enshrined in that version of the Colombian Constitution. The Constitution was rewritten after I left Colombia in 1990.

These large, new oil reserves were discovered in Colombia. We were dealing with a situation in which they could begin to see in the petroleum sector prospects for moving from an oil importing economy to an oil exporting economy. They had set up what they called "association contracts," which were pretty reasonable. While they guaranteed a level of income to the Colombian state through ECOPETROL (Colombian Petroleum Enterprise), as it was called, the private enterprise companies which were the prospectors and extractors of petroleum could make a very good profit from their operations. Particularly with regard to United States companies, Armand Hammer and the Occidental Petroleum Company were able to enter the Colombian market. That brought with it the construction of a huge, pipeline. Bechtel Corporation of San Francisco had won the major contract to build it. Bechtel brought in all kinds of sub-contractors in that area.

At about the same time or during roughly the same period extensive coal reserves were discovered or defined in the Guajira Peninsula in northern Colombia. Exxon Corporation of Houston, TX, received the rights to exploit that coal find. Exxon was in the course of building the largest open pit coal mine in the world. Basically, they were digging into this desert peninsula which didn't support much human life at all. All of that area surrounds the Lake

Maracaibo basin in what are Venezuela and Colombia today.

Projects like the petroleum and coal projects brought in tremendous sub-contracting activity. You had everything from machinery suppliers to other kinds of activities. This also boosted the Colombian economy. Colombia had the reputation of not having had to renege on any of its official debt during the 1982 financial crisis in Latin America. Colombia continued to service its debt and still had access to commercial and financial markets in the rest of the world - Europe, the United States, and Asia.

The Colombian economy was doing well. There were still a lot of restrictions, import permits were required, and there were tariffs and other kinds of barriers to trade. There was a mixture of statism and a healthy economy that presented many opportunities for U.S. business.

Of course, on top of all this was this god-awful security situation, which was, in large measure, directly related to the narcotics traffic. However, it also reflected what I think we touched on earlier. That is, this atmosphere of criminality in Colombia was directly reflected in kidnapping. These kidnappings took place for political reasons, for quasi-political and economic reasons, and they also involved straight economic crime. There were threats of kidnapping and actual kidnapping of either government officials or senior business executives to send some kind of political message. Political figures were being kidnapped - and even journalists a little later on. Then there were cases of kidnapping involving the guerrillas, the revolutionary armed forces that we have talked about. We mentioned the ELN (*Ejercito de Liberacion Nacional* - National Liberation Army), the EPL (*Ejercito Popular de Liberacion* - People's Liberation Army) and the M-19, the April 19th Movement. These groups were carrying out kidnapping aimed at making people understand that they controlled the regions in which they operated. The kidnappings were also a source of funds. The kidnappers were just being paid off. Then, you just had people who were out kidnapping persons for ransom - to make money. That was the security situation which overlaid the economic opportunities.

Our Embassy was a focal point for a lot of enquiries about doing business in Colombia. American businesses wanted to know what the security situation was in Colombia. They wanted to know how honest the government was. Colombia was considered to be corrupt. The official sector had a level of what we would clearly define as corruption. I've always thought that in Latin America certain practices are not considered corrupt or as corrupt on their scale of values as they would be in our terms. However, everybody understands that at a certain level a payoff is a payoff, and that kind of activity was going on pretty regularly.

I had seen in Grenada how important trade and investment promotion could be, if you looked beyond the immediate situation, in terms of how significant these matters were becoming to the United States. Our foreign trade account was becoming an increasingly important part of our economy and of our own economic well being.

I may have mentioned that one of my mentors in the Foreign Service - for whom I never worked directly but from whom I received a lot of good advice and to whom I talked a lot - was George Landau. He was a career Foreign Service Officer who had started out in commercial assignments and then moved beyond that. By the time that I met him he was the Country Director for Iberian

Peninsular Affairs in the Bureau of European Affairs. He later went on to be Ambassador to Paraguay, Chile, and Venezuela. I hope that I didn't leave one of his assignments out.

Interestingly enough, he had a number of personal contacts in Colombia. His parents were buried there. They had retired in Colombia. He and I had talked a lot about the role of the Ambassador *vis-a-vis* the business community. George's comments to me were roughly along the lines of, "I can promise you that the task of being a U.S. Ambassador involves many ingredients. A major part of these ingredients has to do with our national security and with what one thinks of as traditional diplomatic activities of communications between the two governments and capitals, making sure that U.S. national interests are properly protected, preserved, and advanced." He said, "One of those interests is our economic interest. We should not forget that. It may involve potatoes. When all is said and done, how well an Embassy or an Ambassador has recognized where the economic and business interests of the United States ought to fit is a significant measure of his performance."

I took all of this to heart. When I got down to Colombia, I found that my predecessor had allowed to slip a practice that earlier American Ambassadors had followed, and which I had seen as a junior officer all over the world. That was that the Ambassador would arrange periodic meetings with the American business community in the capital of the country where he was located. I arrived in Colombia at a very interesting time - and I think this was also the case in the rest of Latin America. The Ambassador would meet with what was called the American business community - what one might call the expatriate American business corps in the country.

Well, increasingly that American business corps was less and less made up of United States citizens and was becoming a lot more international. For example, I found that the head of Exxon in Colombia happened to be a Canadian. The head of IBM in Colombia was a Brazilian, and so forth. I learned that an awful lot of people who represented U.S. business interests in Colombia were Colombians or of other nationalities. Some were British, some Canadian, and some were French.

My country team in Colombia included a Commercial Counselor who was a very thoughtful man and who was bilingual in Spanish. He had been engaged in business and had come into what was called the Foreign Commercial Service by this time in the mid-1980s. It was no longer the State Department's Foreign Service in the mid-1980s. I had an excellent, Economic Counselor and a very good DCM. I met with a small number of members of the country team and asked them how we should deal with this American business community, which was increasingly international in character. We concluded that the U.S. economic interest was being affected and driven, in large measure, in Bogota and elsewhere in the country, by people who were not U.S. citizens. However, they were just as important in the corporate structure. For example, if a senior partner in a law firm in Colombia was associated with the law firm of Arnold and Porter in the United States and represented the interests of Chrysler, we should be hearing from him and should pass on useful information to him.

So we set up approximately monthly meetings at the Embassy residence. We invited people whom the Commercial Section knew to be as directly associated as possible with U.S. business interests.

Q: I have heard that the fact that so many non-Americans represented American firms is a reflection of local tax law. We are about the only country that taxes our own expatriates, and this tends to make American citizens too expensive to send abroad. Therefore, people of other nationalities often represent American firms. What do you think of that?

GILLESPIE: There may have been some of that, but I think that at this particular time, in the mid to late 1980s, there were still some benefits that could accrue to expatriate Americans. They were given some tax breaks. I am not an expert in this matter. My wife became involved in it in the 1970s, when she was a contract employee in Nicaragua. She fit into the category of expatriate Americans, as it turned out.

I don't remember all of the details but I would say that, given everything that has happened since then, what I see today, and I think that it was occurring then, was that the range of executive salaries was about the same wherever you went. Today, if the economy in a given country has reached a certain level of development and maturity, people who do business in that environment are going to have to be paid at a level that is competitive with what they would be paid elsewhere. That is, if you want that level of person. This results in the globalization of executive salaries and allowances in some ways.

My impression is that in Colombia during the mid to late 1980s there may have been a differential between the salaries paid to American executives and those paid to other foreign executives. That is, an executive in Houston, Texas, would be paid more to work in Bogota, Colombia, than a Colombian, Argentine, or German citizen. However, I think that, increasingly, those differences, in salary terms, were narrowing. If you looked at the total compensation package, there might be some savings involved in hiring somebody who was already resident in Colombia. However, my guess is that bringing a German - or even an Argentine - to Bogota to work for, say, General Motors would mean that such an individual would have to have a benefits package which would be comparable to what you would have to give a comparable executive from Detroit, Michigan. Or you wouldn't get the quality of person you wanted. Increasingly, you see now - less than 10 years later - that executives, whatever their nationality, share backgrounds in terms of such things as study at the Harvard Business School, MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology), or Stanford. It doesn't seem to make any difference what their nationality is. What you are buying is that skills package.

For us in the Embassy the citizenship question was an issue. My inclination was to tell the American business community as much as I possibly could about U.S. policy in Colombia and in the rest of Latin America. I would give them my views on how other events in the world were having an impact on our relations with Colombia and on the business environment. I made a practice of telling them about trade policy developments in Washington. It seemed to me that the Embassy's value to U.S. business interests in Colombia would require a two way street. I would have to give them useful information.

I would hope, in return, that they would begin to share information with us which would be focused and to the point in terms of what was going on in Colombia. For example, from such information could we understand corruption better? Could we understand how narcotics money

laundering and illicit activity in the business sector related to the narcotics traffic had an impact on business developments and thereby might affect U.S. interests later on? What would be the risks to U.S. investors? My sources of information on these subjects were, obviously, the Government of Colombia in the traditional way. Government officials were talking about these matters from one angle. The collection of this kind of economic intelligence from such intelligence sources was incidental at this time.

A major issue was whether the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) should be collecting information about narcotics. It was already trying to collect information on terrorist groups and guerrilla - national security issues. So CIA sources were not as yet really geared into the collection of economic intelligence.

I felt that these business people, regardless of their nationality, would be useful sources of information, and we would have to go to them.

Well, we had our discussions, and I concluded that we would open our doors to business people, regardless of nationality. We collected their names and checked them out, primarily through DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration), the Central Intelligence Agency, and other agencies, such as the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation). We had a Legal Attaché Office, which was the cover name used for FBI activities in Colombia. We wanted to make sure that individuals who were representing U.S. companies would not come back and bite us later on. We wanted to avoid having someone say, "You should have known that that person was an agent of Cuban Intelligence," or something like that. So that's all that we really did in the way of checking their backgrounds.

I met with these business people regularly. I sought every opportunity to attend functions of the American Chamber of Commerce and to go to the newly-constructed World Trade Center in Bogota. I felt that one of my major duties as Ambassador was to show the U.S. flag, to travel in the country, and to visit some of the major economic installations. I went to Occidental Petroleum's drilling sites. I flew in a helicopter along the entire length of the new pipeline which was under construction. This took the better part of a day. I went to the big Exxon coal mine. There was a British company which was actually printing Colombia's currency. It had a major installation in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and there were significant U.S. investments involved in this activity. The U.S. investors had asked if I would visit their operation in Bogota, which I did. I felt that this was part and parcel of the job of the American Ambassador.

There were American airlines active in Colombia. These were the days when Eastern Airlines and Pan American Airways were flying into Colombia. Braniff Airlines had been involved in Colombia. These are airlines which no longer exist or which operate on a far different level. There was a constant set of issues involving them with the Colombian Government.

My Economic Officers from the State Department and Commercial Officers from the Department of Commerce continued to be busy in these areas. We had a Petroleum and Minerals Officer in the Embassy who did superb work.

Furthermore, the Embassy in Bogota was big enough so that we had a considerable contingent of

junior officers. Nearly all of them were assigned to the Consular Section. However, I was blessed with two, absolutely outstanding Consuls General who headed the Consular Section. One was named Arturo Macias. He was replaced by David Hobbs. These men were Foreign Service Officers who had specialized in the consular field. They saw their job as involving a major facility for providing consular services. That is, issuing visas, both non-immigrant and immigrant, protecting American citizens, and, at the same time, developing the Consular Officers and the Foreign Service National staff assigned to the Consular Section. They encouraged their staffs to do their job more effectively and to become better professionals at what they were doing. Both of these Consuls General took their jobs very seriously. They would come to me and ask me to discuss the performance of the Consular Section. Both of them had common sense approaches to their position. They knew the laws and regulations in detail. In my view they had superb judgment and knew how to apply it.

Macias went on eventually to the American Embassy in Beijing, where he was involved recently in some of the major human rights problems concerning Harry Woo and other human rights activists. He received press attention in that regard. David Hobbs went on to move well up in the consular service. He became the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Consular Affairs and then Ambassador to Guyana in Georgetown, Guyana. Before that he became Political Counselor and then DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission) in Bogota.

Their idea was to help to develop the Consular Officers assigned to their section. By developing them, they made it possible for us to take these Consular Officers and give them additional duties in the Embassy, if the officers concerned so desired. I remember one young officer, Rich Sanders, who came to me after discussing the matter with his boss, Art Macias, and the DCM. He said to me, "Ambassador, I've talked to everybody, and they say it's okay if you say it's okay. I would like to be more directly involved in the petroleum mining sector and do some work in that area, on my own. Would you mind?" The Economic Counselor thought that that was a good idea, so we took some of our travel and representation funds and gave this officer, who was on his first tour in the Foreign Service, the resources he needed to travel and work on petroleum developments. He produced some outstanding reports on the petroleum sector, which really helped out the Economic Section. As far as I was concerned, this helped in this young officer's career development.

That was the way we looked at business affairs. I remember vividly the concerns which a number of American business people had about corruption and personal security. Obviously, there was only so much that we could do for them.

Q: If a businessman came to you, either from a firm already well established in Colombia or, perhaps, a firm that was considering coming into Colombia, and they referred to both the security and corruption problems and asked you whether it was advisable to open up an office in Colombia, what was your response?

GILLESPIE: Well, we gave them the cold, hard facts on the security situation. My Security Officer was superb in dealing with such questions. He, or one of his Assistant Regional Security Officers, would sit down with the businessman and lay it all out. Eventually, we had a very large staff in the Security Office, because we had Americans doing protective security for me and my

wife, in addition to other duties. The Security Officer in charge of that office said that his staff was in Bogota to handle protective security, but he also wanted them to see how the Embassy operated. He would rotate them through the various Embassy functions, and they would end up giving some of these briefings. We would send a business person down to them and say that I was interested in this matter or that the Security Office ought to be interested in it. The Security Office would have a map on the wall and charts to support their presentation. They would say, "Look, this is the situation concerning kidnapping and crime. These are the areas where the guerrillas operate." Let's say that the businessman was interested in some aspect of coal processing in North Central Colombia. The Security Officer would say, "This is the city where you're thinking of operating. These are the guerrilla groups that operate around here. These are the crime statistics in that area." We tried to make sure that the business people understood that. We also told them, "This is how other business corporations deal with these problems. They hire security people locally. Here is a list of the people they hire. We make no guarantees on this. You may want to consult with them. You should go to the Chamber of Commerce and talk to them, because they deal with these same problems." We tried to make sure that business peoples' eyes were as open as they could be, in that regard.

Similarly, regarding corruption, we worked very hard and were successful in developing close and cooperative relations with virtually all U.S. business firms and other organizations connected with them. There was still strong reluctance on the part of many business people to open up to us on what corruption they were seeing. They weren't quite sure what might blow back at them in that area, although we would make sure that they knew that we had no intention of running to the Colombian Government and pointing out a particular person or office, saying that "This is the bad person involved" in a way which would finger the American company as the source of the information. I tried to do everything that I could to get that kind of information and take it to the Colombian Government, without endangering the source.

If I was sitting with the President of Colombia and had an opportunity to do so, I would say, "Look, we've heard that on these import permits the current, going price for people in this office is about X number of dollars," or whatever it might have been. I would say, "You should know that, Mr. President. This is awful for Colombia. This is keeping Americans who are subject to the American Corrupt Practices Act from coming to your country, investing, and doing business. It hurts them and it certainly doesn't help your country and its reputation." The President of Colombia would often react. He would say, "Gee, I didn't know that." He would pick up a phone, call somebody, and often there would be a change of some kind. How long the change would last and how permanent it was always remained a question. I felt that it was important to do that.

I think that Ambassadors whom I know - my colleagues in Buenos Aires and Caracas, for example - were doing the same thing. It's part of the job of being an Ambassador. Just as in the field of consular affairs, we always told our constituents that we want them to have as level a playing field as possible. We may not be able to change the laws and we can't change the mores and customs of a given country. However, we certainly don't want our Americans to be at a disadvantage.

Well, in the case of corruption, you start out at an immediate disadvantage if corrupt practices are going on, and American firms decide that they're going to follow U.S. law and not be corrupt.

So the Ambassador has to fight for them to have this matter taken care of. I remember one specific case. At the time I wasn't sure of all of the details, but I learned more about it later. In 1987 I was approached separately by representatives of both Bell Helicopter and United Technologies. One of the affiliates of United Technologies produces the Sikorsky helicopter. Representatives of the two American companies said that there was a competition to provide helicopters for the Colombian Air Force. The two American companies said that they were very disturbed that the French company, Aerospatiale, had won the contract with its big, Puma helicopters. They said that they did not think that the award had been fair. They felt that either their bids had not been given fair consideration or that they were not given the opportunity to do what the French company was able to do.

I consulted with my country team and asked its members what we could find out about this matter. They couldn't find out a whole lot, but from what we could learn, it seemed that the U.S. firms were probably on pretty solid ground in complaining to me. I had developed a relationship with General Rafael Samudio, the then Colombian Minister of Defense. I went to Samudio at a private meeting - just the two of us. I told him that I had heard a report that the award of the helicopter contract had not been fairly made and that this seemed credible to me. I said that, if this were true, I was upset. I said that I was prepared to go to the President of Colombia and raise holy Cain about this. I said that two U.S. manufacturers were involved in this matter which apparently had been handled in this way.

General Samudio and I had a friendly relationship. We'd done a lot together in other areas. He looked at me and said, "You're really serious about this, aren't you?" I said, "Yes, I'm absolutely serious, General. I'm going to follow this matter all the way." It was very interesting. Within a matter of about two weeks, I received a phone call from General Samudio himself. He said, "We're reopening the bidding on the helicopters. We have already informed Bell and United Technologies of this, but you yourself may want to tell the two American firms that we would welcome their bids. This is what we want," and so forth. They already had the specifications desired. General Samudio said, "This presents real problems for me because I've already signed the contracts with Aerospatiale," the French company. This turned out to be a pretty large contract. Samudio said, "However, we're going to do this. I don't want there to be any questions about this contract." So I called the two American companies and told them what Samudio had told me.

Eventually, Bell Helicopter chose not to enter a new bid, for whatever reasons. However, Sikorsky and United Technologies did. They called me and said that they were going to bid. They said that financing arrangements would be very important and that they needed all of the support that the American Embassy could give them. They added that they knew the technical specifications that the Colombian Air Force was interested in and that they could meet them.

At this point there was only one U.S. firm involved in the bidding. I personally must have devoted two full weeks of my time, spread out over a longer period. Members of the Embassy staff spent a great deal of time on working with people from the Defense Security Assistance Agency in Washington to use some security assistance facilities that we had to improve the financing package. Sikorsky worked with various commercial lenders. I talked to those lenders, as did the staff of the Embassy Economic Section, to make sure that we gave them as straight a

picture of the Colombian economy as we could. Later on, General Samudio telephoned me and said, "You can call the people up at the headquarters of United Technologies in Connecticut and tell them that they have won the bid for the helicopters."

I felt that this was a case where the U.S. Ambassador and the staff of the U.S. Embassy had really jumped in and made a difference. This was 1987, and efforts of this kind were still not always made. It was happening around the world and so it was not unique. However, it wasn't the traditional Foreign Service approach to matters of this kind. I found that we could do this. We all sat around later with Sikorsky representatives. They were very nice about it. They brought some champagne and said, "Let's celebrate. We've never had this kind of service from an American Embassy before. We think this is great." I said, "Well, neither I nor the Embassy staff has ever done this before, either." We liked the outcome and felt good about it. It was a significant accomplishment to be able to chalk up real, dollar sales of U.S. equipment.

Q: Did you get any reaction on this from your French diplomatic colleague?

GILLESPIE: The French Ambassador treated me very coldly for the remainder of my tour of duty in Colombia. We spoke to each other, but relations with him were distant. He tried to undo the award of the helicopter contract. Later on, General Samudio called me on the phone and said, "Boy, you really set me up on this. The French Ambassador isn't giving up. He's back in here, yelling and screaming about this."

The same thing happened again in 1996, but the Blackhawk Sikorsky helicopter is still the aircraft of choice for the Colombians. We initially sold Colombia five helicopters, with spare parts. If I remember correctly, it was probably an \$80-100 million sale, which is not peanuts. The sale meant jobs in the U.S. for the people who build these helicopters, and it obviously helped our balance of payments and foreign trade. In any event, it also did other things - and this was one of the reasons that we were so interested in getting an American company into the Colombian helicopter market. I happen to believe that, through these relationships with a country's military establishment, you extend our country's influence. There is no question about it that if you are the supplier of their helicopters, then your people have an opportunity to show them what's good about the U.S. and get to know them and work on them. Also, it established a basis for subsequent procurement of the same kind of aircraft. If I am right about this, up to 1996 we have now sold Colombia 15 Blackhawk helicopters. This means that the total contracts for these sales probably have amounted to some \$400-500 million - say, half a billion dollars' worth of sales. In October, 1996, the Colombians announced that they were going to buy additional Blackhawk helicopters. So this initial contract built something which has continued.

Later on, after this initial contract for the helicopters, General Samudio contacted me and said, "I need to buy for the Colombian Ministry of Defense about \$70-80 million of non-lethal equipment. I need to buy trucks, ambulances, cots, and other equipment for my troops." He added, "I know that you're going to be interested in this. However, I'm going to need financing. I need to figure out how we can get financing. At present all of our trucks and ambulances are Ford Motor Company products. What can you do to help me?"

Well, I checked into it and found out that there were all kinds of export licensing requirements. It

didn't make a whole lot of difference whether the equipment was lethal or non-lethal. There were real limitations on how the Export-Import Bank of the United States could assist with financing and providing credit for these sales, because this involved military equipment.

That set me out on a new jousting match. I went to Washington and met with a woman named Rita Rodriguez, who was a Vice President and a member of the Board of Directors of the Export-Import Bank. She was originally appointed to the Export-Import Bank by the Carter administration. However, she had been kept on. Her term had been extended during the Reagan administration, which was when I was in touch with her. Rita Rodriguez is married to a Latin American and is also a Cuban-American herself. She is a very capable economist from, I believe, MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) or some other well-known university. She is very knowledgeable.

I developed a collaborative relationship with Rita Rodriguez, much to the annoyance of John Bohn, the then President of the Export-Import Bank. I helped to engineer, here in Washington, an amendment to the Export-Import Bank's legal authority for lending which would permit Ex-Im support for sales of military equipment if it could be shown that this equipment was to be used, to a substantial degree, in anti-narcotics activity. We were able to show that the Colombian military out in the field was doing exactly that. These trucks and ambulances were being used to carry people and do different things related to anti-narcotics activity. It took two years and two sessions of Congress to get the amendment passed. However, we got that legislation through, and it is still in force. We were able to get Ex-Im financing for that \$70-80 million order for that kind of equipment. Samudio held off procuring the equipment until we could get the legislation approved and arrange for Ex-Im financing.

In the case of both transactions we didn't pay Samudio a dime. There was no payoff to Samudio from United Technologies or any other U.S. vendor. The Ex-Im Bank and the Department of Defense, in the two cases, were directly involved. We found that these American companies could do business with the Government of Colombia without having to pay any kickback.

Now, exactly at the same time the Colombian Air Force wanted to upgrade its jet fighter fleet. It had a lot of old equipment, some of it of U.S. origin, including some A-37 aircraft, a small jet acquired years ago. It is used as an attack fighter but it isn't very powerful. The Colombian Air Force wanted something bigger and more capable. We had good relations with the Colombian Air Force. We had already sold them some helicopters and were selling them other equipment for anti-narcotics purposes. Obviously, we were not going to sell them advanced jet fighter aircraft. Our policy on arms transfers precludes that. We made one exception in the case of Venezuela but we weren't going to do that in the case of Colombia.

It turned out that IAI, Israeli Aircraft Industries, signed a contract with Colombia to provide a number of Kfir jets, which have a lot of U.S. components. Some U.S. licensing was required for this transaction, but it was otherwise strictly an Israeli sale. For the sake of discussion let's say that the was worth \$250 million. I'm not sure that the Israeli Ambassador, Yakov Gotal, had really thought this through. He was a retired Israeli General, probably in his late 60s, and just as rough as a cob. He had a delightful wife about his age. We had become rather friendly with them. He had none of the diplomatic patina that one might expect from an Ambassador to any

country. He had a guttural voice. His English was accented. He worked very hard on his Spanish which, nevertheless, was also heavily accented.

Jakob told me on the golf course one day, "This is a sick society. 10 percent is what that Kfir deal cost." I tried to get him to tell me how the 10% was parceled out and spread around, but he just didn't want to go that far into the details. He was angry that it was costing \$25 million in commissions of some kind to somebody - with the money probably going into Colombian Air Force pockets - to get that sale. That's the level of corruption that was going on. I don't think that any individual got all of that money. It was probably spread around to some extent, and I'll bet that a number of Colombian Air Force officers got lots of money as a result.

Q: If we may consider consular problems, did any consular questions come up to you when you were Ambassador in Colombia which were particularly troublesome or dramatic?

GILLESPIE: There were some that were both dramatic and troublesome. When I arrived in Colombia in 1987, I found that a U.S. citizen, an employee of the Tenneco Company, had been kidnapped and was being held for ransom. I had been involved in cases of kidnapping when I was in Mexico. Here I saw the problem from another vantage point. An American had been kidnapped. We had a U.S. Government policy on kidnapping of not paying ransom to the kidnappers. This is when I really got into the kidnapping business. I found that a former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Security, Carl Ackerman, was working for Tenneco. I had a phone call from Carl, whom I knew. He had been senior to me in the Foreign Service. He had been the director of the operations center in the State Department and was a very bright guy.

Anyway, he called me and asked if he could come and see me. When he arrived, he said, "I want you to know what we're doing here. We're advising Tenneco on this kidnapping case." He said that this was their approach and he laid it out for me. He said, "We tell people that they should not pay ransom, but if it comes down to a question of fish or cut bait, we'll work these things out. They always start out at very high ransom levels, and you usually wind up settling for 10% of what was first demanded." In this case I forget the size of the ransom demanded, but let's just say that whoever was holding this man had asked for \$50 million. As I recall it, they settled for 5% of that about \$2.5 million. That's when I learned that corporations were insuring their executives through Lloyd's of London.

Yes. I learned that people like Lloyd's of London and other insurance companies sell insurance policies against executive kidnapping. There is a whole industry of negotiators available to consult with. Interestingly enough, it may have been around this time that I started reading mystery novels by the British author, Dick Francis. In one of his novels he described exactly this kind of thing. That was fascinating.

I found that, usually, the level of corporate interest in the kidnapping of business executives was very high. For example, such senior executives as the chairmen of the Board of Directors, the presidents of given companies, and the CEO's (Chief Executive Officers) were concerned about their employees being kidnapped, even if the employee who had been kidnapped was, say, only a geologist working for an oil company. I would get a phone call, a letter, or a visit from a very senior officer of the company concerned, because these executives wanted to show their

employees, their executives, and the families of the victim that they were doing what they could. They wanted as much help as they could get from anybody they could get it from.

Q: You know, I got involved with Tenneco when I was in the Embassy in Athens in 1973 or so, because the Chairman of the Board came to Greece to see about some employees of the company who had been kidnapped in Ethiopia. I told him at the time, "For God's sake, don't you go into Ethiopia." We sent out a number of cables on this issue.

GILLESPIE: Interesting. Well, when kidnappings are involved, the Ambassador has to be directly knowledgeable, interested, and engaged in it. I did this. A lot of the people coming in to see me had been senior, government officials involved in such things, like Carl Ackerman. I also had to make sure that we were minding our P's and Q's with the Government of Colombia. Colombia had a law which basically stated that you may not negotiate with guerrillas. I couldn't stop a private company from negotiating with guerrillas but I wanted to make sure that the officials of the company concerned knew what the Colombian law was. My Security Officer and other people in the Embassy were ready to help them, give them as much information as possible, and engage in as much contact work with the Colombian Government as we could. That was one level of consular work, if you will, that was a little out of the ordinary and which called for the involvement of the Ambassador.

Q: How did the kidnapping of the Tenneco employee work out?

GILLESPIE: In that case the person was eventually released. We had several other such cases during the time I was Ambassador to Colombia. We had two American citizens who were kidnapped at the same time. One of them had a heart attack and died. Another American in a later case had a heart attack and survived. We had American missionaries who were kidnapped by the guerrillas and held for lengthy periods of time. It was a very messy situation. My recollection is that most of the Americans who were kidnapped were eventually released. As I recall, we only had one fatality during my time in Colombia, and that was a natural death from a heart attack. Nobody shot or killed him, though his death could have been attributable to a lack of medication or care. There isn't a whole lot of difference there.

I didn't get directly involved in traditional consular work, such as prison visits and so forth. Where I did get involved, and this was a spin off from consular work, was the constant demand for visas and for special treatment for Colombians wishing to go to the United States. This is worth mentioning, as, I'm sure, others have mentioned it.

For example, I would get a phone call from the wife of a cabinet minister who would say, "My Aunt Susie needs to go to the United States. Can you, Mr. Ambassador, please get her a visa quickly? Can't you just give her a visa?" So we had to set up a system for dealing with such cases. I would say, in the nicest, possible way, that I myself do not issue visas. I would say, "Please contact the Consul General." As I told you, I had two, superb Consuls General during my tour as Ambassador to Colombia. When a visa case came up, one of them would say, "That's my job, Mr. Ambassador. Leave it with me."

Q: Also, you, as an Ambassador, cannot legally issue a visa.

GILLESPIE: That's right. I couldn't give the person the visa. All I could do was funnel or channel the application.

Q: An interesting part of our visa law is that the one function which the Ambassador does not technically control is the issuance of visas.

GILLESPIE: right. I could agree with or approve our system for handling requests for special treatment for certain visa applicants, which I did. We discussed this matter. My two Consuls General gave me the same advice, which I followed. They told us how to handle this kind of case. Their advice was, "Mr. Ambassador, just tell these people that you don't handle visas yourself but that the Consul General will handle it. If it's a high level person, give him or her a certain telephone number. If it's a low level person, give him or her a different number. They'll tell me that you told them to use this telephone number, and I'll deal with the case. Don't worry. It will be taken care of, and you'll never be embarrassed." That was exactly the way this arrangement worked. I think that, probably, in 99% of these cases the person was eligible for a visa anyhow. There was never the slightest question that they were going to get it, and they really weren't going to be put at the head of the line. Nevertheless, the Consuls General knew how to give these people the impression that they probably had been put at the head of the line. (Laughter)

This is an issue which comes up all the time, in nearly all countries where we have Embassies. There is a high demand for U.S. visas, and only limited resources to issue them. Limitations on our resources are increasingly common, even though the consular function is fairly well protected in terms of budgetary resources. Another issue which was a source of true difficulty was the abominable behavior, from time to time, of selected members of the Immigration and Naturalization Service and U.S. Customs at ports of entry in the United States. The Colombian Foreign Minister, Julio Londono, was searched in the United States. I think that that is one of the reasons why he never liked me and carried a big load of animosity toward me. I'm convinced that one of the reasons for his attitude had to do with the fact that he, while Foreign Minister of Colombia and holding a diplomatic visa and passport, was stopped and searched. This was apparently because he was from Colombia, the country which produced drugs. I had a phone call from the President of Colombia on that. The Colombian Ambassador in Washington protested to the Department of State. That was the other side of this coin that one gets involved in and has to deal with. There isn't a whole lot that you can do about it, because the damage has been done by the time you hear about it.

Other things happened, involving cases which were truly more upsetting, in a way. There were incidents which concerned good, honest Colombian business people whom I might have heard of or met at some point. They would tell me these stories. They wouldn't pick up the phone and scream and yell, but I would hear about it later. They would say, "Well, my wife was strip searched," or something like that. My stomach would turn over when I heard that, and I would say to myself, "Damn it! What are we doing to these people? Don't we know how to treat them? There's a way to do this kind of thing." However, there's very little that I could do to deal with that situation, so I had to figure out how to grin and bear it.

Other matters did not truly involve consular cases, but we had a terrible tragedy in Colombia. One of our Marine Security Guards was shot and killed accidentally in the Marine House by the head of security for the Shell Oil Company. Gun accidents are accidental, which means that they shouldn't have happened. However, they do. The Marine Guard was killed with his own gun. The security chief for Shell was examining the pistol, a heavy, .45 caliber pistol. He made two, terrible mistakes. He didn't check to make sure that the gun was not loaded and he pointed it at the owner of the gun. We had excellent Marine Security Guards, and the Marine who was killed was a bright, young fellow. The gun almost literally blew him away in the Marine House, with many other members of the Marine detachment and several members of the Embassy community there. Of course, we had to go through the whole process of reporting an American death abroad - in this case, a member of the Embassy family. We had a memorial service at the Embassy residence. It was truly disheartening and disturbing to have that happen. This is one aspect of the job that an Ambassador has to deal with. However, I must say that the Consular Officers concerned - the Consul General and all the others - handled this case very well.

Another major concern that we became involved in - not so much involving the Ambassador directly, although it did to some extent - was adoptions. Colombia was a major source of children for adoption in the mid to late 1980s. I would get phone calls from Members of Congress, either about themselves or about their constituents who wanted to adopt a child and felt that they were not getting the proper treatment in Colombia. They wanted the Embassy to intervene in some way. Again, it was a case where our Consular Section became expert in dealing with this. We had some truly caring and thoughtful people who dealt with this area, both Americans and Colombians. They did really good work.

On the business side I might mention another, major dispute which I didn't touch on previously. I think that it has come to mark a lot of our trade relationships during this period. This involved intellectual property. Colombia, like many other countries, was pirating audio and videotapes and things of that nature. Satellites were coming into service, and people were taping material over satellite transmissions. They weren't just handing it around but were selling it. Jack Valenti, the President of the Motion Picture Exporters' Association, came to Colombia several times to discuss this matter. He stayed with me at the Embassy residence. We would go in to see Colombian Government officials on this matter. The government didn't really have a policy on the situation and wasn't sure how to handle it.

We had similar problems with pharmaceutical licensing and patenting. This whole area of intellectual property rights and patent protection involved many countries whose development had reached a certain stage. They were beginning to understand that patent and copyright protection was important, although they had previously felt that it didn't hurt them to allow this kind of activity to go on. Until they began to develop, they didn't care much about the matter. However, all of a sudden Colombian authors were becoming known around the world.

For example, Gabriel Garcia Marquez had won the Nobel Prize for literature. He was world renowned, as were other Colombian authors. Incidentally, I will mention him later as a consular case.

Regarding this intellectual property matter, I was interested to see that certain members of the

Colombian Government and the intellectual and economic elite, if you will, were beginning to say, "Wait a minute, this intellectual property issue does not just involve the industrialized and developed countries trying to freeze us out. We're going to have these same problems to deal with as our economy develops and the level of our activity goes up, whether it's cultural or whatever. For example, software development, licensing of patents, and so forth." So we were able actually to develop some cooperative efforts with the U.S. Patent Office to send people down to Colombia to move this issue along. However, it is still an area of great contention.

Let me return to Gabriel Garcia Marquez. I learned about "Gabo" before I got to Colombia. I had a phone call from Gabriel Garcia Marquez before I left for Colombia. He said, "I understand that you are the new Ambassador." He said, "I am under a particular restriction in the U.S. I need a visa waiver every time I want to go to the United States." He added, "I wanted to talk to you and to introduce myself to you over the telephone. I live in Havana, Cuba, or Mexico, and I rarely visit Colombia. I go to Colombia from time to time but, more often, I'm in Mexico. So my practice is the following," and he proceeded to tell me what he would do. He said, "I'm invited frequently to New York and other parts of the United States to lecture and to do different kinds of things. I enjoy visiting the United States very much and I love the United States."

Well, that was one aspect of this case. On the other hand the Central Intelligence Agency and other intelligence agencies were reporting that Gabriel Garcia Marquez was an agent of communist Cuba and things like that. This meant that he was not eligible to receive an American visa in the ordinary way. So if he was to be allowed into the United States, he had to obtain a waiver of eligibility from the U.S. Attorney General.

He told me, "I will let you know when I want to go to the United States." What he wanted was for me to get him a kind of blanket waiver. I found out that I couldn't give him a blanket waiver. At least, nobody in the U.S. Government was willing to consider such a thing at the time. I told him, "Please contact the U.S. Embassy in Mexico City when you need an American visa. I'd be delighted if you'd let me know when you want to go to the United States so that I'll know and can inform the U.S. Government." This was all on the advice of people back in the Bureau of Consular Affairs in the Department of State. When I got to Colombia, this was reiterated by my Consul General.

In 1994 Gabriel Garcia Marquez introduced me to Fidel Castro in Cartagena, Colombia, at the Ibero-American Summit meeting, which I attended as an observer, after I had retired from the Foreign Service. I was the first American ever to attend such a summit meeting. "Gabo" was at this meeting, as was Castro. This was the only occasion on which I ever shook hands with Fidel Castro or ever been that close to him. I learned later that Castro said, "Who is that gringo over there?" Garcia Marquez said, "Oh, that's the former American Ambassador to Colombia. I know him. Would you like to meet him?" Castro said, "Oh, I don't much care." Then "Gabo" asked me if I would like to meet Castro. I said, "Oh, I don't much care." So "Gabo" said, "Why don't you come on over?" So I did, Castro and I shook hands, and that was that.

It turned out that Garcia Marquez was rather easy to deal with. He just wanted to make sure that he could get into the U.S.

Q: I think that the time had passed when he used that issue as a kind of red banner to attack the U.S. Time went on, and it was no longer much of an issue.

GILLESPIE: When Cuba was actively supporting the guerrilla movements in Colombia and elsewhere in the Western Hemisphere, I think that we had a lot of reporting that indicated that Gabriel Garcia Marquez was a conscious agent of Castro. He may have carried money or information back and forth and done those kinds of things. By the mid to late 1980s, he was mellowing. His support of Castro was not unflinching at that stage, and it is even less so today. So he became less of a problem, and his views were not a major issue.

Another consular problem which came up when I received a telephone calls in the middle of the night from the Colombian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bogota. I was told, "We've got an airplane up on San Andres Island. It's a U.S. plane and is carrying drugs. It is on a U.S. flight for the contras in Central America." This was not connected with the Iran-Contra question as such but with Lt. Colonel Oliver North and his operations in support of the contras in Nicaragua. It turned out that flights of this kind were activity carried out by the FDN (Nicaraguan Democratic Front) as part of the support structure put in place by Ollie North, to move weapons and supplies in and out of Nicaragua. They had been using San Andres Island as a refueling and stopover point.

Q: Where is San Andres Island?

GILLESPIE: It's in the Caribbean Sea, about 100 miles more or less due East of Bluefields, Nicaragua. It is Colombian territory. San Andres and Providencia are two islands belonging to Colombia in that area. These islands are a free trade zone for Colombia. What happened was that the Colombian authorities in San Andres checked the tail number of this airplane after it landed. It was on the alert list issued by something called the El Paso Intelligence Center, or EPIC, which was operated by the DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration). However, the aircraft was on an official mission for the United States. That was a sort of interesting game to have to dance around. This matter has come up again and again. I was asked about this flight about 12 months ago by the press here in the United States, which was trying to find out more about this incident. On this occasion it didn't come up specifically in connection with the CIA or possible CIA involvement in sales of crack cocaine, although it has usually come up in that regard. So that was Ollie North's little operation.

Colombian President Virgilio Barco had been somewhat involved in the Contadora process in Panama in connection with peace in Central America. However, by this time the situation in Central America had begun to quiet down, in any event. President Barco, unlike his predecessor, President Betancourt, was not that much interested in the Contadora process. So this was my big operation in connection with Ollie North.

Q: First of all, you got the tail number of the aircraft from the Colombians.

GILLESPIE: I went to the DEA and CIA offices in the Embassy in Bogota, which had information on this matter. We checked with everybody we could. We didn't know that Ollie North was doing this, but we had a situation where DEA and CIA learned what was involved.

They informed me that this was part of the contra resupply effort, which was being paid for out of U.S. appropriated funds. The flight of this aircraft was handled by a private contractor who was being paid with U.S. appropriated funds in a legal and authorized fashion. The activity itself was authorized. However, the aircraft which had been hired to carry this cargo was suspected of having been used in the past for narcotics shipments.

Q: What did you say to the Colombians?

GILLESPIE: I went to the Colombian Government and said exactly that. The aircraft had broken down on San Andres Island, and this raised the problem. I said that we would appreciate it if the Colombian authorities would let this aircraft be repaired and go on its way. I described what the aircraft was doing. There was no way to play around with this, given the facts, except to tell the Colombian Government the truth.

Q: But there are two truths involved here. One was that the aircraft was engaged in resupplying the contras. That's one truth. However, what about the drugs? If there were drugs on board the aircraft...

GILLESPIE: There were no drugs on board the aircraft. The Colombian authorities on San Andres Island had not found drugs on the aircraft.

Q: But the Colombians had searched it.

GILLESPIE: They had searched it. They had identified it through its tail number, using U.S. sources of information as a suspect aircraft. So they then said, "Whoa! Freeze the aircraft. Stop it. The aircraft's broken down, and don't let anybody do anything to repair it. Put the air crew in jail," which the Colombian authorities did. They searched the aircraft and found no drugs. Then they informed us. They said, first, that they were not sure what the people on the aircraft were doing. Secondly, the air crew was not prepared to tell people what was going on. They were supposed to have a cover story. The question was, what is the United States of America doing?

This matter was reported to us as a consular matter. American property and people had been detained. That's when we learned who they were, what was involved, and what was being done. The question for us was, "What do we do about this?" To me the answer was very simple: we would tell the Colombians everything that we could tell them. If there were drugs on the aircraft, presumably the Colombians didn't find them. The Colombian authorities said that they had searched the aircraft for drugs and hadn't found any. Our DEA people were alerted to this development. They didn't suspect this aircraft of being involved in the drug traffic at this point. They told me that this plane had a record of involvement in the drug traffic but they said that they didn't think that it was engaged in such traffic at the time. Then I learned through State Department channels that this plane was under contract to the U.S. Government, was on a mission that was known and approved, and was being paid for by U.S. appropriated funds.

At this point my only recourse was to approach the Government of Colombia - not in writing but orally - tell them what the aircraft is, and what it was doing. Then I asked them to let it go. The Colombian authorities sort of smiled and said, "Yes, we'll let it go." They did, and that was it.

We had another incident, however, involving a kind of Ollie North case. It also involved San Andres Island. There had been a rather heavy battle in Nicaragua. The contra survivors of this battle - or some of them - somehow made it to San Andres Island. I forget exactly how they did so. I think that it may have been in a boat, not in an airplane. One of those survivors was a young man who had his leg badly shot up. At the request of Washington I arranged for him to be flown to Bogota for treatment in the Colombian military hospital there. We sent a young woman, a Consular Officer, up to San Andres Island to get him and accompany him back to Bogota, even though he was not a U.S. citizen. I felt that it was important that, if we were going to take on that responsibility, we should have somebody representing us there. She turned out to be a very competent officer. I believe that her name is Hanke. She took over this young fellow and his case. I think that he ultimately lost his leg and eventually resettled in Colombia. We were able to get him a prosthesis and did other things for him. Part of the name of the game is doing things like this.

There had been other cases like this, but we didn't have to get involved in them. They were handled in Bogota and then sent on their way.

That's the consular side of things. My sense of the whole experience in Colombia was that it had certain, surreal qualities that had to do with the security situation, the narcotics, the corruption, the kidnapping, and the rest of it. It is a very intricate society, in many ways. It is not at all an exaggeration to say that the Colombians think that they speak better Spanish than the people in Spain. They tend to believe that they are a pure race of Spaniards because they came to Colombia and haven't intermarried with indigenous people to any great extent. However, they have this tremendously violent pathology which affects their society. They live in a land that is part desert, part jungle, and part high, Andean Mountain plains and valleys. It is on the Andean trail of volcanic eruptions and monsoon rains. It is a tremendous mix of things. It is a rich country. It is the fourth largest trading partner with the U.S. in the Western Hemisphere and has been so for many years.

In many ways the Colombian people are very independent but very orthodox in their views. There was a national poll carried out by a very reputable polling company while I was in Colombia, covering both rural and urban areas and rich and poor. This was one of the early polls which showed us that drug consumption in Colombia was actually on the rise - something that the Colombians had not wanted to face up to. Perhaps most important of all, in connection with this poll, was that the Colombians did not place a high value, or didn't at that time, on something called democracy. However, they certainly value liberty - the ability of the individual to fulfill himself and to do what he thinks is right. And "he" is probably the correct pronoun, although in contrast to many other countries, women are major economic actors up to a certain level in the society. They are in the managerial and executive class.

Like all other countries, Colombia is obviously involved in some kind of transition. However, in many ways it is still coming out of a colonial and into a more modern era. The Colombians fought alongside the United States during World War II and the Korean War. They have been good allies of the United States in many ways.

Today, in 1996, the Colombian-U.S. relationship is as troubled as it ever has been. When I left Colombia in 1990, I felt that we had not had an effective anti-narcotics policy or strategy and I still believe that we do not have one. We were trying to interdict or stop the flow of drugs from and through Colombia to the United States. We were trying to do this either by finding the drugs and destroying them on the ground or by eradicating the cultivation of coca leaves. During the time I was in Colombia we were dealing primarily with marijuana and coca which was processed into cocaine. We had only marginal success in doing this. DEA representatives and other people on the Embassy staff could and did boast of large seizures of narcotics in terms of tons of marijuana and cocaine discovered.

After I left and even while I was in Colombia, we spoke of tens of tons seized. We said that 1987 was a huge year. Around the world something like 210 tons of cocaine were seized, of which a certain amount was in Colombia. Well, since then the total seizures have just skyrocketed. We have not been successful in stopping the flow. In my view we have absolutely refused to face up to dealing with the demand side of the problem in the United States and come up with a strategy or strategies for dealing with it. It's so much easier for domestic, political audiences in the United States to say that this is a problem that comes from overseas, and there's where we should deal with it. We tend to say, "Don't worry about it. We're okay." In 1996 we are spending some \$15 billion on anti-narcotics activities, and most of that is going to support programs overseas.

I have become very skeptical and, to some degree, cynical about our ability to deal with this problem. At the same time my fear, or concern at least, is that in the same way that drug trafficking has further corrupted the societies in which it goes on we are also being corrupted in ways that we do not fully appreciate and have not faced up to. Colombia is a perfect and perhaps extreme example of the corruption which the narcotics traffic has created, although Mexico also suffers from it, as does Peru, Bolivia, and other countries. I feel that the corruption is in our police and judicial systems in ways that we are not aware of. I don't think that there are huge conspiracies in our country in this respect but I think that it's happening. There's a lot more drug consumption than people want to admit.

I remember vividly that, at our residence in Bogota, we had a wonderful clay tennis court which I take credit for improving over what it was when I arrived in Bogota. It was possibly the best tennis court in Colombia. The Embassy residence is a single dwelling on a six acre plot of ground on the side of a hill in the best residential area in Bogota. Around it several very attractive, high-rise apartment condominium buildings were being built.

The new manager for Barclay's Bank came to Bogota from England. He was a very bright man. His wife was the daughter of the British Ambassador to Bolivia and Peru when she was younger. He was a tennis player. We would invite them over to play tennis and got to know them fairly well. They had come to Bogota from New York. After we had become pretty well acquainted, he confided to me that when I would go to a party - not necessarily a diplomatic function but especially a Colombian society party - it was not absolutely unheard of that, when the American Ambassador and other senior officials had left the party, people would bring out cocaine and other drugs for people to sample. He said, "This is just like Manhattan and Washington, DC, where they do exactly the same thing." He said, "Ambassador, don't be misled by all of this. Colombia's not any different from New York, Chicago, or Washington, because I've done it." His

wife said, "Absolutely. We stopped going to parties given by certain members of major law firms, investment banking houses, and others in Manhattan - or, just going very early, dropping in, and leaving. Because if you stay around long enough, somebody will come out with a silver tray and offer you narcotics."

That was going on in the late 1980s. Nancy Reagan, President Reagan's wife, was saying, "Just say No." My skepticism at that point was growing. I don't think that I was cynical about it but I was wondering if we were on the right track. Nobody was in charge. We had the beginnings of an Office of National Drug Control Policy, but they weren't really doing anything. It was mainly a matter of making political hay in the 1986 and 1988 elections. I remember coming back from Colombia to a meeting in the White House in the Cabinet Room. I sat directly across from President Reagan. Vice President Bush was there, as well as 16 American Ambassadors from around the world - not just Latin America - where the drug issue was important. We all talked about this and how important it was. The basic line was that, "We've got to keep these narcotics out of the United States." There was nothing about what we should do in the United States, although at the end of the meeting President Reagan - or maybe Vice President Bush, I can't remember which one said this - "Now we've all been drug tested here in the White House. Have you all been drug tested?" Well, there was no drug testing program in the State Department. We all got up, went over to the dispensary in the Old Executive Office Building, and peed in a cup. I had Bill Swing, Dan Donohue, and a mixture of career and non-career Ambassadors with me. We all lined up to have our drug test. They sent us all the results later and said, "Don't worry, you're all okay." (Laughter)

Anyhow, I had thought, when I started my tour of duty in Colombia, that the drug question was important but that my predecessor as Ambassador had, perhaps, devoted too much attention to it. I felt that I should try to find some approach that would allow us to have an impact on the Colombian drug strategy. My objective had been to persuade President Virgilio Barco to come up with a narcotics strategy for Colombia and fit it into his vision of what he wanted to accomplish during his Presidency. As of the time that I left Colombia, he had not done that. He was beginning to do that and actually approved a narcotics strategy when my successor, Ted McNamara, was Ambassador to Colombia. He was a really effective Ambassador.

Barco eventually came up with a narcotics strategy - not necessarily a good strategy and certainly not the best one. However, it was a strategy of sorts. It devoted resources to it and identified responsibilities. It defined Colombia's objectives in this respect. Even so, the levels of narcotics related corruption, as we have seen, have grown. The narcotics problem has not declined at all, and this complex of difficulties remains.

In one sense I came away fairly frustrated after spending three years in this surreal, threatening atmosphere, where I felt for the first time in my life real fear associated with my job. My wife felt this fear, also. I was concerned that we had not been able to do very much either in Washington or in Bogota to deal effectively with this set of problems. We'd been very successful, in my view, in understanding the political dynamics of Colombia and, perhaps, in influencing some of the events. We'd been very successful in focusing attention on some of the positive aspects of the relationship between Colombia and the United States, primarily in terms of economic and some of the political and other security issues. However, in terms of this core

set of issues that revolved around the narcotics traffic and the illicit activity associated with it, we just didn't do as much as we hoped.

Q: This problem reminds me of a friend of mine who was Deputy Chief of Mission in Dublin. His Ambassador was a political appointee who was getting close to the end of his tour of duty. The Ambassador was in the habit of saying that he really felt bad about the fact that he hadn't been able to settle the problems of Northern Ireland. Maybe the narcotics problem in Colombia and elsewhere is of that nature.

GILLESPIE: Oh, I think it is.

Q: So when did you leave Colombia?

GILLESPIE: I left Colombia in mid-September, 1988. I'd already been selected and nominated to be Ambassador to Chile.

DAVID L. HOBBS
Consular Officer
Colombia (1986-1989)

Political Counselor
Colombia (1989-1990)

Deputy Chief of Mission
Bogota (1990-1992)

David L. Hobbs was born in Iowa in 1940. After serving in the US Army from 1960-1963 he received his bachelor's degree from University of California at Berkeley. His career included positions in Germany, Brazil, England, Japan, Colombia, and an ambassadorship to Guyana. Ambassador Hobbs was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in March 1997.

Q: What was the situation in Colombia when you went down, politically?

HOBBS: The post has a reputation of being a very, very dangerous post and I suppose it was in a way. The drug war had been going on for a while and we were trying to work with the Colombian government to put a little crimp in the narcotic traffic out of that country. First marijuana and later on cocaine became a major export item from that country. The famous Medellin and Cali cartels, criminal elements, were going full blast. A few months before I got there a bomb had gone off in front of the embassy and a woman who was waiting outside to get a visa was killed. There was a tremendous amount of tension. We had hundreds of jeeps, bodyguards, machine guns, etc. The place was an armed camp.

The president of Colombia, Barco at the time, did some very helpful and I suppose you

would say brave things. He, for a while, opened up the window for extradition, although it was stopped after a few months by a parliamentary bill. We had a chance to extradite narcotic offenders to the United States. I got pretty much involved in that. We extradited quite a number. One of the first was Carlos Lader, who was the famous leader of the drug business of Colombia. He was prosecuted and is still serving time.

Q: What is the consular role in an extradition case?

HOBBS: It is basically just paper work. You sign the various papers and put on the blue ribbons and seals on it. It is not a major thing. We worked with the Colombian government and courts to make sure the papers met their standards of identification of offense and offender, etc. We had a little contact with them. There was a lot of work involved when the papers were received in Bogota from the States, after having passed through the Justice Department. We had to go over them pretty carefully to make sure there were no errors or omissions. In fact, we found quite often there were and would fix things up a bit before sending them over to the Colombian government, not wanting them to turn down the extradition on technical grounds. It was a rather tense time and very necessary to pay attention to a lot of detail. We didn't know how long this would go on or how the narcotic offenders would react to this. Whether or not they would decide to take revenge on some of us personally because we were involved in the process.

Q: Were you married when you were there?

HOBBS: Adult dependents were allowed at post but no minor dependents because there would be more people to protect and more vans going around with Americans in them. It just made it too costly. My spouse did not come with me the first year because we had a son finishing high school in Virginia. My daughter went to boarding school and it was important for her to have a full year there. So, I was alone the first year and later my wife joined me.

Q: What was your impression of how Tony Gillespie ran the embassy?

HOBBS: I think he was very good. I felt he was an excellent manager. He had a good DCM, too, in Mike Skol. Tony had a big picture and understood very well, I think, the environment in which we were working. He understood all the theory we were up to but also very practical in making decisions. I remember once I went to him when I got the idea that we should be refusing visas to Colombian congressional members who we had information making us aware of their involvement in the narcotic traffic. Why should they be exempt from paying the price? I knew it would be controversial if we took on congressional leaders. One was a presidential candidate, which would cause a bit of an uproar. I went to see Tony Gillespie about this idea. He listened to me, thought about it for a few minutes and said, "Go ahead. It makes sense." I was pleased to see a person in his position who could see all the pressure from the Colombian government to be nice to them. If he was uncomfortable with the idea he never showed it to us. He was quite willing to let us take the visas from the various congressmen.

Q: What happened when you started to do this? Did the papers attack you?

HOBBS: Yes, there was a bit of an uproar. At first the congressmen would come in and want to know why this was being done. You can't tell them precisely why because you can't reveal intelligence sources and methods, but you would give them enough information to let them know it had to do with narcotics. At one time I had a congressman crying in my office over losing his visa. It was probably the worse punishment he ever had, I suppose, to lose his visa.

Eventually it got to be a matter of debate in the congress and they had this famous debate where I was denounced personally by one of the north coast politicians for my role in this. I stayed on in Colombia for three more years and for awhile. The foreign minister, whenever he saw me, even after I had left the consular section, would refer to me as señor consul to let me know that he remembered my role in the visa thing, I guess. However, it was something we needed to do, did it and got away with it. I think it sent a message that the United States government was serious about the drug war and you didn't have any position whatever that made you exempt from the rules that everybody else played by. Later, after I left Colombia, we took the visa from the president, Samper.

Q: Where were you getting your information from?

HOBBS: Intelligence sources.

Q: How about the support you got back in Washington?

HOBBS: I think it was very good in general, but I had one little campaign I had to wage. The immigration law was changed to allow one to take the visa from those who only aided and abetted. You didn't have to actually engage in drug trafficking. That is what we were using in most cases to take the congressional visas. Initially it wasn't easy. I would send an advisory opinion to Washington on a case and then go on R&R and fly to Washington and work the case there with the visa office to try to convince them that the amount of information we sent up was sufficient, did fall under the law and was the right thing to do. I would talk them into doing the answer that we wanted and then fly back down to Colombia to carry out the decision. It took a little bit of that for awhile until they got used to the idea. There seemed to be a little reluctance at first to use that section of the law.

Q: Did you have the feeling that you were looking at this as a very practical political message that we were doing but when it got to the visa office it was in the hands of attorneys who were looking at it without thinking about the foreign policy implications?

HOBBS: A little bit, but in a way it was kind of odd. Usually it would be the legal person who wanted to do what was right by the law regardless of political implications. But in this case we were the ones who wanted to have it done because of the political implications and the advisors were reluctant to do it. I was quite surprised at first. I adjusted to that and tried to use my influence to get it to work. We did get a number refused.

It was just the opposite case in Bolivia following Gilbert's time there. Dick Bowers was there

as ambassador. There the embassy was trying not to have the visa from one of the prominent Bolivian politicians taken away, but the Department in that case took the visa. That is more typical.

Q: I would think so. Normally the embassy tries to go along with the government because there is always something bigger that you have to deal with.

HOBBS: It is very important for them too to be able to have their visa to go to Miami or somewhere. Everybody goes up there and it is kind of a social stigma not to be able to go. So, it is an excellent weapon for us and we started using it. I was the person who told them they couldn't have a visa. I would do it in my office with the door closed to indicate how seriously we took the situation. I would have closed door sessions amassing all the information to see if we had enough to justify taking a visa. We got 20 some visas during my time there.

Q: Were there any American congressional queries about this?

HOBBS: Not about our taking visas from the Colombians; no. Not one single American inquired. I don't know if any Colombian congressman ever got in touch with an American congressman and complained about it, but if they did they probably assumed we had the information we needed and nobody ever raised it.

Q: With the tremendous drug trafficking going on there, there must have been Americans involved. Did that arise?

HOBBS: A little of that but much less than I expected. By the time I got there the narcotic trafficking had progressed way beyond the simple little mule carrying a little bit of cocaine on their person. They were shipping it in ships and aircraft, using commercial shipping and aircraft that belonged to them. There was one case that lingered on, having taken place before I got there, where a person claimed that he had been unjustly arrested and that the DEA had engaged in framing him and participated in some interrogation of him. But the guy had left by then. So, that case wasn't a problem.

At time we tried to look into these allegations but they were very fuzzy and you couldn't put much credence in them. We had only about six or eight prisoners which is a very small number for a country that size.

Q: That is amazing.

HOBBS: Yes, but there were no more tourists coming in so that cut down the usual tourist getting into trouble. The mule business had pretty much stopped. There wasn't much going on.

Q: You might explain what a mule is.

HOBBS: An individual who carries narcotics for the traffickers on their body. There was very little of that. Once in a while you would get somebody who was carrying small amounts

but they usually got caught at the other end, States side.

One case that was difficult. When I was still in Washington in the Bureau of Consular Affairs, I participated in an effort to get a judge in New England to extradite to Colombia an American who had been charged with marijuana trafficking and had gotten away and was in the States. We were working very hard to get the Colombians extradited to the United States and this was the one case where the Colombians tried to extradite an American. We were quite interested in that case to see if it justified extradition. In the end they get the man extradited to Colombia.

This was before I even thought about being in Colombia. When I got down to Colombia I thought about that case and wondered how it turned out. I checked up and found out that the man had still not gone to trial. He had been waiting three years for trial. I decided that wasn't good enough and went to see the judge in charge of the case to try to explain that a little bit quicker justice would be appropriate. She told me all the sad stories about how much work she had and how difficult it was. I remember I came back to the embassy and talked with our legal advisor, who was a Colombian attorney who had been on our staff for many years. I told her I wanted to go see the minister of justice to complain about this. She said I couldn't do that, the policy people don't do cases. Then I requested to see the person who runs the court...

I did go see that person and the case got resolved very quickly. The man was released on bail. But then he did a dumb thing. He tried to escape across the border to Ecuador with some emeralds in his pocket to finance his trip. He got arrested again for that. Within a few months he was let out on bail again and it was clear that everybody just turned a blind eye and let him leave the country. My feeling was that in a way he didn't get the justice he deserved, on the other hand he got what he didn't deserve which was many years of waiting in jail without the court determining he was guilty.

Q: David, what about the other side of citizenship and welfare work, like with missionaries. You had a guerilla war going on and you had Americans out there. Was this a problem for you at the time?

HOBBS: Yes, it was. Colombia has a lot of kidnappings, over 15,000 in one year. A few of those are Americans. You are right, the people who get caught are usually those Americans who are out in the interior, the oil business or missionaries. I think we had around 15 Americans kidnapped during my time in Colombia. They were difficult cases because they would hold them a long time.

It was usually guerilla, not narcotic kidnappings. When the guerilla movement of Colombia lost their financial support they used to get from Cuba, they needed to find an alternative source of income and turned to bank robberies, kidnappings and criminal activities like that. They became basically bands of criminals more than they were ideologues trying to change the world. I think they forgot they were supposed to be some kind of crusaders for a new world order. So, we had a number of Americans kidnapped.

I remember one case where two young men 21 years old disappeared. Their parents said they were on a voyage by small boats all through Colombia and down through South America. The idea was to travel through South America from river to river. They got kidnapped and held for months. We heard nothing and assumed they were dead. About the tenth month into the kidnapping a letter came to the embassy one day addressed to Bogota. The letter was supposedly written by these two young men with a note attached to it from the guerillas, said they were fine, doing well and moving around with the guerillas. The note from the guerillas said we should put an ad in the newspaper using a specific series of words and then we would hear further. So, we did. A few weeks later we got a contact. But, then we couldn't get any actual contact.

I then got in contact with a bishop who was said to be a leftist bishop and somebody who probably had contact with the guerillas. He said he thought he could be helpful. In the meantime the family had hired one of those companies that takes care of these sort of things, does the negotiating and such in kidnapping cases. A few weeks later the bishop arranged for a delivery of the boys. They showed up at a house where we had arranged to meet with them. We talked with them for a long time.

I talked to the bishop later and he described how the actual turnover took place. He took his jeep, along with a card table, table cloth and a bottle of wine, and drove to a clearing in the jungle. He made a little noise to make sure they knew he was there and after a while he heard some rustling in the bushes and somebody sticks his head out and comes over and talks to him to make sure he is the right guy. Then the boys walk out of the bushes. Somebody else brings a chicken, which they kill, cook and eat with the wine. The bishop drives off with the boys and the guerillas take off with his card table and table cloth. It was kind of an interesting story.

Q: Presumably somebody paid money.

HOBBS: Well, the funny thing is in this case they didn't. The company that had been hired to deal with this said initially the guerillas had been convinced that they were CIA agents, these two young men. They thought they had some real prizes there and were going to make a lot of money off of them. But, eventually the bishop convinced them they were just kids on a lark. I was told later by the man from the company that they didn't pay anything. It was the only case he ever had where they didn't pay anything.

Q: Could you talk a bit about these companies?

HOBBS: There are a number of them and more are being formed all the time as the kidnapping and terrorism business expands around the world. Often they are people who have former intelligence or law enforcement background.

Q: These are Americans?

HOBBS: Well, Americans, and there are some British companies that I am aware of, too.

Q: But these are not Colombian groups?

HOBBS: No. American groups that we were dealing with there. Usually the relatives of the Americans kidnapped would contact these companies, or they contact the relatives to let them know they deal in this world and have contacts. The US government is not allowed to negotiate for the release of prisoners by offering money. We might negotiate in the sense that we will discuss with them what they want, but we don't give in to their demands. It is a good policy because it is pretty well known now that you don't talk with the American government and get political concessions or money, or whatever you want when you kidnap an American. But, these companies do negotiate ransoms.

My policy was that I really didn't want to know what was going on. I knew what they were up to but didn't want them to tell me because I didn't want to be involved in any way. I would be concerned about the welfare of those kidnapped, try to make contact to find out how they were doing, insist that they let them go, but never really wanted to know what they were offering. But, you generally did know, and the price went up quite a bit. It used to be about \$200,000 and during my time it went over a million. The Japanese had an executive kidnapped and he was out very quickly. I know they paid the million. I went to see the Japanese ambassador once and was nice to him but let him know that we were disappointed that they had paid so much so quickly because now his citizens were the best prize in town. It also raised the price for foreigners in general. I told him we had this policy of never paying, etc. But, the Japanese usually paid.

Q: Were we taking active steps to keep Americans out of the country?

HOBBS: We tried. We put out a travel warning against coming to Colombia. The Colombians didn't like that very much because they felt it would ruin tourism, which was partly true. But, my experience in these countries where we put out travel warnings, I think what ruins travel to these countries is not the warning so much as just the reputation the country has in general. I don't think our warnings have that much effect.

The way Americans find out about travel warnings is through airline reservation systems which pick up on that. The travel agencies want to know because they feel there is a liability that they might suffer if they send clients to countries which the State Department has warned people not to go to and their client hasn't been informed. So, we give our warnings to the travel agency associations who would disseminate it in various ways. Newspapers pick up on warnings and you see notices printed in travel sections. But, of course, we can't stop anybody from traveling to those places, we just tell them they shouldn't. Tourism was almost nonexistent in Colombia.

Q: When there was a kidnapping of an American, what would be the role of the embassy and the consular section?

HOBBS: We had a pretty good drill down because we were so used to it. It started with Tony Gillespie and continued with all the other ambassadors during my time. I was there with three ambassadors. We had a kidnap committee, which included the DCM, the consul general, who

always dealt with the families; the legal attaché, because they had good contacts with the police in Colombia; the military attaché because they had contacts with the military; and the intelligence person, who picked up stuff here and there. We met all the time and discussed what we knew and any new information that came up.

Q: How did you deal with the families?

HOBBS: If the families were in the United States they dealt mostly with the State Department. We would then deal with the families through the emergency center in the State Department. If the family was in the country, then we had direct contact with them. It was a difficult situation because if you are picking up some intelligence you can't tell them how you got something or everything we knew. You could say we have received some indication that we think is credible that your relative is alive and well in good health, or maybe not in good health. I remember one person who had terrible foot problems. The guerillas moved around constantly so there was a lot of walking. So, it goes on and on and often a family get antsy for more specific information and we just don't have it. We, tell them it takes a long time and a long time doesn't necessarily mean bad. In Colombia we had things going on for months before we got contacts. At that time we could say that there was never anybody killed by their captives. There were two cases where one died of a heart attack while captive, and another died of a heart attack while being released. Since then, there have been people killed in captivity.

Q: What about American businesses in Colombia, did they sort of take care of their own?

HOBBS: They had quite an elaborate security network because there was a big threat. Occidental Petroleum was blown up once. Coca Cola was constantly getting threats. Occasionally they would lose a bottling plant or something. Things that were symbols of America or companies that were known to be American companies were often picked on by the guerillas to further their image of protecting the country from exploitation by capitalists. So, they had very, very rigorous security requirements for their employees.

One time the guerillas kidnapped a man who they thought was a Filipino and actually he was an American. We guarded that information very carefully because we didn't want them to know they had an American, which would have made the man a bigger prize. He got out without them ever knowing he was an American.

But, once in a while the security net doesn't work and they get somebody caught. We never wanted the Colombian government to rescue them. They weren't well trained and lost a couple people. The daughter of one of the presidents was kidnapped once and in the rescue attempt they killed her. That is not a very good outcome.

There was one lucky person, a friend of Estrada, who was the son of a president, who was mayor of Bogota at the time he was kidnapped. There was an operation of some kind going on and inadvertently they rescued him. He sort of walked away from the situation while shooting was going on.

We tried to keep the Colombians relaxed and not to rush things. Don't try to rescue anybody, try to talk them out.

Q: Did you find Colombia a violent society with a lot of guns and problems?

HOBBS: Yes and no. There are a lot of guns and far too much violence. I was in a hotel for the first three months I was in Colombia waiting for an apartment. After moving into an apartment I went back to the hotel for a meal. I left around 9:30 at night and two cars almost collided at the intersection. It was a small hotel in a very nice residential area in the northern part of Bogota. There wasn't a lot traffic there then. Both drivers jump out of their cars and start screaming at each other—a man in his forties and a woman probably in her thirties. They were face to face when suddenly the woman reached in her purse, pulled out a gun and shot the guy. I was only about 15 yards away. I stood there like a dummy and watched. She waived the pistol in the air and looked around, then shot the man in the stomach again. He sinks to the ground and I finally get enough sense to sink behind a car. An elderly private guard appears and walks over to her and takes the gun from her hand. Then there was yelling and screaming and she walked over to the guy on the ground and spit on him. It was probably over an hour before the police finally came. When they did come there were about 15 motorcycles pulling up. Then a Volkswagen police car pulled up and they threw the man into the back seat and headed off to the hospital. I thought he might be dead for awhile, but he did move when they picked him up.

I never knew what happened to him because that same night there had been a shoot out in an Italian restaurant where a man, who, the papers pointed out over and over, was a veteran of the United States army and fought in Vietnam, although a Colombian citizen, had freaked out and gone to this restaurant and shot and killed 20 some people. He just cleaned out the restaurant. It was amazing because just everybody in the restaurant was armed but nobody had the nerve to take on this guy. It was incredible.

I saw another guy killed on a street. It was common, really. And, yet, I found that sometimes Colombians would go a long way to avoid confrontation and violence. If you get in a traffic jam and are able to catch a person's eye and look him straight in the eye, you win, they will give. You can almost always get them to back off if you get eye contact.

Q: What about as a consular officer dealing with the judiciary and policy force?

HOBBS: The prisons were lousy but we could usually get the few prisoners we had into better conditions than anyone else in the country had. They would treat them okay. So, we got good cooperation from the jails. To help with our anti-fraud efforts, there was a lot of visa fraud in Colombia, we had a Colombian policeman and a representative from the Colombian FBI equivalent organization, working out of the embassy. They assisted us in fraud investigations. You always wondered how much they made on the side doing this. I made sure we had new people every year to prevent them from getting too entrenched.

When we had a fraud to which a person would confess, the police would say they were going to take them away and arrest them. However, I knew what happened. They took them down

the street about three blocks, out of sight of the embassy and then they would come to some sort of agreement. There was never any prosecution that we could point to. They were cooperative, but on the other hand their system took over and they would take the pay offs. But, at least it hassled the fraud people a bit and the perpetrator didn't get the visa and had to pay off the cops.

With the military we had not too much to do on the consular side other than the kidnappings. The military attaché when I first got there felt it was imperative that every military person in the country get a visa, so he had an incredible number of referrals. I spent a good bit of time making sure these referrals were legitimate and referring to people they actually knew.

Basically the cooperation with the Colombian authorities was very good. I enjoyed the Colombian people, liked their culture and atmosphere.

Q: Did you get any reflections as a consular officer from the Colombian community that settled in Miami? I am thinking of the ones who became American citizens. Were they a problem pressing for visas, etc.?

HOBBS: No, there wasn't much of that. I guess this was because the Colombians living in the States tried to avoid traveling to Colombia.

There was one time somebody came to tell me there was a guy in the lobby who wanted to see me, an American from Colombia. I had him come up and it turned out he had come in to brag a little bit. He was a fairly gregarious guy, an insurance person. He was head of the regional New England Association of Insurance Brokers, or something. He was also, so he said, the head of the Republican party for Massachusetts. He just wanted to let me know that he had gotten to the States in the early sixties on a tourist visa and never came back. He wanted me to know that not everybody who goes to the United States illegally is going to be a bum. Some of us, he said, become important people and make more money than the president. I congratulated him on his great success and didn't show any hard feelings that he got a visa which he misused by staying in the States.

I tell some of the people I work with in the consular business that the system is not perfect by any means. Once you have lost a case I don't see any reason to get excited about it. You do your best and try to make good decisions. The system is just not there to be perfect, especially when you get congressional pressure to issue visas. The poor consuls are getting mixed messages--keep all the bad guys out but issue a visa if there is influence. It is doomed to be less than perfect.

Q: It's a hard one. I used to have the same thing when I was in Korea telling the young vice consuls to do their best.

HOBBS: We have to be philosophical about it. We have no excuse not to do our best, but what we are given to work with, our best is quite frankly not good enough. We need more bodies to do the job as well as we know we could. But, we do the best we can with what we have and I go home and never lose any sleep.

Q: In 1989 you left the consular section and what?

HOBBS: I was getting ready to leave Colombia and was looking around where I could go next. The one job that I had a lot of pressure on me to take was the consul general in Manila, which I would have loved to have had, in a way. But, I had kids in school in the States and it was a long way from Manila to the States, phone calls are difficult, etc. I decided not to go there. I had the good fortune of having the ambassador, Ted McNamara, who I had known ever since I came into the service, ask if I would stay on as political counselor for a year and possibly DCM after that. After thinking about it for a while I decided why not, I was having a good time, it would be a great assignment. So, I went on home leave and returned to be the political counselor.

While I was on home leave we got word that Galan, who was running for president, was shot and killed. He would have been, I think, a great president if he had made it. His campaign manager, Gaviria, became a presidential candidate and won and went on to be, I think, an excellent president. He later became the head of the OES. He did a very good job of collaborating with McNamara. I had a good time working on political issues and then later as DCM.

Q: So from 1989 to 1992 you were back in Colombia?

HOBBS: Yes. From 1989-90 I was political counselor and from 1990-92 I was DCM. So, it was a six year tour.

Q: That's a long time. What was the political situation and how did the embassy deal with the Colombian side during this period?

HOBBS: When I first got to Colombia there used to be a fair amount of questioning inside the embassy whether the government under Barco was really committed to the anti-narcotic effort. Then Barco got really tough and let us have extradition for a while before a constitutional amendment stopped it. Barco sort of became our hero in a way.

When Gaviria came in the same thing happened. It seems like one of the characteristics of Colombian politics is as a person takes power they usually try to unify the country, reach out and touch everybody. So, Gaviria appeared at first to be making concessions to the narcos. But some of us who had been there long enough, and I certainly was one, remembered we used to say the same thing about Barco and he got really tough, so we shouldn't necessarily assume that because Gaviria was trying to make some concessions to show that the government was being reasonable, we wouldn't later on get more support.

I remember they had worked out this deal where the persons who were accused of narcotic traffic could confess and turn themselves in and get a reduced sentence for doing that. If they cooperated and gave the government information they could get an even more reduced sentence. So, someone who was caught and tried could get up to 30 years, but by turning himself in and cooperating and with good behavior get off with three or four years. That

seemed to us to be excessive. But, the Colombians felt they needed to show that they were not just fighting the Americans' war for them but were acting in a Colombian context. That is why I think sometimes the Colombians get the rap of being very violent, but in a way they are not that violent. A lot of violence goes on, yes, but they kind of look for compromise, concessions to make things work without confrontation. So, we had that going on during the first years of the Gaviria administration.

There was constitutional reform going on which was very mischievous because the narcos were deep into that process. They were influencing the congressmen to get a constitution that was more to their liking. It was very hard to get the Colombians to see that and to accept that. They had a hard time understanding how deep the corruption was, how deep the penetration of the narcotic traffic had become. Early on they tried to kid themselves by believing drugs were an American problem, they were only selling them. They didn't realize that once you get into a drug situation with such a large mafia that they would end up suffering the consequences themselves. And one of them was violence.

Medellin was particularly violent. It was a wonderful place that became one of the most violent places on earth. Business suffered greatly, people took their investments elsewhere. The city became a shell of what it was. And, what they couldn't see was that this was going to happen to the whole country as the mafia got deeper and deeper into it. They would kid themselves about how the influence wasn't so deep and how could commerce be influenced. We would find evidence of all this. Some Colombians would come and tell you confidentially on the side that we were doing the right thing. This was really bad and we were in trouble. But, yet, it was very hard for them to accept that in a public way.

So, we always had this tension with Colombia. They were trying to do the right thing. They had a very good anti-narcotic police that worked very hard with us to try to crush drug trafficking. There were military who were working very hard to try to do the right thing. It was a very mixed message. You would get victories and defeats every day.

I remember during the extraditions, there was this case where the judge called me and said that she was being told by lawyers for this person we were trying to get out of there, that we had his identity wrong and therefore he shouldn't be extradited. She wanted to know if I could do more to prove his identity. I asked like what? Pilot's license, driver's license, etc. I pulled every stop I could and got all this stuff together the same day and called her up a little after 5:00 to tell her I had everything she requested. She said she would come over and look at it. She came over to the embassy and walked into the room and you would never guess she was a judge with that kind of power and backbone, but more like she might have worked at a fruit stand somewhere on the street. A very simple woman, not very well dressed. I talked to her a little bit and realized this was a very simple woman really. She wasn't any big deal. I asked if she would like to meet the ambassador and she was thrilled never having met an ambassador before. We joined the ambassador and talked for a little bit. I asked her how she got here. After all she was coming over here to look at information that may put somebody in jail in the United States for life. Did she have bodyguards? "Oh, I just came in a taxi," she said. I asked if she wasn't afraid sometimes without bodyguards? She said, "You just have to do what you have to do." She was just doing the right thing, being honorable.

There are all kinds of Colombians like that who are brave, love their country, want to do the right thing, and will do it in the face of great danger. You have to wonder how many of us would do what they do in similar circumstance. Yet, Colombia has a bad reputation like they are all narcos. Of course, there is certainly enough corruption there to make it a difficult place to make progress. It is a country that constantly has you going in both directions. You are proud of what you are doing, admire some of the people you work with, yet are constantly being shown that things are not working very well.

Q: What was your impression of the Colombian congress?

HOBBS: It was a useless and corrupt institution basically. The presidency of Colombia is fairly strong and the congress doesn't really have much power. It is fairly corrupt and easy to get one congressman at a time in your pocket and after awhile you get a whole bunch of them in your pocket. It looks as if they have the president now. We didn't spend a lot of time hobnobbing with congressmen.

Q: I think that is interesting that congress is not the place you would go to make your points to get something down.

HOBBS: You go to the head of the national police, the head of the military, the ministers and the presidency.

There would be some congressman who were good contacts and well clued into what was happening. We used to spend a fair amount of time with Botero, who became the minister of defense in the Samper administration. He is the son of the famous sculptor. He seemed to be someone who was on his way up, but then, of course, he got caught in a scandal in the Samper administration and ended up in jail for corruption, narcotic influence. Even someone like that who appeared at the time to be somebody maybe a little bit above that, turned out not to be. So, we didn't work too closely with the congress, we worked with the other institutions.

Q: What was your impression of Ambassador McNamara?

HOBBS: In retrospect he seemed to be the right person at the time. He had a fairly extensive political/military background so he knew very much the military side of things. When Gaviria was elected and we were pretty sure they were committed to the effort, we suddenly got a tremendous amount of military assistance available to us. McNamara knew how to work that system very well and how to get it to Colombia and then apply it to the effort in Colombia. I don't think he was appointed to that job because of his background, but once there and the opportunities were available, he really did a great job of getting assistance for Colombia. I think we had a very good thing going there during the Gaviria years. We provided them a lot of the wherewithal they needed to do the job and they were the soldiers on the ground doing the job.

Q: At some point, I'm not sure it was during this time, there was a highly publicized case in

the United States about drug lords being arrested and being put into luxurious quarters, etc. Did this happen during the time you were there? If so, what role did the embassy play?

HOBBS: That was a difficult one. The Ocholas turned themselves in and then later Escobar was captured. The Colombians started hearing accusations that these narcos were living in rather luxurious surroundings. They built a special place to hold the Ocholas. So we became convinced they were living a pretty good existence under the circumstances. There was evidence that Escobar was leaving the prison at night and going to parties. They pretty much carried on business as usual from the safety of the prison. We put a lot of pressure on the presidency to do something about that. They kept telling us it wasn't true, although looking back on it now they must have known that it was true. I think they just didn't want to take on the narcos in that way. They figured if they got them in jail, maybe they could tighten the noose later. One of them asked me once how quickly did we get our mafia under control. How many years was it they were working mafia business out of prison? They were kind of aware that it took us a long time to really get control. They felt we owed them a little time to get their situation under control. And they probably are right. Why should we expect them to do in one year what took us 20 or 30 years. So, it is a difficult situation.

Q: As DCM you were responsible for the daily management of the embassy. Colombia was a dangerous place and embassy people were targets. What did you find you had to do?

HOBBS: It was difficult in a way because we had a number of agencies in the embassy. When you have an embassy where minor or all dependents are evacuated out, and there is danger pay and hardship pay you attract sort of the Lone Ranger types. You had a lot of cowboys who were risk takers and hard to control somewhat. So, we put bars off limits. We had people leaving their weapons in bars and taxis and strange places. We had a lot of these problems inside the embassy. It was a pretty rough crowd. You get a little smattering of that and it is hard to control.

There was an incident where an officer was accused of hitting a senator's car and running, and doing quite a bit of damage. The officer denied he was ever there, but the guy had a perfect description of him. We constantly changed license plates among our cars so it would be harder to identify who was who. The license plate that was supposed to be on this guy's car was not the license plate that the senator said he saw. But, he saw the plate that the guy really had on his car, so he must have seen the plate and taken it down. We were never able to get the guy to admit that he was there. You are constantly trying to deal with almost juvenile delinquents, it is just incredible. Trying to keep things under control was difficult.

DEA had a large, large contingent. I was told before I went there that the most difficult job as an ambassador was control over the AID operation. However, we didn't have much of an AID operation. The difficult one was DEA. There were so many of them and many had spent a long time with the drug war.

When the head of the DAS, the sort of Colombian FBI, was fired, DEA was very upset by that. They thought he was sort of a hero of the drug war. But, the president had gotten the idea that he really wasn't as committed as he should be. In fact, some of us believe he was

committed to fighting the Medellin group but was really in the pocket of the Cali group. There was some indication of that, but no proof. We sent a cable to Washington about the firing. The political officer who wrote it took it down to DEA to clear it, but they didn't agree with it. DEA wanted to send a different cable which was sort of juvenile and poorly done. I told them that they were entitled to say what they wanted but they should do a better job of it. The cable was not well drafted. I got a call from Phil McQueen, who was deputy assistant secretary in ARA a couple of hours after sending the telegram. He said, "I hear you are squashing DEA reporting? What is this about?" I said, "What do you mean squashing their reporting?" Well, the DEA guys had called their headquarters and their headquarters had called the State Department saying I had stopped them from reporting on this incident. I called up the head of DEA and told him this was not true, I was just trying to tell him that the cable as is was very badly written and would look stupid. I told him I didn't care if he sent it, but put on it that the embassy did not clear it. And, so they did. [Then a] call asking "what sort of garbage was coming out of Bogota. This is the stupidest cable I ever saw". That is what I thought too, that is what I was squashing.

The next day the head of DEA comes in to see me and said, "You know, that wasn't very nice what you did yesterday." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "You let us look like fools and you shouldn't have done that." "Listen," I said, "I tried to stop you and you went around me to Washington with accusations against me so I let you fall over yourself because you deserve it." We had a very blunt conversation. It was an example of how difficult it was sometimes to bring these people into line.

It was the same guy that when he left made a lot of accusations against the Colombians. He was really upset with them. He had been there a long time. I basically figured out that he had two contacts. One was the head of the DAS and one was the head of the national forces and that was basically it. Whereas we in the embassy needed much broader contacts to understand the country, and many of the officers had broader contacts and therefore were able to put things into a better perspective. With limited contacts it is very hard to see things as they really might be.

Q: I think this is always one of the real problems with DEA and CIA. Sometimes they get wedded to their contacts which may be really very few and they have been milking them for a long time so that their point of view is really much more restricted than is apparent. It is the way they operate.

HOBBS: Early on in my career it was made clear to me by an incident that happened in a meeting I had with my consul general over a grant for somebody to go to the States. There was someone I had chosen who supposedly had some communist affiliations. We were questioning the station chief about all that and pressuring him some to come up with some proof. At one point in the meeting he blurted out they had just one contact. Someone said, "One contact, is that all?" "Well, that is all we need," he said. It turned out they had one contact who could deal with that issue. It seemed almost incredible and hard to believe. I always thought there was a vast network out there, when in fact sometimes they are hanging on by a very thin thread.

In the case of the DEA in Bogota, I felt they needed broader contacts. But, they were police and wanted to hang out with police. Fine, but give us who have broader contacts a little credence that we may have a better view of what is happening.

Q: Did you find DEA was getting involved with things they shouldn't get involved in? This seems to be a standard problem. They are basically policemen and hard for them to observe the political niceties.

HOBBS: They often had a more gruff approach to things. There were pistol incidents. One guy killed a person walking across the highway in Bogota. I don't think it was his fault, but the whole attitude was "casualty of the drug war here." They maybe needed to be a little more sensitive sometimes. Their attitude was they could do what they wanted.

My personal belief was that our huge security apparatus was more than we needed. Certainly the ambassador had to be protected, and I suppose the head of DEA, but the narcos really didn't want us. I don't think they would have taken the ambassador out, although the guerillas might. They were shipping enormous quantities of drugs to the States and we were burning crops, smashing labs, and seizing narcotics on their way out of the country and into the country, but the price was not going up or quality down, so it led you to believe there was still enough in it to deal with the market. So, that being the case and with profits being enormous, why would they want to take on the United States by killing the ambassador or some other official American.

There were restaurants where we were known to hang out. There might be ten or twelve staff members having lunch and all speaking English to each other and obviously Americans. I remember once a woman in the donut shop across the street when I went in there once in a loud voice asked me how everything was at the embassy. So, anyone who wanted to take out ten or twelve Americans could throw a hand grenade in a restaurant around noon anywhere around five or six blocks of the embassy and you get several without even thinking. Or they could follow cars, only DEA agents drove armored Ford Broncos, and discover what bars they frequented. The head of the DEA had a BMW, one of the few in the country, so he could be watched. There were a lot of reasons to ask yourself, if we are so threatened why are we living like this? So, I think there was a little of that going on.

There were huge battles over the danger report. I remember once, after I became DCM, the first paragraph of the report was "Whenever we dare to venture onto the streets, we are constantly looking over our shoulder for signs of people following us." I called up the security officer and said, "Come on, this is a blatant exaggeration of what is really going on. We are having a great old time down here." We could go almost anywhere in the northern part of the city. Nobody really had their life all that much restricted. You had to be careful going into the countryside because the guerillas were out there.

Q: So you really had two groups, the guerillas were one...

HOBBS: Yes. They never got too much into the city, although occasionally they would get into the outskirts. But inside the city the narco traffickers probably didn't want to take us out.

I came up with a conclusion and I told this to someone in the Department. There is a system in place for putting in danger pay but there is not a system for taking it back out. And, we need to have a system, if there are a large number of extensions for reups, and you want to stay on for another year. Why would you want to do that if you are going to die? If people are clamoring to get there and you don't have any difficulty filling positions because everybody loves to go there. Bogota, I think, eventually got the reputation of being kind of a sleeper. It was a great place, great climate, great food, nice people, a lot of fun and lots of money. If we really thought we would have to earn that money by a few of us being whacked each year, I think the number of people who wanted to stay longer would have decreased. However, I stayed six years and there were many others who extended their tours. This to me is an indication that things might not be quite as bad as people are saying. There should be a system for dealing with danger pay situations by using certain criteria.

I remember being at a meeting to discuss with Ambassador McNamara the question of whether to bring back minor dependents and there was a lot of pressure from the staffers not to let that happen because they feared it might send a message to Washington that things were not dangerous there and they would lose their danger pay. I used to say to them that we were not here to make decisions on the basis of how it affects our danger pay, we should make decisions based on what is right under the circumstances and if that effects the danger pay, so be it. I felt if we could get the children back we might give a different impression. People going to Little League games, PTA meetings, are not going to bars as much.

Q: I spent 18 months in Saigon during the war and it was very much the same. A different lifestyle.

HOBBS: And the lifestyle that comes with children is probably a little bit less risky, less dangerous than the lifestyle that we would be encouraging by having all bachelors. So, I saw it a way of actually enhancing security by bringing the children back, but people were against that. No one would ever admit the reason openly because you are not supposed to do that, to say it would endanger the danger pay. However, the pressure was incredible and you would get all the feedback. The vans, that took people to and from the embassy, passed all the information back and forth. That was another thing, if you get the danger pay dropped people would have to start paying for the vans. So, there were all kinds of benefits people wished to keep.

Q: What about the cities, Medellin, Cali, Barranquilla? Were we able to do much coverage in those places?

HOBBS: Medellin was a place that was put off limits before I got there and never put back on limits during the time I was there because Escobar and his gang were running that place. I did get their twice myself. McNamara went down there once and occasionally the DEA went there. We had some ways of getting their occasionally but very little normal contact. It was always very highly structured.

Cali was more normal. We could get down there until the end of my time when it was put off limits as well. This was a shame as it is a wonderful city. You could go in there and make

your contacts and do business. We started getting word that the narcos were watching very carefully our movements, they knew when we were there, where we stayed, who we contacted, etc. We got a little nervous about having people go to a place where they were so well observed. Again there was the question of whether they would actually do something. I kind of doubt it. But, having our people in a city controlled by the narcos, we couldn't trust the police for protection, we put that city off limits too.

Barranquilla was never put off limits but it was a city that was full of narcotic traffic, basically the jumping off point, transporting headquarters of the mafia. We kept the consulate open long enough until we wanted to close it for State Department reasons as a concession to DEA because they wanted to have a group of agents working out of that consulate. I never understood why they had to have a consulate as a cover because it was a very thin cover. There were only a couple consular people there and lots of DEA agents and again the way they moved about and the atmosphere in which they worked it was pretty obvious to everybody who they were. So, I don't think the cover was very good anyway.

When I was still the consul general there we had an inspection and Fred Chapin, head of the inspection team, said he had closed Baranquilla once when he was in ARA and he was kind of surprised to see it was opened again. His job was to close it again. At that time I was still a big believer in DEA's story that they needed that place, and fussed with Fred about it. I went up to Washington and fussed some more. We got DEA to pay for half the cost of running the post. I went to Fred and he said they were only trying to save money. So, I thought we had pulled off a good deal to get DEA to pay half the cost of the consulate's operation. But, I found out later when I was DCM they had never paid. Then I changed my mind and decided to close the place. It was only being left open for DEA's use and if they wouldn't pay half the costs, let's close it. It took all the time I was there and about three more years. It only closed last year, I think. DEA was of the opinion that the post was necessary for cover, but that State should pay for it. I thought that was pretty brazen. Finally we did get it closed.

Q: While you were there did Morris Busby come in?

HOBBS: Yes, he did.

Q: How did he operate?

HOBBS: He comes through with a military background as an officer. He was probably chosen for that job as much as anything because of his background. He enjoyed very much, I think, the whole apparatus. The military assistance, the work with the military. He worked very well with the president and the defense minister and police. It was clear he was very much into the drug war. I think he went there with that clearly being his number one priority and spent a lot of time working on it.

He did a good job of keeping the flow of assistance to Colombia and seeing it was applied in a productive way. He was very good at working the crowd inside the embassy. He would get the group together and wear us down. If he wanted something or wanted to get somewhere he would get everybody together and wear them until they all agreed. He never crushed people's

opportunities to express themselves, but he was very persistent and forceful and took people along pretty much. I think he was a good appointment.

HOBBS: I came back to Washington in July, 1992, to become deputy assistant secretary [for Consular Affairs] in Overseas Citizenship Services, and then a year later principal deputy assistant secretary.

**JANEY DEA COLE
Andean Desk Officer, USIS
Washington, DC (1987-1989)**

Ms Cole was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York and was educated at Hartwick College, the University of Hawaii and Virginia Polytechnic Institute. After working in New York City several years, she joined the United States Information Agency in 1980. During her career, Ms. Cole served in Dacca, Caracas, Katmandu, Calcutta, and in Islamabad, where she was District Public Affairs Officer. In Washington, she served in the East bureau of USIA and was a Congressional Fellow on Capitol Hill. Ms Cole was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2004.

Q: So, 1987 you're off, you came back to the States.

COLE: I came back to the U.S. for a posting as a desk officer thanks to Marilyn McAfee's assistance. She was the PAO in Chile and she wanted somebody on the Andean desk, which then included Chile, who would understand her needs. Two years of it was on the Andean desk in the office of what was American Republics (AR). For one year I had a fellowship to work on the Hill.

Q: Okay, well let's talk about when you were in AR doing Andean affairs. What did that include?

COLE: Chile, Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, Colombia and Venezuela at the time.

Q: Well, were there any particular issues dealing with your Andean parish?

COLE: Drugs are always an issue and it's always a code word for Colombia. Drugs overwhelmed everything else in our relationship with Colombia and that was very bad because, obviously, not everybody in Colombia is a drug dealer. And there were a lot of people who wanted to talk to us about something else besides drugs. That pitted the State Department against DEA (Drug Enforcement Administration). And we were fortunate finally in getting a good ambassador down there (I can't remember his name) who understood that if you wanted to address drug issues you had to talk to people about other things, keep the channels of communication open.

Also, the other issue was Roundup, a type of defoliant chemical related to Agent Orange. DEA

wanted very much to use it, you know, to drop it over the fields of coca plants and destroy them. I thought that for a number of reasons this was a very bad idea (eventually, the company that made Roundup refused to sell it to the government). When I came back to my last assignment after many years away from Western Hemisphere affairs and after years in South Asia, we were spraying Roundup and exactly the issues that we thought were going to arise were arising.

Q: Were you hit hard by our policy in Central America? El Salvador, Nicaragua and Honduras were all bubbling over at the time with the contras and the Sandinistas and the death squads.

COLE: Yes. All those nice leftists in the Andean republics were on the side of the rebellious leftist forces. But there were also significant groups of people, influential people in the Andean countries I was working with who were not on their side who didn't think they were going to win, who didn't think they were right, and who regretted the damage that they were doing. At that point we had a lot of good friends in Venezuela who were perfectly happy to provide asylum for people from Central America but who basically were very critical of leftist movements. And the Colombians, being plagued by some very nasty leftists, were not always sympathetic to the various leftist movements in Central America, nor were the Peruvians, who had one of the nastier ones.

Q: Shining Path.

COLE: Yes, Sendero Luminoso was pretty mean and a lot of people who were themselves leftist were very disconcerted by Sendero and also, they were busy with their own concerns and their own political problems. So I was surprised. It was there, it was an issue we had to address. We were denounced; we saw the headlines; but it was not as virulent as I might have expected it to be.

J. PHILLIP MCLEAN
Deputy Chief of Mission
1987-1990

Mr. McLean was born and raised in Seattle, Washington and was educated at Seattle University and the University of Indiana. He entered the Foreign Service in 1962. A Latin American specialist, his service in the State Department in Washington and abroad, primarily concerned Latin American Affairs. His foreign posts were Brasilia, Edinburgh, Panama City, La Paz, Milan and Bogota, where he was Deputy Chief of Mission. In Washington Mr. McLean held positions dealing with Latin American Affairs, including that of Deputy Assistant Secretary for South America. Mr. McLean was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1999.

Q: Well, then in 1987 you moved to...?

McLEAN: In 1987 I become the DCM in Colombia.

Q: Did you go there with some trepidation because of the danger and the situation?

McLEAN: No, I was really excited about it. In fact, let me mention one thing that I did that caused me to receive some favorable attention, and that was early on when I was still Deputy Director of the Office of Andean Affairs and Lou Tambs was having his problems and the threats were coming on very hard, we knew that there was going to be some discussion of this thing, and on a Sunday the Executive Director of the Bureau said something I was always grateful to him for, he said, "You know, Phil, nobody has got to the assistant secretary a note that would allow him to answer these questions at the staff meeting on Monday morning, and shouldn't you get something for you?" So on a Sunday I went into the Department, Sunday evening, and wrote a four-page memo that really laid out everything with regard to what were the threats and what were our options and then a recommendation of what we should do. And I turned the machine off with the plan that I would come in on Monday morning, print it out, and hand it to him before he went to the meeting. I was just learning to type and just learning to run computers, and I turned the machine off in the wrong way and wiped out the message. So I started again at twelve o'clock that night. This time I wrote a two-page memo. Well, of course, a two-page memo is far better than a four-page memo, and since I had written it before, it was very compact, and it became the basis for the planning that we did on security for Colombia. The Assistant Secretary was wildly happy, because he could present it, and he gave a copy of it directly to the Secretary and sat down with the Secretary and told him what he was going to do. For all my implied criticism of George Shultz, he certainly was very concerned about security and wanted nobody to die in this process. So when I went to Colombia, I felt very prepared. I had just separated from my spouse, and so I was very excited to go off on a new challenge and get myself totally involved in something that was different, and security was a constant of theme of my activities from then on.

Q: You were in Bogota from 1987 to...?

McLEAN: From 1987 to 1990.

Q: Why don't we talk about the security problem first? How did you live, and how did it work out?

McLEAN: As I say, the security problem had already been building up in previous years. By the time I got there, the DCM himself was already much more highly protected than most ambassadors were. It's something that bothered me as a newly single person a little bit, but after a while I got used to it, and it was part of our life. I had bodyguards with me at all times. My apartment had bodyguards. We trained continuously so I would make sure I knew how to use the guns that I had at the apartment, and we trained also on the road and how we would handle ourselves. I had an armored car. When I first got there, my armored car was painted yellow, and I said, "That's very strange. Why is it painted yellow? That would draw a lot of attention." They said, "Oh, we repainted it. It used to be painted red." I had it painted sort of cream color. We were very interested in everyone in the embassy's security and very sensitive to the fact that it wasn't good for the ambassador and myself to be seen protecting ourselves but everyone else was...

Q: Who was the ambassador?

McLEAN: When I got there, it was Tony Gillespie, Charles A. Gillespie, who himself was a very security-conscious individual.

Q: His background was a security officer.

McLEAN: Early on. But Tony was the best manager I ever worked for. He very much delegated and told you what he wanted done and then stood back and let you do the job. I had had experience in security in Milan. I had drummed into myself the ideas of varying your routes and times and all that. But a big problem was making sure that the embassy, which was beginning to grow because we were getting more people coming in for this anti-narcotics program, how to get them to take care of themselves, so we involved it in training, we involved it in having regular security meetings. I adapted a security style. I discovered early on that if you said to people, "What should we do?" you got just a cacophony of people discussing their own inner fears and various bright ideas, so I adopted a system that said, "Let's spend the first half of this meeting discussing what is the threat. What are we being threatened by?" And each of these meetings usually was because we had some new threat information. And then we would discuss it until everyone got comfortable that they understood what we were being threatened with. Then I took the second half of the meeting to discuss how do you design a response to those particular threats. It always wasn't easy, because they always wanted then to jump off onto some other threat. But how do you define that particular threat? And that worked pretty well. It worked both in terms of being able to have out of each of those meetings a telegram that showed Washington that we were looking hard at each and every threat and all the possibilities that were coming up, but it also showed programmatically what we were doing, which was changing our profile, getting DEA not always to go to the same bar every night. We adopted a system where my people were driven to and from work, and their pick-ups in the mornings were randomly chosen. We had a computer program that would generate on a random basis the schedule for each person so that they weren't picked up at the same time every day, and design the routes for the vans to pick people up. At various times we had additional guards that we put on to our people. We built up the diplomatic security unit. I think it had 12 people at the maximum. I think most of the things were basically trying to drum into people to be aware of it without trying to scare them. We limited travel. At that time nobody could go to Medellin. There were some few, very minor exceptions. There was at least a minor exception or two that was unauthorized by certain agencies, but by and large we kept to it. I've never been to Medellin, as much as I know about Colombia. We even had a live fire exercise one time. We were out playing tennis and suddenly guns went off. I thought that was a bit extreme. We all hit the grounds and we did an exit, just to make sure we knew what we were doing. One of the more interesting and effective things I think we did was the Department of State would send down teams that would do fantasize exercises and crisis exercises that I think were very useful in terms of getting us to work together. Eventually we did counter-surveillance teams because we were getting so many..., well, we actually were being attacked, we had two rocket attacks. One was not effective at all; it was a made-up piece, broke some windows. But one was an anti-tank rocket that luckily went off after hours and hit a piece of concrete up on the top side of the building. We dismissed it at the time, but the next morning when people went into that area of the upstairs, they discovered that there

was a small hole but it had blasted, like anti-tank weapons do, through the inside and would have killed people. So we did have threats, and we did have specific threats. We had a counter-surveillance team we brought in one time. I was a little reluctant to have that, but, well, okay, you've got to do everything. There was a tendency, if security people told you you had to do things, there was a tendency to say, "Okay, we've got to do that." It's hard to pull them back a little bit. But I will say in that particular case, after they had been there for several days, they brought the camera to me, and rewound the camera so you could look in and see what the camera had seen, and they showed me how the ambassador had been surveilled, and you could see people at certain places looking and taking notes and the rest of it. And then they said, "Look here. Here's your car. See what happens. Your car comes in. See this guy over here. He walks up, and the next day when you come by and see that same person walks up," and I said, "Yes, yes." I remember I put down the camera and I began to talk, and yet no sound came out. My voice is very light anyway, but I had no liquid in my throat anymore. But you recognize the fact that these things you're always thinking of, in fact they're very real, something was taking place. So it was a constant concern. The ambassador and I both did leave the country a fair amount. We took full advantage of our leave. As a consequence I was left chargé a lot or I was out of the country a fair amount, but in fact I think that was good for relaxing tensions, because at the time things were going on. The narcotics traffickers had decided to launch a reign of terror to scare the government and to get them to stop the policies of extradition. So there were periods when you would wake up in the night and hear bam-bam-bam-bam as the bombs went off in various parts of the city. I can remember twice hearing very major explosions and going to the curtains--I had a penthouse apartment that looked over the city--and seeing these big mushroom clouds rise up. One of them was the newspaper, a major newspaper, *El Espectador*; and another was one that was on the route, the principal route you used on the way to the embassy just below my apartment. I later met a lady whose father was blown apart in that bombing. And there was a third one in which the secret police's, Colombia's FBI's, headquarters had blown apart leaving a hole greater than the size of this room in the pavement, breaking the back of the building. These things always happened when I was chargé. So the next day I went over to see the chief of police who was determined that he was going to stay in the building. So he stayed in this building, locked in. It was like walking into a building under construction. The plaster and tiles from the halls and stairways had just been torn off. We walked up, and way in the back of the building we found this guy seated and determined to hold on and to give us a sign that he wasn't going to be threatened by this. The explosion blew up and blew away and destroyed other buildings nearby including a piece of the debris landed and destroyed a warehouse where we were at that time working on armoring vehicles for the judges. It was one of the programs that we were doing, and we were secretly putting this armory together, but it was one of the ironies that this debris landed on the very building and we had to start all over again.

Q: How did this security affect your operations? You're not there just to protect yourself but obviously to exude American policy and do what embassies do.

McLEAN: I think we did pretty well. Clearly we didn't get on the ground as much as we would have in a place like Medellin, and I think that threw off a little bit our interpretation of events, but we traveled pretty widely through the country. You know, you only had volunteers there. It was a constant question I was always being asked by the press--I did a lot of press interviews--"Aren't you putting people in danger?" In fact, I remember one night CBS stood in front of the

embassy and said, "The people in this building are in danger," and that night my daughter calls me from Seattle saying, "Daddy, are you all right?" But, no, we tried to function pretty normally, and I think we did. We had ways to conduct ourselves. We tried to keep the numbers low. At one point, I think mistakenly, we had a drawdown of spouses and some others, but generally I think we tried to show that we could do the job but we were prepared to take people out, prepared to shut the embassy down if that was what it came to. As I say, there was always this tension on the diplomatic security side of things to always want to take a further step. I would often have to say, "Well, okay, are you ready to take these consequences? If you are not, then you have to put it against what are the dangers, because we're not going to lose anybody in this operation," and in fact I'm proud to say that in the whole time that I was involved in it from Andean Affairs to the time that I left being Deputy Assistant Secretary, to have anything to do Colombia, there were no Americans killed or kidnapped even though the threats were continuous.

Q: I find it remarkable that you couldn't pick up a vice consul or somebody fairly low down in the embassy, because they would go out places and all that and, I guess, almost target of opportunity rather than a...

McLEAN: I suspect they could, and yet that isn't what they were aiming at. They were aiming at those of us who were somewhat more visible. That was the threat information we had at the time. But I never denied that it could happen. It was just that we tried to take all measures that would keep it from happening. You had some people in the embassy who chose to be there for the wrong reasons. We had danger pay, so they stayed basically in their apartments and didn't do anything. But the majority of them, vice consuls particularly, we had just enormously good bunch of people, very eager and eager to do the job but also to protect themselves. I'd let them go to all sorts of parts of the country. There was a vice consul in Barranquilla. When she did get picked up on, we were threatened and we pulled her out. But by and large, people went out and tried to do their jobs. There was a lot of bravery but not stupidity, and I think the people understood that you this was serious, and we kept reminding people it was serious, and we kept reminding people to think about what they were doing. But it didn't happen, not saying that... It was dangerous. I watched the technology of terror increase during the time I was there from bombs that would go off as people passed to finally we had these types of ANFO, ammonium nitrate fuel oil combinations, the type of thing that went off in Oklahoma City. We had two of those that went off and one that didn't go off but was identified and defused before it happened. I guess the fuse didn't work, the dynamite that was supposed to set it off. That one, which was a truck bomb parked inside of the neighborhood, would have hurt some of our people if it had gone off, so you can't say it couldn't have happened, but you try to lower the possibility as much as possible.

Q: What were they trying to do?

McLEAN: The narcos at that time were trying to weaken the government and remove the government's willingness to act. In some ways they succeeded. They certainly scared the pants off a lot of people and caused major difficulty for us to get our job done. I can remember one time the cabinet appearing on television when the president reinstituted extradition, and I wish I had a tape of that, because they were scared to death. It was written all over their faces that they were frightened to death that this was occurring, because people were dying, and people were

dying. By the time I left, eleven people that I knew were dead. Within a few years the number I could have counted had gone up to 14 or 15, and these were people who were assassinated in one way or another and didn't die of natural causes or even accidents; they were people who were subject to somebody trying to assassinate them, including several presidential candidates. One was the leader of the UP (Patriotic Union), the civilian communist party. I had him in my apartment, and we were supposed to be talking about what the UP wanted and we did talk about that to some degree, but I was mostly talking to him about his security. By that time I had become somewhat of a security nut, and I was telling him how he was mishandling the security and how he had to do it better--and my God, if he wasn't assassinated two weeks later. It was terrible. In fact, the next case was then the most dramatic. It was the leading presidential candidate by the name of Galan. It had invited him to my apartment. I remember it was July 3rd, and I invited the ambassador and his wife, and I invited the lady who is now my wife and one of his aides and he and his wife, Gloria, to my apartment, and we discussed security. He told us how he was being threatened. We offered assistance to him. So he knew he was being threatened, and we knew some of that, but then he gave us a better, clearer idea of it. I, foolishly in retrospect, said to him, "You know, you really should make narcotics much more of an issue, because that's the way to face these guys down." President Barco's popularity had always gone up when he stood tough. He told me quite frankly, "Phil, I can't do that. I cannot do that. It's just too dangerous." What occurred was about six weeks later. In fact, in the interim he called me on a visa problem. It was very typical, and he talked to me about this offer of protection or help on this protective unit he called me about, helping one of his relatives get a visa. But he went out on the campaign trail, and he was assassinated. It was a deeply emotional thing for all of us, for Colombia, the trauma. In effect that is when President Barco reinstated extradition and began a program that showed that we wanted to move ahead. It was a time when I worked out so that the helicopters came in and the C5, and Bush at that point declared an anti-narcotics program in a very dramatic way. But these were sad events. I had another instance: the narcos blew a plane right out of the sky, blew a 727. That's very dramatic. After the investigation of looking at this metal, a type of metal I recognized, because I don't know if I mentioned it at the beginning, but for a brief time after I dropped out of college, I was a Boeing mechanic, and I recognized the skin and how it's put together and the rest of it. You could see where the bomb had blasted through. They were probably again trying to assassinate the major presidential candidate. We had the information. I was due to be on that plane but in fact didn't do it. I knew one of the people that I mentioned was assassinated was on that plane. It was very dramatic. But these guys, as I say, developed their technology. They probably got it through--here again you have the guerilla connection, and the guerrillas that we knew were getting training. They were bringing back this training, and then they were defecting over to the narcos, going to work for the narcos, and they designed these remote detonation things. You hear the most incredible stories of close calls, and they we'd hear from time to time cases of people falling down and dying.

Q: When you left there in 1990, what was your impression of whither Colombia?

McLEAN: Well, I probably thought things were going pretty well. They had just elected a new president, a young man whom I knew, and I thought they were beginning to get their act together at that point. We had a major shift in terms of instituting new programs. Colombian opinion was beginning to come a little ways towards us in the sense that Colombians were no longer saying it was just the United States' problem and beginning to see that there was some problem on their

own. They were beginning to see the violence at times had nothing to do with what we were doing; it was simply that the narcos are violent people. There were examples of them going into things like the used tire business, but as soon as they went in with their own investment and their open money, violence began to increase. It was just an interesting factor. So Colombians were beginning to turn, and I thought we had the embassy together in a pretty good programmatic way, and I was pretty happy about it. It turned out to be obviously over-optimistic, which is not unusual in those circumstances. The narcos, particularly Pablo Escobar, in my time, before I got there, later had been captured and brought to the United States and tried and convicted. During my time another one of the major and one of the most violent people was brought down with not our direct assistance but our indirect assistance. Then the one outstanding was Pablo Escobar, but then he began a campaign of kidnapping in the period just after I left Colombia, which was recorded by Gabriel Garcia Marquez in his book News of a Kidnapping, and he did a series of them, and he designed it in such a way as to really get to the Colombian governing political class, which made it very difficult for them to keep their game going, so that in the constitutional convention which was designed to reform government, to improve their government, then nine months later the political class caved and agreed no extradition, which left them holding the bag with "What do you do with these guys if you can't send them out of the country and you can't credibly keep them and try them in your own country?" In fact, one of the things I haven't mentioned up to now that I should mention, which I was involved in as early as the time I was in Andean affairs, was a focus on the justice system. I thought if we're going to do anything in this area, we have to do something in the justice area.

Q: I'd like to stop at this point, because I've got to move on. So we've talked on Colombia. We're going to finish it off by talking in some depth about what our policy was with the Colombian justice system, and then we'll move on to your next assignment.

It's the 26th of February 1999. Phil, you sort of got disorganized, so do you want to start putting it together?

McLEAN: Let me start by just saying that justice and how justice systems work was really at the heart of what we were trying to do in these countries. Maybe it wasn't the heart; if it was a heart, it was a weak heart, one with a lot of disease in it. In effect, narcotics put enormous amounts of pressure on legal systems in Latin America, which weren't really equipped to handle it. The system of civil law, which requires finding an honest man, a judge, to go out and investigate and come to some good conclusion, doesn't work well in a system where you have corruption and intimidation, and it gets harder to find that honest man who can do it by himself, so a theme that runs through all of this was the failing justice systems and their inability to deal with these questions and then the U.S. role in trying to find a way to deal with these countries when their justice systems couldn't handle it. I might begin by something that occurred when I was still Director of Andean Affairs. On one of my visits to Colombia, Ambassador Gillespie had taken me in to see the Justice Minister, and this was in the period after the murder of his predecessor, and he was in a closed room, a drawn tightly office, and he was clearly a man who felt very threatened, and he felt threatened not just by the forces outside but the fact that he did not feel he could find the truth inside his own government, and he didn't feel he had the instruments to deal with these things. Yet, despite that he was a person who was speaking out on the narcotics traffickers. Eventually the pressures got to him, and they sent him off to Hungary as ambassador

to get him out of the country. Well, in Hungary the narcotics caught up with him, and here it was in the days when you had the so-called iron curtain and the narcos sent an assassin to kill him. They came very close to doing so. He came out of his house one morning on a snowy day and caught lots of bullets in his body, and that was a big shock on everyone's part back in 1986. I remember my involvement in it was the fact that we tried to be helpful. We felt that this was an incredible act by the narcos, and I managed to get the U.S. military to send a plane into Hungary. I'm told it was the first U.S. military plane that had gone into a Hungarian airport, a hospital plane, and picked him up and took him out. The other humorous side of that is that about six months later I got a bill personally--it was addressed to me personally--for that particular operation. I must say it made me a little uncomfortable, and I guess somebody else figured out how to pay for that thing, because I didn't do it. But I think it was a point of support by us. When I went to Colombia as DCM then, right away I was involved in these issues very deeply. It was both a justice question and a security question, because although we had seen the extent that these folks would go to to threaten the institutions of the government, in one of the first meetings that I remember, Senator Lawton Chiles came through. I took him to see the Supreme Court, and the acting head of the Supreme Court at that point had us meet in their temporary chambers, temporary because just the year before a group of guerrillas, who I am convinced were working for the narcos, went into the Palace of Justice and held the whole supreme court in hostage. In the counter-attack which we authorized that night--I authorized from Washington, in fact the year before, getting U.S. explosives in to help with these things--this particular confrontation ended up with the death of a large number of the members of the Supreme Court. Here it was a year later I'm meeting in the Supreme Court and Senator Chiles, and we meet in a room that has on its walls large portraits of all of the justices who had died dressed with black mourning around it, which as the senator and I came out we commented from the content of the conversation but also, more importantly, the place and the way that it was set up indicated these people were deeply threatened and were not about to do anything to confront the narcos. So that was very much the atmosphere in which we were involved. We then tried, and we were always trying, to find ways to be helpful, but the justice systems are very resistant to outside play. I had even found that back in my days in Scotland, when I discovered that the most radical Scottish nationalists were lawyers because of their legal system being different than England's, and this was true there. When we tried to extend a helping hand to the justice system, they basically turned us down, either because of the natural phenomenon that I speak of but also because some of them clearly were being affected by the narcos directly. Our first effort at offering them a program of assistance to improve their justice program was turned down by their legal institutions. We found then the AID director or the one AID person that we had in the embassy had developed a relationship with a private foundation, and we used the relationship with that foundation to channel our money in the beginnings of the program. It turned out to be a very good program, because it didn't have quite the onus of being government to government and allowed this foundation to bring in people from the government but also from the society as a whole and to work in a very nonpolitical way in trying to strengthen the justice system. On my side, my personal contribution, because of my experience in Italy, I had come to admire the Italian judges despite the clear problems of the Italian justice system. I had seen them struggle to find ways of reforming it.

Q: They are the spearpoint in Italy of most reforms, and the investigating judges really are effective.

McLEAN: And they were doing that at that time on the two fronts, anti-terrorism and anti-criminality, anti-Mafia. They had begun to design things such as what we call plea bargaining, which is something that was very suspicious for them. They found it very difficult to deal with that, the Italians did. The *lay depenedente* was a very controversial thing, and yet it became very effective. During the Dozier kidnapping I was being kept informed as those negotiations about the terms that these people would serve for their crimes led to more information. I wanted very much to see the Latin Americas adopt these types of things, particularly the Andean countries. I went to Italy when I was still Director of Andean Affairs in 1986 on my way back from a conference in Vienna and tried to get the Italians interested in playing a role in Latin America. It had some effect, where they began to come up to the table and be much more involved. Then I did this again when I was in Colombia. In 1988 I went over, specifically at Ambassador Gillespie's request because I had been talking about this, and it was a particular time of crisis, which I'll talk about in a minute, but I went over and again had meetings, and they turned out to be extraordinarily useful meetings. It was during the time of the twice yearly meetings between the U.S. Attorney General and the Italians, so I was there when the U.S. Attorney General, Ed Meese, was there, and I got him together with the Colombia Minister of Justice, Enrique Low Murta. I had a long session with him, and then through Ambassador Rabb's assistance I also got Murta together with parts of the Italian government. We went to Fanfani's office, couldn't meet Fanfani, but we did meet his number two, in effect his parliamentary minister, and we had a long session with Scalfaro. Scalfaro is now the President of Italy but at that time was just coming off a long period when he'd been Minister of Interior of Italy, and we had a long session with him. Out of these meetings, not as much as I would have liked, but there did begin to be some efforts by the Italian government to have more contact with the Latin Americans. My next ambassador, Ambassador Ted McNamara, took the lead in trying to get some seminars going in Italy with the Europeans and the Colombians. All of this was by way of trying to find a civil law country that was involved in reforming its system to have contacts with the Andeans in general and the Colombians specifically.

Q: As we're doing this as Americans, we tend to be somewhat arrogant about saying we've got this wonderful system and why can't everybody be like us. But I've been reading accounts of the civil rights thing, and there was a complete breakdown--in fact, it had been going for maybe 50 or 60 years or more in the South--as far as being able to get real justice to blacks in the South. There were some horrendous things that were happening during the '60s, and I was wondering whether this ever once in a while was thrown in our faces.

McLEAN: Oh yes, all the time. As I say, that was one of the reasons for my interest in using the Italians something as a surrogate for our efforts at reform in this regard. I was trying to show that the Italians were doing specific things like plea bargaining and protection of witnesses and a number of other things. Particularly also one of the things the Italians, Judge Borsellino, who became one of my contacts on this, showed me or gave me a lead into how the Italians were able to hide the judge who was making the decision on cases, and that helped relieve the pressure on individual judges, because the Mafia or whoever it was couldn't just simply kill or threaten the family of one judge, they would have to do a large number because in the room the defendant couldn't tell exactly which one of the judges was the one who was going to be making the decision. And that was done in open court and done in a very democratic manner. Of course, the

trick of all this is that as a foreigner you're never sure that you know enough. You think you have an insight, but you can't get into the other person's side completely, and when you try to push for reforms, you discover that maybe they don't come out quite like you wanted them to. In the specific case of hiding the deciding judge in cases, unfortunately this occurred--I say thinking of my own reputation--after I left Colombia, but I discovered a couple years later that as we entered into direct contact with the Colombians and were pushing them directly, they began to in fact almost create a star chamber system not like the Italians at all but one in which the judges were behind a wall and talking through a dark glass with their voices disguised, which turned out to be very threatening and I found very objectionable. Later as a deputy assistant secretary I began to object on human rights terms to something that I myself had been the one that had really gotten it started. And other things were even more important. One of the ministers that I dealt with, Enrique Lo Murta--I will get into a little bit how he always ends up on the wrong side of the issue, not being brave at one point and then being too brave in speaking out--well, the end of the story is he gets killed. I must say my personal sense of dread and regret for ever trying to encourage him to be brave, because he was a very kind and good person though somewhat foolish, I believe, are moral things that you have to deal with and recognize that when you're dealing with other countries, you're dealing with different institutions and you're dealing with different situations that you as a foreigner can't really quite fully appreciate.

Q: Working on the legal system, was Colombia in a way, when you were looking at the area there, a unique situation as far as justice and the narcos, or were they having their effect in Bolivia and elsewhere?

McLEAN: I think in all of these countries there is this problem. In the Colombian case it was worse because the Colombians strangely are a very legalistic country, somewhat different than these other countries. It's almost an exaggerated legalism, and yet ironically the legal institutions were quite weak. But the work that we did on justice reforms and some of the things I got started in the Andean affairs office, we in fact were also applying to Bolivia and Peru specifically.

There is still a major problem in all of these countries. In Peru, for instance, it's really not clear that the judges are independent from the government. Their sensitivity to human rights issues is still very weak, so in all of these countries it's very hard for the judges to take on major parts of the political institutions, and they generally don't do so. Colombia is doing a number of things but in ways that are confusing. They have basically three supreme courts. They have in fact three or four major parts of the government that do prosecutions. The system is always falling over itself one way or the other, but they have done something. They have increased the salaries of judges, they've increased their training, and they are giving them some protection, which was new. In this period just after I got to Colombia, the judges were being killed on a regular basis if they stood up. These are judges, and when we talk about judges, we think of dignified men in robes, if not in a wig, but in fact in the Colombian case it's a fairly low level of civil service, and they would be waiting for the bus and would be assassinated. Our Congress, congressional staffers, came through one time and were horrified by this, and so the next thing we know, we have a million dollars to spend for protecting judges. Then thereafter every time a judge was killed, we would get a Congressional inquiry, "Why haven't you spent that million dollars? Aren't you responsible for the death of these judges?" So we scrambled like crazy trying to do something, but again, just throwing a million dollars at the problem doesn't necessarily solve it.

As I think I mentioned earlier in part of the presentation I talked about, we actually began to armor cars. We used a little bit of money to bring in some armored cars from the outside for the most endangered judges, but one of my ideas was to try to build up the capability inside the country to armor cars. There was nobody who did that at that time. It's now a big business in Colombia, but at that time it wasn't anything that was done locally. We tried to give training in security procedures and trained guards. But again, all of these things didn't work automatically. I know that at one point the guards that we had given to one judge, I discovered they were being used as personal servants to them, so those are the types of things, that just because you have a program, just because you spend money doesn't mean you have immediate impact, but over the longer term, I would say, it is beginning to happen, is beginning to have some effect. On recent trips that I've made to Colombia, I've actually seen instances where I thought there was good protection being given to endangered people that had never been done before. Again, this was with money that they themselves are now putting forward. We in effect did some seed money, and they in fact have taken up the idea and become more sophisticated about it, even in the communications for protection and creating a part of the police that would be permanently in charge of looking after these people. But the problem is just that, that you have a very weak system of deciding who's guilty, and you have a very weak investigating system. I know one time we had an American, he'd landed at the airport and disappeared. One of the most shocking things to me was that our own diplomatic security people, with a little bit of police training, actually went out and solved the case, whereas the local police couldn't do it. They found the body of the man and were able to reconstruct what happened and identify who the killers were. Here was the American embassy doing a murder investigation because the police didn't have that type of capability to do it. Those are really shocking types of things, but it wasn't unusual because when you looked at their offices, they were crowded, they didn't have a typewriter even for each person, the judges went out to investigate murders on the bus. They took a bus to go out and do these things. It was really a shocking type of activity. As I was leaving, we were beginning to get more money from the U.S. Congress for these types of things, and we moved away from this foundation, channeling money through the foundation, and began to do it more directly. I oversaw this from Washington but I think with a little trepidation. I wasn't sure that in fact our first way wasn't the better way, because once the United States got involved in it, we tended to want to do it our way and, as you say, we tended to want to talk. Thoughts about legal systems is something almost deeply embedded in people's sense. We in the United States watch Perry Mason and think that's the way it should be, whereas, as I say, they had a fundamentally different approach to it. I know that in some of the discussions that we had early on when I first got there about extradition, I would sit there with groups. On their side and our side people had some international experience, yet they were lawyers and when they talked, they had a very hard time with one another. As a non-lawyer I would watch them just talk past one another. They wouldn't have common grounds to communicate, and it was a very worrisome thing. But we kept on it. After Lo Murta left and was assassinated, I kept going. I had a subsequent anti-narcotics meeting. Again when I was still DCM in Bogota, I went to Madrid. Frankly I had gone to Madrid on vacation but got dragged into an anti-narcotics convention. I was trying to get the European, the Spaniards, the Italians, the French and the Germans to do something and help. We got big promises that were little delivered on at that point. But I arranged a side meeting with the new minister of justice, with my contact, and with a very famous Sicilian prosecutor, who just months later was then assassinated in Sicily, showing they were giving a lesson to the

Colombians that here these people I was trying to force on them as models in fact did have their problems of the very same nature.

Q: Is there anything else we should discuss? We're really looking at the Colombian period, aren't we?

McLEAN: That's right. I think a key point here would be extradition, and that's what really set the key, and it's related to the justice thing. The narcotics traffickers, narcotics cartels, were most afraid of being extradited to the United States, because they perceived, and I think they perceived correctly, that there was sure justice in the United States. If you're charged, you're likely going to be convicted, and if you're convicted, you're going to spend a long time in prison. Therefore, they in effect had declared war to try to keep their government from extraditing them to the United States. Early on at my arrival in Colombia, Enrique Low had been appointed as the Minister of Justice. He was known as a friend of the United States, and so the president asked him, gave him a charge, to go to the United States embassy and work out how we would do extradition, and he came with an open mind and we began to talk in some concrete terms. But unfortunately just after that, or maybe fortunately just after that, the police in Cali, Colombia, stopped one of the major traffickers, Jorge Luis Ochoa, for a traffic violation and then took him in and held him. The police that were involved were contacts of DEA, and they informed the embassy that they were going to have to be releasing this man very shortly, and thus somebody at a high level would order his retention by the police. So Ambassador Gillespie called President Barco, and this created a great crisis in the Colombia government, but in the end Barco agreed to hold him and then to decide whether they were going to extradite him or not. That then began about two months of confrontation between the United States and Colombia over whether this guy was going to be extradited or not. Low, who had started to be on our side--in fact, I remember it was at a Thanksgiving day meeting with him in his office where the windows of the Minister of Justice were now open, which indicated to me that he wasn't really taking security very seriously, and he had with him a young lawyer whose husband we knew represented narcos--turned around and began to put up reasons why this extradition could not take place. Another month went by, and I was then chargé d'affairs in the period just after Christmas. I finally--the frustration in Washington was mounting--called Low up and asked him to come see me, come visit me at my house, my apartment, and we had a long conversation, two hours. He had arrived late because there was a riot in prison nearby. Well, we discovered later--he called me meekly later that night to say while he was at my apartment, while the rioting was going on in one prison, Jorge Luis Ochoa had walked out of the other prison and been let go. That created the major confrontation in our relations with Colombia for many years. I very quickly received some of the most intolerable, inflammatory instructions that any chargé or ambassador would ever want to receive, that basically I was told to go in and tell the president of the country off. Well, I was still new at being chargé and a little timid about this, but I also felt that I had to deliver my instruction. The usual way to do it is, of course, to type up what you received and hand it over as an *aide memoire*, but this time I decided not quite to do that. I called in his chief aide, a man whom I had breakfast with every week or so, and I showed him my instruction. He read English very well, and he knew how bad it was. And then I went to see the president, and through that I said, "I must see the president right away." When I went there, my friend was not there but instead the Foreign Minister was there and the president, and the president, of course, had been briefed that I had some very difficult instruction. But I very briefly but I believe accurately laid

down the tenor of the instructions I had and what I was saying, which was this was totally unacceptable. The President then got red in the face and began screaming at me. I remember his finger was close to my nose, so I had to cross my eyes. He was shaking the finger, just furious that this could happen. As he was talking, I was speaking in my voice which was a little low, and I was speaking underneath his voice and saying, "Mr. President, I understand your objection, but, you know, there's only one way out of this thing, and that is for us to cooperate," really talking at the same time, which is unusual for me, but I found that I really had to get through to him that we had to do something, that it wasn't acceptable that we just be in this mode. Even as I was doing this discussion, the U.S. head of customs, Von Robb, had unilaterally decided to go to war with Colombia and was causing Colombian shipments of all types to be held up at the ports interrupting Colombian trade. Perhaps for Colombians the most difficult thing he was doing is that he was--basically if you flew into the United States for Colombia, you had to wait two hours in a long line--he was hitting the Colombian political class right where it hurt. It was embarrassing them, and this was causing enormous pressure on him. So we terminated that meeting, and Ambassador Gillespie within about a week decided to come back but come back in a very dramatic way. He borrowed the Commandant of the Coast Guard's executive jet and flew in and we went out and we had pictures, and we went directly to see Barco. It was agreed that I wouldn't attend that meeting if the Foreign Minister, who was considered not to be friendly, would not attend as well. In the meeting, according to Gillespie, Barco went down the program that I had outlined and said, "Yes, we will do these things, do do do do," and so it was a very dramatic thing, and he began the march then towards working with us much more closely than it had really been his want to do. He became much more aggressive in terms of trying to get Colombians to sign on to doing something more seriously.

Q: Within the President's staff, entourage or ministry, were there people who were trying to find a way?

McLEAN: There were people, and luckily they were. Barco himself was known to be very pro-American. In fact, that wasn't quite accurate. He was also supposed to speak good English, and that also was not accurate. He was married to a woman who had American citizenship when they were married, and he'd lived in the States for a good time, but his English was not really good. I think he basically wanted to be friendly to the United States. As I say, his closest intellectual aide was a man very close to the American embassy, and the Secretary General of the Presidency was a former head of Ford Motor's subsidiary there and a very pragmatic, practical man, and he and I developed a close relationship when I discovered I could go and see him late at night and sometimes Barco would stop in and we would talk. In fact, I understand later Barco thought pretty well of me, but not in his early days. But the problem was the public as a whole was quite convinced, and many are still convinced, that this narcotics was a U.S. problem, not a Colombian problem, and that any political leader had to battle that particular problem. Then they also were terribly threatened individually by all of these things, there's no question.

Q: It's easy for us to talk.

McLEAN: Sure. The crisis that I just described took place against a number of things that were also happening. Their attorney general, who was an independent position, had been one of those opposing extradition. I got to know him at a couple conferences and discovered that maybe his

argument wasn't absolutely solid, and then he and I began to talk. Finally he had me to come to his office one day for a long session, and as we exited I discovered he had not only informed the world of this, he brought the press in, because he was trying to show the press that in fact he was having contact with us. This was just before Christmas that year 1987. What happened then was that within weeks he was going home to his hometown of Medellin and he was kidnapped and eventually assassinated. Again, you feel like you're very much in the middle of things. Here you'd been part of this man's effort to change his position, and he gets killed. At the same time, the candidate for the mayor of the city of Bogota, Andrés Pastrana, now the president of the country, at that time was kidnapped, again by an effort to threaten the political system. In that period I tried to bring in American resources from outside to be helpful in the kidnapping. In that at one point people came in and were able to identify where the attorney general was being held, and I went to the government and did that. The government sent out forces, but they were not able to locate the Attorney General, who was killed that day, but in the process they found the Mayor and released him and he was freed. So this period, late 1987, early 1988, January of 1988, was a period of enormous pressure and confrontation and death, and the country was totally on the edge, and the United States was in a very hostile position towards Colombia because of the perception that Colombia was not taking the drug problem seriously.

Q: When did the confrontation between the United States and Noriega in Panama take place?

McLEAN: That took place the next year. Some of that problem did spill into Colombia, because it was perceived that drug traffickers had been working with Noriega in that time and they tried to get Colombian figures, personalities, to testify in the trial. In fact, I can remember the night that we were supposed to have this Special Operations man from the Joint Chiefs was supposed to come down. I had known that a young Marine had been killed in Panama, and then in the middle of the night I got a call saying that the Special Ops guy would not be coming the next morning, and I thought to myself, oops, I think I know why. The young man who had been killed in Panama was an American, but his family lived in Colombia, so we had been involved in informing the family of the death. I could see that the United States wasn't going to stand for this.

Q: If I recall, during the period there was all that stuff in the newspapers and all about the Colombians in Miami and elsewhere, that these were particularly violent people and they were prone not to take our law too seriously and to sort of walk into wherever they had to and kill people in drug battles. It was all said, "These are the Colombians, and these are violent people." It was sort of like madmen with guns. Did you back off there?

McLEAN: Well, this, as I say, was going on at this particular time. Of course, I don't want to say too much about the Colombian violence. Now I'm married to a Colombian, so I wouldn't want to exaggerate that. Colombians are, in fact, enormously elegant and very polite people, but there is a level of violence that goes back into the last century, and there are people that come out of it that are just almost unbelievably violent. One of them was a man by the name of Rodriguez Gacha, and he was one of the three cartels. There was a Cali cartel, a Medellin cartel, and a Bogota cartel. He was related to the Bogota cartel, and he just keeps killing people in just massive numbers. You'd have big slaughters that would take place. Ten and 20 people being wiped out at parties and different events was part of his game. We helped track him down, and in

fact we paid a reward to the man that provided the information to allow the police to follow him. It is not true that we were involved directly in his capture, although they did use helicopters, the police used helicopters that we provided, and we did provide information from an informant and through our reward systems paid that person. It is very likely that that person also was working for the Cali cartel, but again this is part of the confused and difficult area. And this man, Pablo Escobar, was enormously violent, such that he would kill his friends if they were threatening him or not doing the right thing. There was one case that is an example, that shows the confusion of how things were in those days. After the Palace of Justice incident, one of our pieces of analysis was that the incident had happened because the police and military didn't have an intervention force a la the United States swat teams, and therefore we trained a joint task force of theirs that was attached to the army but was made up of different units of the government. We were also very close to a man named Massa, who was the head of the police, the secret police, the FBI of the country. I had also been trying to keep control of what we were doing. Sometimes, with Massa for instance, various agencies were working with him, and one agency might intimate that he was tainted and dealing with the wrong people and he wasn't quite on our side, and he would get word of this, and back and forth. Sometimes the ambassador and I would have to play peacemakers. Massa himself is a pretty violent guy. He himself sent out swat teams at various points. Perhaps, and I believe that it's true, in one instance he went in and tried to blow up Pablo Escobar's apartment, and in another instance he probably went in and shot up Pablo Escobar's office, killing many people. If we had perfect knowledge about these things, it would be one thing, but at the time you had a feeling that this was going on. In the incidents that I'm talking about, it took place in an apartment house, and that makes me nervous because it was right across from my apartment. My apartment was just up the street from the ambassador's, so the people who had done this chose to do it right among where we lived. They had an apartment, and they were representatives of the emerald dealers, who were another criminal force in the country. They obviously had contact with Massa and they were working with Massa. It is my belief--this again is a belief that I cannot be sure of--that they also had contact with the U.S. Marshal Service and with the plain clothes part of the Florida police, or so Massa has indicated to me, that they in effect were trying to develop some sort of team that would work against Gacha and Pablo Escobar. This is significant in the sense I had kept the head of operations for the Marshal Service out of the country on two occasions. On one occasion he actually threatened me with obstruction of justice because I was keeping them out because they were trying to mount a team to kidnap some of these major drug traffickers. The man, of course, is now the head of the New York City Police, but that's a different story. But you felt very much on the line. Then we had this incident in an apartment where the swat team that we had been helping goes in and attacks the team that had relations with Massa and probably with the Florida State and Marshal Service, and it shows somewhat the chaotic and almost irrational situation we were in. All the people in this apartment were killed except one, and he managed to hide himself behind the shower curtain and was not found and therefore was able to tell the story. After the police and others showed up on the thing, the man shouted out the window and was then taken into custody, and we brought him into the United States to keep him out of harm's way. Again, it's how difficult it is to find out what's going on. One of our DS agents very bravely went into the building very shortly after the shootout and brought me back the truth. I must say, I believed in the beginning that in fact it was a legitimate operation, but the more that I have known through time of this thing, I recognized that it was bad guys shooting bad guys, and the U.S. role, thank God, was never made more clear

than it is. But it again is a question of, when you do things, they don't always turn out quite as you want them to be.

Q: Is there anything else you want to talk about before we move to your next job back in Washington.

McLEAN: Well, yes, there are a couple things. One is that Barco's commitment began to pay off in the summer of 1989 when he finally made a commitment to do serious extradition, to have a serious AID program with us, to change his own police and try to get a much more active program. It had taken him a long time, and we knew this was coming. I had been working with the new minister of justice, a young lady who was in fact fairly brave in standing up, and she was helping to design some programs. The announcement actually came just the day that Luis Carlos Galan, the presidential candidate, was killed. Sometimes they say, it is often said, well, because Galan was killed, Colombia started taking action. In fact, it is absolutely true that that happened before, and in fact most of the speech on this matter was delivered, was taped, before news came in Galan's killing. The country began to move seriously. I remember turning to Ambassador McNamara in the days after this saying, "It just occurred to me that we had some helicopters that were coming up from Peru." They'd been active in Peru and they needed some reconditioning. They were going to stop in Ecuador and then come there. I drafted a telegram for Ambassador McNamara which urged Washington to skip Ecuador and bring them right into the country, and we brought them in, and it was very dramatic because it just happened to be the day that President Bush was giving his speech on the Andean initiative, and this came out and they showed the C5A disgorging these helicopters--again one of those public moments that in fact turned out not to be. Those helicopters didn't fly for many months after that, because they had to be repaired, but it did have an enormous impact on showing that the United States was ready to do it. And then our aid program just went up like crazy. For the next nine months, ten months, we began to pour in material, particularly into the police but also into the military. As I say, our justice program began to grow, so by the time I'm leaving Colombia, a very strong program was underway. In addition to that, the president asked for a summit of the countries, and we put together a summit in late February of 1990 of the presidents of Bolivia, Colombia, Peru and the United States. Bush went, and that was a major event.

Q: Was he there?

McLEAN: He was there. He went to Cartagena. I did the advance trip on it, but I myself stayed in Bogota. The ambassador went down to Cartagena for the event. Again it was an event designed to try to put backbone into the Andean countries' political leaders. I think to some degree it did, albeit... I remember listening to the television commentary as the summit was going on, as the camera pans around, and the television announcer is treating it as if it is a summit on economic matters. He never mentions the word 'drugs' throughout the whole event. Of course, we knew that this man in fact had had calls from Pablo Escobar, and we had seen the substance of those calls and we knew he was totally terrorized, and he was certainly not the only one in that.

I may mention just a couple other small things. As a part of this thing, we were beginning to have concerns about human rights. I know that I was given a medal on my last days in Colombia

by the police in a very dignified ceremony, but as I stepped to the side with the ambassador and the three generals of the police, we unleashed a lecture to them about human rights and about how this whole thing was going to collapse unless they got their human rights effort together. Obviously there was a whole part of this in the time about their peace program which we began to show the Colombians and they began to understand and accept that narcotics was part of this phenomenon of strengthening the guerrillas. We also began a program of trying to deny visas to people who we had reason to believe were in some ways associated with the narcotics traffickers.

Q: I would have thought that, Colombia being so oriented towards Miami and all this, putting the families of the Escobars and other cartel people--I mean the kids couldn't go to school. If we just keep them out of the United States, it would be far more effective than, say, if you would do it to the French or something like that.

McLEAN: And it's surprising that that really wasn't done. One, there had been on the books for several years a law which said that visas could be refused if you had reason to believe that someone was abetting. It was a very low standard that you could use, and in fact we weren't using it. We were the first ones, in Bogota, to do this. I will say that we tried to do it very carefully. We tried to lay down... David Hobbs was the consul general when we first did it, and we made sure that we had both sides of the law covered, that we had reason to believe and that we had indication that there had been an exchange made between something the person did and the narcotics traffickers. It was very hard to go the next step, which you mentioned, and it disturbed me at the time, that many of these narcotics traffickers had their children in school in the United States, in one case in Harvard. And yet it was very difficult. We had two consular officers in Barranquilla, and the people in Barranquilla, because they just would know the community so well, were able to put together files that did just what you're suggesting. They began to refuse visas to family members as well as to known traffickers, and they were able to do it by way of showing that the flow of money was in fact benefiting these people for their education or their shopping trips or whatever it was, but it took very careful work. The young lady that did this, that led this program, vice consul, she was threatened. They began to identify that she was in fact the problem. I tried to get similar programs going out of the consulate in Bogota, but it was much more difficult because people didn't have the knowledge of the community in the same way that they did in Barranquilla, where you had local people indicating to the consul general information that was helping them make these justifications. My own sense is that probably the visa system went on beyond us, that the things that we began then they began to do much more after we were there.

Q: It's not going to change real things, but it serves... It hurts, because what do you make this money for unless you're passing it on to your kids and all that, and you're stigmatized. This is a real stigma, I'm sure, in Colombian society if you can't go to Miami.

McLEAN: These techniques that we used--and again, I truly say that this is something that we did, and I would give credit to the consul general, but I think we all, the two ambassadors and myself, had a lot to do with taking these steps, using all parts of the embassy including the consular section to do the job. One of the things we had there, by the way, on the consular side was kidnappings. They probably had more kidnappings than any other country in the world at that time, and again I got the consul general in a position so he became the coordinator to get an

inter-agency approach to play a positive role in getting the release of people. When I first got there I discovered that there was somewhat of a passive attitude towards this, that the United States, the U.S. government, shouldn't get involved, didn't want us involved, because if we were involved, there'd be difficulty about paying the ransoms, which were important. But I still thought there were things we could do, and in some few cases I think we did have a...

Q: Who was kidnapping whom, and what was the motive?

McLEAN: The motivation was money in most cases, all the cases that I can think of right now, but they often were the guerrillas. In fact, the thing that set me off was I discovered we had two young men kidnapped in the far Amazon region by the guerrillas, and in the end I discovered that a private agency went and freed them without paying ransom, but it did so by getting into the area and making local contacts. That just said to me we in fact could have a more positive effect, and I think in some cases we did, by then getting to church people, getting to private organizations, seeing if you couldn't find some way to get at freeing these people and doing so in a way that you didn't endanger lives, but doing so.

Q: Then you left there in 1990, is that right?

McLEAN: That's right.

Q: Is there anything else we should cover?

McLEAN: I think that's most of it. A couple positive things that we did that weren't narcotics: We got a scholarship program going, which was very hard to do. We discovered that the Fulbright program, because of the cost of education in the United States, was becoming really a vehicle for very rich parts of society. So we got a program going, and got it through Congress, to get scholarships for lower class, lower middle class people. It was very hard to keep on track, because there was always a tendency in Colombia for the favored goods to go to the rich. I remember one very powerful person in the Colombian community calling me up and pushing for a scholarship for a certain person. He said, "He's a member of the country club only because he inherited that." But that was a good effort. And the other thing, I guess, is the fact that we struggled to get the embassy site where it is right now. They were building new embassies under these new programs...

The security programs, the Inman Plan, and there just is a tremendous to put these all towards the edges of cities because you had to have setbacks, but I think there was something of a mentality that it's better to have it in the suburbs. My own sense that was going to really hurt the effectiveness of the embassy. I forced the situation, and finally a fellow in building operations said, "No, it can't be done unless you can find land with so much setback," etc, etc. I went to the then mayor of the city, Andrés Pastrana, and we located some land, and that's where the embassy is now. It's very close to the presidential palace, at least it's within a 20-minute shot, whereas where the FBO (Foreign Buildings Office) wanted it, it would have been an hour and 20 minutes in traffic to get from the embassy to the presidential palace. So it was one of those very small victories that you have. Why you fight those battles is never clear, because you're not going to be there when...

JAMES F. MACK
Director, Office of Andean Affairs
Washington, DC 1989-1991

Ambassador James F. Mack was born in Connecticut and raised in New York State. After graduating from Cornell University, he joined the Peace Corps and served in Honduras. In 1966 he joined the State Department and was sent to Vietnam in the CORDS program. Mr. Mack's other overseas service was primarily in Latin America, where he served as Political Officer and Deputy Chief of Mission at a number of posts before being named US Ambassador to Guyana. Ambassador Mack was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: Where to?

MACK: Well I went back to Washington. And I became the Director of the Office of Andean Affairs.

Q: Andean Affairs consisted of what?

MACK: Of five Andean countries. Which were Venezuela, Columbia, Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia. There were five. Chile was handled by South Cone Affairs.

Q: You did that from '89 until?

MACK: Until '91. The Office of Andean Affairs was a very busy place. Remember Colombia was not in the best of shape. The drug cartels were very strong. Shortly after I arrived, the Liberal candidate for president, Gaitan, was assassinated at the behest of Pablo Escobar, one of the notorious Medellin drug cartel king-pins. Colombia was in very, very bad. The Government of President Virgilio Barco was really shaken by the drug cartels which were enormously powerful to the point where they were electing people to Congress. In fact at one point, a quarter or a third of the Colombian Congress were ineligible for US visas because their links in some way to narcotics trafficking or money laundering. Their power went up to the Supreme Court. It was a pretty serious situation.

As a result of the Gaitan assassination, President Bush (the father) and his National Security Council decided we needed to take a hard look at Colombia and come up with a proposal to provide a massive amount of assistance for Columbia. This was almost 10 years before "Plan Colombia". This was a reaction to the assassination of Gaitan and the power of the drug cartels.

Over one weekend we in the Office in Andean Affairs were asked to come up with a proposal to spend several hundred million dollars in support of Colombia. And in addition, we were asked to come up with something that would the attention to show that the U.S. really supported the government of Colombia and the other Andean countries in their war against drugs.

At this point I can't recall who actually came up with the idea for all of this, but the Bush Administration agreed that they would propose an Andean drug summit involving President Bush, Jaime Paz Zamora of Bolivia, Alan Garcia of Peru and Virgilio Barco from Colombia. It was to take place in February, 1990. I had come on board in the fall of '89 and my office had been given the lead in preparing for a summit. That's what we did for my first four months on the job. Anybody who has been involved with this kind of thing knows that Heads of States don't just show up. A huge amount of prior planning and inter-agency coordination is involved.

It also involved advanced negotiations with the other countries involved in the summit. It involved the negotiation in advance of six different Agreements of Cooperation with each of the four countries. And that occupied my first four months as Director of Andean Affairs.

And actually we had finished negotiating these agreements in Cartagena itself the evening before the summit. So we had very little time to put them in final form for signature by the respective Foreign Ministers and Secretary of State. Unfortunately, when we tried to enter the changes and print them out, we realized that the computer disc on which we had brought the draft agreements was not compatible with the computers we had available at the hotel. As a result, a heroic US Embassy secretary, I think the wife of a MILGRP officer, stayed up all night retyping them into the computer. This was a huge job. She didn't finish until after the official caravan taking the staffers had left the hotel for the summit site, which was the Colombian president's equivalent of a summer white house. This was a highly secure location at the tip of a peninsula. You first had to go through a naval base just to get to the outside walls of the presidential villa. I am telling you with the presence of 4 presidents including George Bush, and with worries about missile threats from Pablo Escobar, security was tight!!

Anyway, I missed the caravan by a half hour. By the time I got from the hotel through the Naval Base, the gate through the wall to the presidential retreat was closed tight, with the guards under strict orders not to allow nobody to pass.

I had the six agreements that were supposed to be signed the three foreign ministers and secretary of state James Baker. What to do. I was able to make telephonic contact with a colleague on the other side who came to his side of the wall. So I threw my brief case containing the agreements over the wall to him. Eventually I did get in. The agreements were signed. It was kind of funny how it took place. Because security was very, very tight.

Q: So how did the Summit turn out?.

MACK: Well it actual came off quite well. The Summit launched substantially increased U.S. support for the Andean countries. It was quite a show. US Chinook helicopters from the US Naval ships off the horizon, a huge protective detail for Bush.

Q: Well, when you were charged with this, doing something about this, what were you looking at?

MACK: Well we were looking at the protection of Colombian judges. That was one thing.

Judges were being assassinated by the dozens by the cartel. They were afraid to hear cases involving drug trafficking and to render verdicts. So one of the first things we focused on was physical protection for the judges. Armored cars, secured court buildings, secure communications. The Colombians also borrowed a concept of “faceless judges” from Italy by the way from Sicily to protect their judges. The judges heard cases behind a screen so their faces could not be seen by the defendants. That was a major area that we looked into. There were other kinds of systems as well.

CHARLOTTE ROE
Deputy Political Counselor
Bogotá, Colombia (1991-1992)

Ms. Roe was born and raised in New York State and educated at the University of Colorado, the Sorbonne and Ohio State University. During and after her university training she was involved in political and labor activities. In 1983 she joined the Foreign Service. In the course of her career with the State Department, Ms. Roe served in La Paz, Santiago, Tel Aviv, Budapest and Bogotá, primarily in the political and labor fields. In Washington, she served on the US Mission to the OAS and in the International Organizations and Environmental and Scientific Affairs Bureaus. Ms. Roe was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: Then you went to Colombia. You were there from when to when?

ROE: I was there from July 1990 to August 1992.

Q: Who was our ambassador in Colombia at the time?

ROE: Ted McNamara. He was succeeded by Morris Busby. The DCM was David Hodges. Janet Crist was the political counselor. Phil French and I served as deputy counselors. Matt Kaplan and Phil Goldberg were junior political officers.

Q: What was the situation in Colombia when you got there in 1990?

ROE: The climate was a bit spooky. Embassy staff left for work in an armored vehicle with an armed follow car in a shifting schedule that would range from five to eight in the morning. The guards got out at every stop and flaunted their machine guns. Ironically, if we went home late, we were on our own. So more often than not I took public transportation home. Go figure! Colombia had its share of upheavals. Luis Carlos Galán, a beloved reformer and the leading candidate for President, had just been assassinated on the campaign trail. He was a Robert Kennedy type figure. Cesar Gaviria, Galán’s campaign manager, was elected President the summer I arrived. Pablo Escobar had not yet been taken prisoner—

Q: The drug lord.

ROE: Himself. The drug cartels of Medellin and Cali had tremendous power. The guerilla movements – the FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia) and the ELN (Ejercito de Liberación Nacional) – controlled significant parts of the countryside. The M-19 (Movimiento 19 de Abril) and the EPL (Ejercito Popular de Liberación) responded to the peace overture of the previous government to lay down their arms and become part of the political process. They were a both small movements. The M-19 achieved dark fame with its bloody seizure of the Palace of Justice in 1985. They moderated their actions after 1987 and eventually became seriously engaged in the political process. I'd been exposed to little positive about Colombia before moving there, but the country grew on me. Colombians, like Chileans, are highly educated. Their intelligentsia has strong ties with Western Europe, particularly Spain. The government's common cause with the U.S. in battling the drug lords created new connections.

Q: What was the labor movement situation?

ROE: The trade union movement was weak and highly politicized. A relatively larger confederation, the CUT (Central Unitario Colombiano), included the main political tendencies as well as the small Communist party. Of the two smaller confederations, one had a fairly close relationship with the AFL-CIO. The Embassy had no contact with the CUT. There was a modest-sized AIFLD (American Institute for Free Labor Development) project with an able Colombian coordinator, Guillermo Virracachá. Guillermo had informal relations with all the confederations. Unfortunately, the leaders of the federation in AFL-CIO's sphere were patriarchal and most likely had ties to the drug mafia. Instead, I cultivated close contacts with the CUT. When I traveled to the provinces or explored a labor issue, their affiliates would often be helpful. The CUT secretary general, Jorge Castillo, later became the chief labor advisor to Alvaro Uribe. Our central concerns were the endemic violence in the labor sector, the blacklisting and lack of protection for those trying to organize, and widespread discrimination against women workers and other minorities, including Afro-Colombians and indigenous workers. We also worked with industrial relations experts and human resource officers to help promote best practices in labor-management cooperation.

President Gaviria's boldest initiative was a participatory movement to rewrite Colombia's constitution for the first time in 105 years. This was a risky venture with major implications for U.S. extradition policy as well as for Colombia's chances for political stability and a whole subset of social equity issues. The U.S. was worried the drug lords would seize control of the process.

Elections to the Constituent Assembly took place in the fall of 1990. The delegates were everyone from poets to housewives to people to new political party activists, ex-guerrillas, magistrates, peasants, journalists, trade unionists, indigenous tribal leaders -- a potpourri of Colombian society. The process was wide open. Alvaro Uribe, then an independent Liberal Party Senator who chaired the Labor and Social Welfare committee, was in the thick of things. Uribe, who later was twice elected President of Colombia, was relatively unknown to Washington. But he was a strategic player and astute observer of the Constituent Assembly and became my closest contact. Fernando Carillo, who later became Colombia's youngest justice minister, was another key delegate. Others included young reformers like liberal Senator Fernando Botero and Eduardo Verano de la Rosa and ex-guerrillas like Angelino Garzón of the M-19 (later a Labor Minister

under Uribe). I worked closely with Ana Maria Salazar, a gifted Mexican-American attorney and AID contractor who steered the Agency's justice reform project. Following this stint, she became Deputy Assistance Secretary in the Defense Department, and is now teaching in Mexico. During the AC we compared notes on a daily basis.

Once elected, the *Constituyentes* (delegates) got right to work. January '91 began eight months of intense negotiations. The new constitution prohibited discrimination against women workers, child labor, indigenous peoples and other minorities. It incorporated the ratified ILO conventions and recognized the right to strike for non-essential public employees. A fairly comprehensive labor code reform passed in 1990 increased the fines for interference with trade union activity --

Q: How open were the delegates to this convention to you?

ROE: Many were glad to talk. We were up front about U.S. concerns. We weren't trying to twist arms. We kept our distance when sensitive issues were on the table. But we could follow what was happening. Colombians love to debate. They will open up to someone who grasps something of their history and appreciates the risks they confront. A lot of people who don't understand Colombia wonder why they don't—

Q: Stand up to the drug lords?

ROE: Well, they do. After the most egregious assassinations, Colombians turned out in huge demonstrations demanding peace. They were saying "stop the violence." Many would take risks we couldn't imagine. A prosecutor, judge, journalist, mayor or independent political figure realized that any point he or she could be kidnapped or knocked off, and that happened with grim frequency. They saw colleagues gunned down doing their work, some right in the halls of the university. Business people pooled their resources for rescue funds because they were kidnapped so frequently.

Q: Looking at the issue of extradition to the United States, I take it we were pushing this because if a Colombian drug person was involved in pushing stuff to the United States, once they got into American jail, it was going to put a crimp in that export. How did this play in Colombia?

ROE: This was a heated issue in the Constituent Assembly. We lost ground, though less than anticipated; several years later Colombia passed legislation legalizing extradition again. Attitudes were shifting. Colombians were becoming more conscious of the social costs of drug addiction and cocaine production, particularly as it affects Colombian youth, rural communities, and the economy as a whole. There's widespread skepticism whether we're using the right approach to the problem. One U.S. officer directing the Embassy's anti-narcotics program acknowledged that if we spent a portion of the drug war budget on programs to help get homeless kids off the streets of Bogotá and on rehabilitation in the U.S., it would generate far better results. As long as the U.S. and European demand for drugs keeps up, the trade may shift geographically, but it will stay alive and healthy.

Q: This is a common complaint and a perfectly valid one.

ROE: In the end prohibition never works, it just increases the street price and the Mafia's power. But politically, the more holistic solutions you see in countries like the Netherlands are dead on arrival in our Congress. Many Colombians see the issue as a struggle to ensure that drug lords don't own large sections of the country, that guerillas and paramilitaries don't destroy the countryside through constant violence and counter violence. They're trying to come out of a very dark period. Inside the labor community, I found common ground on issues where the U.S. is trying to advance worker rights and human rights implementation. The paramilitary groups are a major threat. Hundreds of trade unionists have been murdered and disappeared since the mid-90s by groups with shadowy ties to local and national security forces.

Q: Were you able to get out much around Medellin and Cali?

ROE: I traveled whenever possible to the hinterlands, but not to Cali. Once I joined Ambassador McNamara on a trip to Medellin, the first visit a U.S. chief of mission had made there in over a decade. I set up a separate schedule of meetings. Alvaro Uribe's close friend Antonio Yepes Parra, a former Antioquian governor, medical doctor and constituyente, met us in the mayor's office, and took me around in his beat-up car to meet local council delegates, employers, academics, and other civil society organizations. I felt safer than if I had gone in an Embassy van. Medellin is a beautiful, haunting city that was just starting to regain its footing. Unemployment was high – 14 percent – and the government was beginning to do something about the decrepit public education system.

Hector and I traveled a lot in our free time. We visited Villa de Leyba, a colonial city that takes you back in time, where dinosaur bones crop up on the outskirts of town. We loved Cartagena, the walled colonial city on the Atlantic that's very Caribbean in feeling but also struggling with strapped schools and a grim job market. Bucaramanga, where the Embassy had a binational center, also saw significant guerrilla activity. I traveled there several times. In my spare time I visited Leticia, in the Colombian Amazon. On several occasions I joined the military flights to places that weren't safely accessible except by plane. One was Buenaventura, the Pacific port, where I met with a fisherman's family that lived at the wharfs. They were dirt-poor. The whole population was suffering as the big Japanese and Russian trawlers were drastically reducing the fish stocks. A large crowd of children gathered around me. The local taxi driver who had driven me there was worried stiff I was risking my life by venturing near the docks. But the danger wasn't mine – it was their lives of silent desperation.

I went to Pasto, near the Ecuador border, on fact-finding trips. Galeras, the large volcano west of town, was supposedly dormant. There's a small scientific observatory near the crater at over 4000 meters. I hiked up to the rim on very loose soil and peered down into the cauldron, wondering why it was smoking so much. The Pastaños told me, "Oh it does that all the time." Six months later the Galeras volcano erupted and killed six vulcanologists. Navarro Wolff, ex-guerrilla and minister of health during my tour, later became mayor of Pasto and won national awards several years in a row for attacking corruption in the city.

Q: Was our policy towards Colombia completely dominated by the drug problem?

ROE: The drug issue was not the only focus, just the elephant in the room. The criminality

fueled by the drug trade is like an occupying power. It undermines the rule of law and fragile democratic structures. It replaces local harvests with cash crops that cause addiction and death. It threatens the extinction of Indian tribes. Indigenous leaders that resist the drug gangs that cut down their forest are killed. In other areas the narcos corrupt members of the tribe by giving the young men motorcycles and guns. This totally undermines the authority of the elders. Rural villagers get caught in the crossfire between the guerrillas and the paramilitary thugs, two forces that finance themselves with drug money. Many drug processing places operate a form of slave labor. They recruit young people telling them they'll earn big money and will be free to go home on weekends. When they try to contact their families, their overseers kill them and dump their bodies in the river. Many who operate the homemade cocaine processing labs die in explosions caused by the chemical reactions.

Human rights issues constituted the other major U.S. government focus involving close, day to day scrutiny by our Congress and by international NGOs. AID and the Justice Department were cooperating in a long term effort to strengthen the antiquated judiciary and promote reforms. The 1991 constitution created a series of new judicial institutions – a Constitutional Court, an independent judiciary, specialized public order courts, and a government watchdog office, the “fiscal general.” Gustavo de Greiff, the highly respected jurist who became the first fiscal general (attorney general), said the reforms must work because “impunity keeps us from living a civilized life.” During 1992 I monitored the implementation of these reforms by the newly elected Congress and Constitutional Court.

Q: Well, something affecting both human rights and labor – I saw a film some time ago about the cut flower business. Cut flowers are beautiful, but they have a lot of chemicals. Young women go out and work in those areas with all those chemicals around. Is that a problem? Did you get involved in these worker health issues?

ROE: Not during that assignment. These issues emerged more recently, with Ecuador as a major focus for those concerned about conditions in the cut flower industry. Edmundo Esquinazi, the former Colombian ambassador to Israel, was one of those involved in the flower business. He had a strong social conscience. Hector knew Esquinazi well from the time they worked together in Israel. He visited the farm and reported that there were around 40 adult men and women working the flower plantations; they used protective gear and kept pesticide applications to a minimum.

Colombia has its share of child labor. Children work in street vending, family farming, rural mining operations. Quite a few are involved in coca picking and flower production. The ILO (International Labor Organization) estimates about six percent of Colombian children aged 10 to 14 are in the labor force. Colombia has worked with the ILO on projects to prevent child labor, especially in small-scale mining. It was the first government in the region to acknowledge the scope of this problem.

Q: And the violence in the labor sector -

ROE: Starting in the late 1980's, Colombia experienced a renewed wave of violence directed against trade unionists and other political targets. A decade later, hundreds of worker representatives were being assassinated or disappeared. The victims were campesino leaders,

teachers, banana workers, factory advocates. Hundreds of peasants also lost their lives, just for being caught between warring sides. Trade unionists were often targeted by paramilitary forces that were linked to rogue army and police elements. Others were killed by drug and guerrilla mafias that don't tolerate anyone getting in their way. For example in 1991, FARC militia executed leaders of the palm workers union following mock trials accusing them of helping the peace process. In the mid-'90's, the AFL-CIO began sponsoring a small program through the George Meany Studies Center to get high-risk trade union leaders out of Colombia for a year at a time.

Q: It seems some Colombians in the United States have been prone to really nasty violence, not being discrete about it but taking out automatic weapons and going after each other in the streets of Miami.

ROE: The movies have dramatized the violence that surrounds the drug culture, depicting some of the worst nastiness on the planet. The Colombian outback reminded me of the Wild West of our frontier days. Parts of the country had never bowed to any government authority. Until several years ago, around 70 percent of the countryside was under the control of the drug lords or the guerrilla bands. But there so are many other sides to Colombia. In recent years the government has made real strides to curb the violence and demilitarize the no man's lands. It has some of the oldest universities in the Americas. Its cultural life is strong, nourishing writers like Gabriel García Márquez, painters like Botero, scores of other artists and intellectuals.

Q: How did you find social life there?

ROE: We had good friends in Bogota. The Embassy was a fairly convivial place to work. The violence was a low background noise that made you more alert to your surroundings but didn't isolate you. We had an interesting experience when Hector's sons Alvaro and Gabriel were visiting from Chile one summer. A Colombian friend, Daniel Quintero, was studying for his Masters while helping his father run a cattle ranch several hours south of Bogota near Villeta. The ranch was located in an area of sporadic guerilla activity. Daniel invited us to visit the farm and a cane-extracting plant between Bogota and Villeta. I checked with our security people, who considered the area safe at that time. It was quite a long trip. We stayed overnight near the cane sugar plant at a hostería with a garden chock full of monkeys and parrots and lush vegetation. Alvaro and Gabriel had a blast with the pool all to themselves, and our dogs Golda and Navarro splashing around with them.

The next morning we left early. At 8:30 we were snaking around a mountain road headed for the farm. Suddenly we came across five burned out buses. We learned that guerillas from the FARC had come down from the hills, taken all the passengers out, robbed them, sent them on their way and then set fire to the buses. The buses were still smoldering. They were purportedly guarded by Colombian policemen holding Uzis and makeshift weapons. Some were barefoot; others had what looked liked homemade boots, ragtag uniforms or T-shirts and jeans. Hector said quietly, "They look like guerrillas." We never found out for sure. When we returned on the same mountain pass the next day, the armed "guards" were still there. They stopped us from taking a video. We photographed the still-smoldering buses on the way back. We'd been saved by the clock. An hour earlier that first morning and we'd have been in a heap of trouble.

Q: Well, you left Colombia in '90?

ROE: 1992.

WARD BARMON
Deputy Director, Narcotics Affairs Section
Bogota (1992-1994)

Ward Barmon was born in Huntington, Long Island in 1943. He graduated with a double major in American and Chinese history from Yale University and then studied at the University of Madrid for a year before coming into the Foreign Service in 1967. In 1992 he served as Director of the Narcotics Affairs section in Bogota, Colombia. In addition to Colombia, he was posted to Belize, Taiwan, Thailand, El Salvador, and Honduras. Mr. Barmon was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1998.

Q: You were in Colombia from when to when?

BARMON: 1992 to 1994.

Q: Then we return to Colombia, 1992. What was the job and situation at that time?

BARMON: As for the job, again being a tandem couple, we had to look for a place we could both go together. The possibility of going to Colombia in the Political Section came up for my wife. The position was Labor attaché, but also covered the Liberal Party, the party in power, as well as the Congress. Then, I was able to get a job as the deputy director of the Narcotics Affairs section. This sounded like an interesting thing to do in Colombia.

Q: What was the situation in 1992 when you got there? Politically and drug wise?

BARMON: Well, President Gaviria had been in power for a couple of years. He had a good reputation and was fighting the drug war vigorously, or at least gave the impression of doing so. I think he did within certain constraints. The situation in Colombia, particularly in Medellin and Cali, was a bit dicey because there was a great deal of violence, more than normal. Colombia had always had, in the last 40 years, a high level of violence per capita, just as El Salvador has had a very level of violence per capita. That was intensified and augmented by the drug-related violence, particularly by Pablo Escobar. He was taking out his frustrations against the government by sending randomly detonated bombs into Bogota, and having them set off around the city. He was trying to intimidate the Colombian government. He did not succeed in doing this. It made life interesting in Bogota, because you never knew when or where the next bomb would go off. This was compounded by the fact that there was a very serious energy shortage. For our first year in Bogota, our electricity was rationed. We would only have electricity for a few hours in the morning, and a few hours at night. It was a strange experience being driven

home in the dark with the streetlights being out. Some people had generators, but basically, the city was blacked out at 6 or 7 o'clock at night. It was an eerie feeling.

Q: Who was the ambassador and how was the drug side of things?

BARMON: The ambassador was Morris Busby. He was totally focused on the drug problem. That is why he was sent there. Unfortunately, but perhaps understandably, he paid very little attention to the rest of our bilateral relationship, such as cultural, economic, etc. But I was think it was forced upon him. He spent 98 percent of his time fighting the drug war, leading our efforts, and working with the Colombians. I think he did a good job.

Q: Your exact title was what?

BARMON: I was deputy director of the Narcotics Affairs Section.

Q: Who was your guiding bureau in Washington?

BARMON: The Bureau of International Narcotics. It became known as INL when it added law enforcement. When I was there it was still INN.

Q: What were you doing?

BARMON: The Narcotics Affairs Section of Colombia was the largest NAS [Narcotics Affairs Section] in the world. We had about 50 employees, most of them Colombian, but some were U.S. contractors. There were a number of advisors. Basically our job was to assist the Colombian Anti-Narcotics Police across the board. Logistically, training, spare parts, helicopters, just everything across the board. We basically helped to create and fund the Narcotics Police which was a very small number of police officers dedicated to the narcotics war with the much, much larger Colombian Police force.

Q: Could you describe some of the types of work that you were doing, and also talk about the effectiveness of what we were doing, and what the police were doing?

BARMON: Let me try and separate the two. As I said, we had four American officers, who were specialists. They were hired to do drug work. The head of the section had a military intelligence and DEA background, so he was ideally suited. He had served previously in Colombia in the mid 1980s. So, he was wonderfully experienced. He and the other drug specialists basically concentrated on working with the police. The other officer was the administrative officer and he did administrative and personnel work for the section. I, as the deputy did a number of things that no one else did. I ran the demand reduction program, that is helping Colombia deal with their own internal consumption problem. I worked with the local drug Czar, with whom I became close friends. Their drug czar's office reported to the Ministry of Justice rather than directly to the President. They basically ran the government-financed demand reduction programs. I am not talking about the department programs or the city programs. For example, Bogota City had a major program. They coordinated all of those programs. They funneled foreign assistance such as ours, into the various programs, like the media, against using drugs.

There were drug treatment programs. We sponsored a lot of training in the U.S. and also brought people down from the States to run demand reduction seminars, and how to set up and run a treatment program.

Then, some of the other things I did, I worked on a project that we started a number of years before to supply judges and prosecutors with armored vehicles. We had already provided the vehicles, but we needed follow up and needed to keep track of them. They needed repair. The vehicles had been dispersed all over the country. Some of them were already destroyed. Some had not had proper repairs. I spent some time working with the relevant people at the justice ministry trying to track down vehicles and get them repaired. I spent time to set up a central repair operation which we were never able to do. At least we did track down most of the vehicles to get some of them repaired. This was a very important program because it managed to keep a number of judges and prosecutors alive. Several were ambushed in their non-armored vehicles and were killed. One famous female judge was ambushed and killed in her car. She was not using one of our armored cars. So, I spent a fair amount of time trying to follow up on all of these vehicles. Then, AID had a program to supply some new armored vehicles. I worked with the AID people on that.

Another program I did, I ran the environmental monitoring of the Colombian Anti-Narcotics Policy project to spray opium poppies. We paid for a Colombian scientist who went out to the field and took surveys of the soil to determine if any damage was being caused to the soil, flora and fauna. He was hired by the Colombian drug czar's office. However, we paid his salary. I ran that program which was politically very important because there was a great deal of criticism by the environmental groups, but frankly, much of it orchestrated by the bad guys to discredit the spraying. They were claiming the spraying was killing the animals, killing people, causing abnormalities, etc., in order to try and get it stopped. The media campaign by the "druggies" had some success. This was probably the reason why the Colombian government resisted our pressure to spray coca plants for years and years. I played a small part in working with the drug czar's office finally to persuade the government to permit the spraying of coca, not just the opium poppies. The Colombians had sprayed the marijuana crops in the 80s with a toxic chemical, then switched to Roundup, which was much, much less toxic. That campaign had a certain success. There was a great deal of political resistance to spraying coca, but the Gaviria government finally overcame that resistance in the Congress. Toward the end of my tour, they did in fact start spraying coca with a certain amount of success.

Q: What was the mood in the embassy when you were there? What was the feeling with the drug problem? Were we winning, losing?

BARMON: Again, I think most of the people that worked in the fight against drugs in the embassy (and that was most of the country team) were believers in the effort. Not necessarily that we were going to win the war, but that we had to fight it, and that we had to fight it various ways. Most of the people in the country team were concerned with the interdiction side. The DEA, CIA, the military, working with the various agencies in the Colombian government, and with the equivalent of the FBI, the Secret Service, and the CIA which is their Department of Administrative Security, which we funded to a certain extent to help train and equip their people. Basically on the interdiction side, on the ground, in the air, working with the U.S. military in

Panama (SOUTHCOM), and in the Caribbean. Customs (very active), FBI, Coast Guard, everybody was involved. Again, it was almost totally on the interdiction side. Very few of us were very involved in the other aspects of the drug war, such as helping the Colombians deal with their own problem. Internal consumption of illicit drugs was not a major problem but was becoming worse. We had a special narcotics country team that used to meet twice a week and just talked about narcotics issues. We also had a regular weekly country team meeting where you had the non-players in the drug area as well. However, the focus of the embassy's attention definitely was the drug war.

Q: The way I understand it, in Colombia, the big people, Escobar, and others were making so much money off of the American market. They could buy almost anything they wanted and if they wanted. If they did not want to buy it, they could kill. They probably had more sophisticated arms than the Colombian Army. Colombia was in jeopardy in those days, and maybe still today of losing to this corruption.

BARMON: That is right. The other factor was the guerrillas who began to feed off of the drug war as well. They expanded into cultivation to a certain extent, protecting fields and labs out in the countryside. So, they began to feed off of these huge profits. You had a terrible combination of guerrillas and druggies, and the right wing militias. The politicians, police, military, and other people were either bought off or intimidated, or both. That combination was very difficult to fight. You did have some honest, legitimate, and honorable people in the government who either would not be intimidated, or would not be bought off. Many of them were killed or had to leave the country. I am convinced there were some who were not corrupt or intimidated. Some of the people in the embassy, particularly the head of the DEA felt that everyone in the government was corrupt. I think that was a vast exaggeration. Although there certainly were corrupt politicians and people in the Armed Forces and Police who had been corrupted, I think we were fortunate in the Anti-Narcotics Police that good people were selected. If anybody was found to have been corrupted or intimidated, or gotten to in any way by the guerrillas, they were immediately cashiered or returned to the regular police. They were prosecuted if there was any evidence. I think the Anti-Narcotics Police was basically pretty clean and excellent to deal with. They were very committed people.

Q: Did you get a feel for Colombian society having these drug lords and these guerrillas. I mean, sounds like a society that is not typical of almost anywhere.

BARMON: Many Colombians were somehow able to grow a bit inured to the problem if it did not effect them directly. For example, if they did not have close friends, or relatives killed or kidnapped. I think the people in the cities were able to isolate themselves a bit more than the ones in the countryside. In Medellin, and also Cali, there was a lot of violence, bombs, police being killed, gang murders. Innocent people were caught in cross fires or injured and killed by the bombings. Somehow the Colombians had developed this hard shell. If it did not affect them personally, they were seemingly able to ignore it and carry on. The problem was, while I was there, more and more people were being affected, either by the violence, by their children taking drugs, or by this campaign of intimidation of Escobar. I think it turned the Colombian people against the drug lords, many of whom were quite popular in their hometowns. Escobar did a great deal to help the poor people of Medellin. He financed housing, health services, and

education. He even owned a soccer team. So, he was revered in Medellin by the poor. However, most Colombians were relieved when he was finally hunted down and killed. Certainly, the bombings stopped in Bogota.

Q: What were the guerrillas after?

BARMON: There was a debate going on in the embassy whether the guerrillas were still ideological or not. The guerrillas had been around 20 or 30 years by then. The embassy felt that they no longer were fighting an ideological war of liberation. They were more interested in money and/or power. They seemed to be less and less distinguishable from the druggies. Washington at that point had not acknowledged that we need to fight the guerrillas as well as the druggies. Washington believed the two were distinct and separable. Perhaps they were earlier, but as they became less and less distinguishable, you had to fight both. Now, we are doing that. When we were there, there were a lot of constraints to giving aid to the military in particular, if that aid was going to be used fighting the guerrillas because of allegations of corruption as well as human rights abuses. Some of both existed. If U.S. assistance was going to be used to fight the druggies, fine. But how do you make that distinction? I am sure a lot of our assistance was used for both purposes, as we felt it should be in the embassy. We had to justify our assistance to the Executive Branch, and it to the Congress that the money was not being used to fight the guerrillas. This was rather silly.

Q: How was life at the embassy during this time?

BARMON: We all felt beleaguered to a certain extent. There was tight security. We were provided with armored vehicles. The embassy was pretty much a garrison. There were a lot of security measures and rumors of possible assassination attempts against the Ambassador Busby and other officers. There were also threats of possible bombings against the embassy. Nothing came of that, perhaps, because we were so alert and worked well with the Colombian security people. It was a pretty beleaguered life. A lot of people were extremely nervous about living there. Before going outside of the city we always had to check with the security office to see where we could drive or fly on the weekends, and what the latest rumor was about bombs. My wife and I were less nervous than most because we had spent two years in El Salvador, which I think was a lot worse. Most people were very nervous there during their tour, especially when Escobar was setting off these random bombings around Bogota in 1992 and 1993. One large bomb exploded in front of a restaurant only several blocks from our apartment building. An embassy couple had been in that same restaurant a half hour earlier.

Q: Could the embassy send officers to Medellin or to Cali?

BARMON: No. They were off limits for most of my tour. After Pablo was killed, it eased up a little. But, no, you did not do normal business in Medellin and Cali. We had closed our consulates there years ago. We had no Peace Corps, they had left the country. So, the only people that went to Medellin were undercover DEA agents, or occasionally the ambassador or some other drug related trip would sneak in with the Colombian military or police, and sneak out. They would covertly inspect some anti-drug operation. No, it was not life as usual.

Q: How about the DEA, was that a separate branch? If it was, how was cooperation?

BARMON: Yes, they were a separate branch. They had a large office in Bogota, and a smaller but significant office in Barranquilla, the only other city where we had a consulate. That was the primary reason we kept it open, to give DEA an official place to work. They had a lot of people doing every conceivable aspect of fighting the drug war. They had undercover people, analysts, and their own Administrative Section. They did a lot of work with informants. They were very active. We had excellent cooperation with them. We worked very closely because they also worked with the Anti-Narcotics Police on the operational side, and with the DAS. We worked with them on the logistics and training side. They did some training, too, so we had to work very closely with the DEA. The head of DEA was a bit of a controversial figure. He had been there for a number of years, and was very cynical by the time I had arrived. He had already been there for a couple of years, and was one of the people convinced that everyone in the Colombian government was corrupt.

Q: Were there problems of the DEA getting too involved?

BARMON: Well, it was part of their mandate. I do not think any American DEA employee was killed when I was there. It was always a risk. Obviously, we had a lot of Hispanic DEA agents who blended in, more or less. They were pretty active.

Q: Was there concern about Colombians who migrated to the United States who still had their "bad guys" connection?

BARMON: Sure. We kept very close track working with the FBI and other agencies, because in many instances it was the Colombians in the United States that received the drug shipments. They were the ones that distributed them, at least at the wholesale level. So, we were always working on trying to persuade the Colombian government to reverse their constitutional prohibition against extradition for those Colombians arrested in Colombia accused of crimes in the United States (Escobar's bombing campaign in Bogota was in part directed at "persuading" the Colombian government not to reverse its prohibition or extradition. That happened several years later under President Samper. There were a lot arrested, prosecuted, and sentenced in the U.S. We were always trying to figure out their connections back to Colombia. There was a great deal of that sort of work, particularly by the FBI (legal attaché), CIA, and by some of the DEA people.

Q: Did the CIA play much of a role?

BARMON: Yes, obviously they were very involved. Their main mission in the country was directed at the drug war as well. They provided some assistance in the logistics area, and trying to penetrate the drug organizations. Much of their work I was not familiar with. I did not get involved in it. Yes, they were very active as well.

Q: You were there 1992 to 1994? A new administration came in, the Clinton Administration came in early 1993. Was there any sense of any change in Colombia? Or, was it business as usual?

BARMON: It was pretty much business as usual. A new U.S. drug czar was appointed. I did not get the sense that things were any different overseas. Perhaps, less effort placed on the fighting the drug war domestically. At least, less effort placed on the media side. Certainly, the President did not make it quite the personal campaign that President and Mrs. Reagan and President Bush had. I did not notice any significant changes overseas.

Q: Did they have a presidential election while you were there?

BARMON: Yes, toward the end of my tour.

Q: That was one of quite a lot of controversy, was that the one?

BARMON: Yes, Ernesto Samper. It was alleged and he finally admitted that there was drug money in his campaign. We knew about it early on. We had also heard rumors that there was drug money in his opponent's, Pastrana's, campaign. Pastrana came out publicly saying that there was drug money in the Samper campaign. He was discredited at the time, lost the election, and went to Spain for a while. In any case, during the campaign and even for a period after he was elected, Samper never admitted that he knew about it. Two of his close assistants, including the Minister of Defense, were fired or resigned, and faced indictments, and prison time. The Colombian people basically backed him. He was able to turn it around and blame it on the U.S. He protested his own personal innocence and got away with it. We took his visa away, so he could not travel to the U.S. except for UN business. It was a very difficult period between the United States and Colombia.

Q: Did that have any effect on your relationship with the drug police?

BARMON: Operational effect, no. This happened in the last couple of months that I was there. I am sure it had a negative effect later. We were always able to continue working very closely with the Anti-Narcotics Police.

Q: When you left in 1994, what was your feeling about this problem?

BARMON: Well, it just seemed to be getting worse. Colombia was, I believe, the one country in the world that produced all three narcotic drugs and exported them. Marijuana to a much smaller degree than in the past (1970s). Opium poppy cultivation was something new but was being expanded. Although Colombian coca is not as potent. It does not have the same level of the degree of alkali you need to make cocaine that Peruvian and Bolivian coca has. Nevertheless, cultivation was being expanded. Colombia was processing a lot of Bolivian and Peruvian coca paste which was transported into Colombia. Opium was being processed into heroin and being exported in small amounts. So, Colombia had a very diverse drug industry. They were also producing some artificial drugs, amphetamines and other things. It was basically concentrated on cocaine, but supplemented by opium and marijuana production. A very big industry.

Q: Were you hit at all by people saying, "who are you to do this? We are just supplying, you're the demand?"

BARMON: Yes, and that was a legitimate argument. One of the ways we tried to turn it around was say “look at your own problem.” You have a growing problem with consumption and a problem with all the violence resulting from the trafficking. Yes, we were a lot of the problem because we were the demand. There was also a growing demand in Europe for drugs and it was an uphill battle. I think the Colombians finally recognized it as their own problem as well. For a long time, they preferred to say, “It is not our problem; it is yours.”

JAMES F. MACK
Chief, Colombia Task Force
Washington, DC (2000)

Ambassador James F. Mack was born in Connecticut and raised in New York State. After graduating from Cornell University, he joined the Peace Corps and served in Honduras. In 1966 he joined the State Department and was sent to Vietnam in the CORDS program. Mr. Mack's other overseas service was primarily in Latin America, where he served as Political Officer and Deputy Chief of Mission at a number of posts before being named US Ambassador to Guyana. Ambassador Mack was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: In 2000 you left. Where did you go?

MACK: I returned to Washington. The US Congress was about ready to pass the Plan Colombia Support Act. Under Secretary for Political Affairs Ambassador Tom Pickering, for whom I worked many years prior in El Salvador, asked me to come back and head up a new Inter-Agency Task Force called the Plan Colombia Task Force. The idea was that the Task Force would facilitate the coordination the implementation of US support to Plan Colombia. We are talking about a billion dollar package here. I started up the inter-agency task force before Congress even passed the appropriation, but we knew it was coming and wanted to be ready. We basically teed up for the Principles, that is those senior officials in the various US departments with programs to be implemented with Plan Colombia Funds, issues that could not be resolved a lower level.

That is what I did for about eight months . Once our support for Plan Colombia was launched I moved to Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) where I served first as Deputy Assistant Secretary with responsibility for Latin America and the INL Air Wing, which provided support for our counternarcotics programs, at that time largely in the Andes.

Q: How was most of the vast amount of Plan Colombia money going to be spent?

MACK: Well a significant part of what came to INL was actually then funneled to other implementing agencies, much of it USAID for alternative development or to the Department of

Justice for legal and judicial reform. Alternative Development programs were aimed at providing alternative livelihoods for people who had been growing coca. INL itself executed very large programs to support aerial coca eradication in Colombia and to train specialized police units to go in and bust big drug labs often defended by and later also run by guerrillas. In fact the guerrillas, especially the FARC, actually pushed aside many of the traditional narcotic traffickers and took over much of the businesses themselves. And of course many anti-guerrilla paramilitary groups got heavily involved in the drug trade as well. So there were the three major areas: narcotics control, alternative development and legal and judicial reform.

Q: So then you moved. You were then working with the new administration?

MACK: Correct. Bush came in January of 2001. It was at that time that I moved from the Plan Colombia Task Force to INL. In 2000, we had negotiated with the Government of Colombia, the conditions under which we would provide the Plan Colombia assistance. The biggest issue was getting the Colombian Government, the Pastrana government, to agree to specific targets for eradication. And after an enormous amount of back and forth during two weeks at the Colombian foreign ministry in Bogota, the Colombians agreed to reduce their coca cultivation by 50% by 2006. That is what has happened if you use the UN coca figures. According to the CIAD figures, there is as much coca as there ever was, but the CIA keeps discovering new coca areas that have been there all along, which distorts the figures. In any event, these results made were possible because of aerial eradication. I should note that while then President Pastrana would occasionally place temporary restrictions on spraying for political reasons, or as a sign of good faith in his on and off again and eventually fruitless negotiations with the FARC, the current Colombian President, Alvaro Uribe has been unwavering for his support for coca eradication.

Q: There was quite an apparatus by this time in the Department of State for drug trafficking wasn't there?

MACK: Indeed. The Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs maintained large apparatus. That apparatus included an Air Wing which we sometimes joked was the seventh largest air force in the Western Hemisphere. I don't know if that was true, but we had over 100 aircraft including helicopters fixed wing. The helicopters, armed by the way, rode shotgun for the Air Wing and Colombian spray planes. In addition we had supply aircraft. And of course we had to have the contract people who flew them and maintained them. With Plan Colombia money we also bought 300 million dollars worth of helicopters for the Colombian police and military. So all this required an impressive effort to make it work.

Q: Was this all concentrated in Colombia? What were we doing in Bolivia and Peru?

MACK: When I was in INL, we only sprayed in Colombia, both of coca and opium poppy. In the 1990s we had sprayed poppy in Guatemala. Peru and Bolivia did not allow aerial spraying of coca. They depended on manual eradication. But we did support the Peruvian Police Air Wing and the Air Force in Bolivia which were involved in counter-drug operations. We also supported Peru's aerial intercept program with aircraft. And of course INL financed local government manual eradication operations in both Peru and Bolivia.

Q: How long did you have that job?

MACK: I had that job until the summer of 2002 when I retired.

Q: During that time did you find any change in focus on the drug issue between the Clinton and Bush Administrations?

MACK: Actually not. Our Assistant Randy Beers, who started drug the Clinton administration remained in his job until the summer of 2002 when went to the National Security Council. By the way, Randy resigned his NSCA job not much later and went to work for the Kerry campaign as a senior foreign policy advisor. I am sure you have had an interesting conversation with Randy about the things we are discussing now.

Q: We haven't come up to that point yet!

MACK: The bottom line is that there was very strong program continuity between the Clinton Administration and the Bush Administration with respect to narcotics control in Latin America. I would like to believe that Kerry would have followed the same path.

Q: Sometimes Colombia has been portrayed as turning into a narco state

MACK: Well that is an unfair characterization and obviously I have seen a lot more sides of Colombia than the average person. Yes, the narcotic traffickers and the cartels gained enormous influence in Colombia, and even apparently made a substantial campaign contribution to a former president, Samper. They probably controlled a quarter of the Colombian Congress at one point. They had infiltrated people into much of the government.

However, many brave Colombians didn't fall prey to this and sacrificed their lives. They were in Executive branch, the army, police, the judiciary, and they were also in Congress. We were able to make common cause with these people.

Those people are in power in Colombia today. They were in power when I was working there as well. Colombia's mistake was letting things go too far before they decided to address the problem frontally. For many years they thought it was America's problem but it turned out to be much more a threat to their country if everything is considered. Now a large number of Colombians are fighting quite hard and sacrificing an awful lot to get their country back and I think they are having some success. But it is not easy.

End of reader