

ECUADOR

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RICHARD P. BUTRICK
Consul and Acting Consul General
Guayaquil (1923-1926)

Richard P. Butrick was born in New York in 1894. After working with the United States Bureau of Fisheries, he attended the Foreign Service School at Georgetown University and entered the Foreign Service in 1921. He subsequently served overseas in Chile, Ecuador, Canada, China, the Philippines, Iceland, and Brazil. Mr. Butrick retired in 1959 and was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1993.

BUTRICK: I served in Iquique for several months and was then transferred to Guayaquil, Ecuador where I served for two and a half years, most of the time in charge of the Consulate General.

There were three of us in the office and the three of us ran it. I did the economic reporting and general representation. I knew all the authorities and was friendly with them. One of my assistants, an American citizen, took care of citizenship matters for Americans, and the third person, who was an Ecuadorian, took care of the consular invoices and the routine operations of the office. The three of us ran it. I suppose today in Guayaquil one would probably have fifty or even a hundred people to run it.

Q: You were there from 1923-26.

BUTRICK: Yes. Then I came home on vacation. A new Consul General came to Guayaquil and he came at the good season of the year and was quite pleased with the place on the whole.

As far as living conditions were concerned it was a hell hole if there ever was one. I have written something on it which I can give you...

Q: Yes, I would like to have it.

BUTRICK: ...to give you an idea of what Guayaquil was like in those days.

Q: Well, Thomas Nast, the famous cartoonist died there.

BUTRICK: Yes, he died there and the wife of the consul general that I succeeded died there of yellow fever. They also had bubonic plague there. But at the time I arrived the Rockefeller Institute had sent a member to Guayaquil to eradicate yellow fever, and he did it. The principal thing in eradicating yellow fever was to get rid of the anopheles mosquito which the man from the Rockefeller Institute found was being propagated in the interior water tanks over the toilets which were open on the top. So he had them all covered. That was a big item in eradicating yellow fever.

My period of service there was an active one. I sent a radio report in every week to the Department about the cacao market, which was the principal cacao market of the world at that time. And generally speaking took care of everything else including representation with the local authorities as well as contact with the Embassy.

On one occasion I was able to go on vacation to Riobamba and while there I called on the local officials, including the military man. He told me that on the following Saturday he had received orders to keep everybody in barracks. That occurred to me to be very pertinent information and I took the first available train to Guayaquil and sent a message in code to the Embassy indicating that there was a possibility of a coup on the following Saturday. And actually the coup did occur and the Embassy had been forewarned by me. I received a highly commendatory letter from the Embassy.

Q: That is one of the great moments of anybody in the Foreign Service to be able to predict a coup.

BUTRICK: I traveled somewhat through the countryside too on horseback to Cuenca and other places. So I was quite busy there. Also one of the outstanding things was to settle the estate of a Virgin Islander who kept a small grocery there and died of bubonic plague. This worried me quite a bit, but after two or three days I got over that. Fortunately I didn't catch the plague.

Q: How about shipping and seaman? Were there problems?

BUTRICK: Well, we had some problems with seamen and shipping. The governor of the province was in Guayaquil. We had a seaman who came ashore and was arrested and I found out about it later on, I didn't know about it at the time. So I went to the governor and spoke to him

about it. He said, "Oh, that is quite all right, we will fix that right away." And he did. He released the man that afternoon. And he said to me, "Oh, by the way, I have a pony that I would like to ship up to the railroad." The railroad was built and controlled by an American company. I said, "I will see what I can do about it." So I arranged for the railroad to have his pony shipped up country free of charge.

Q: A little quid pro quo.

BUTRICK: Exactly.

Q: I was a consular officer for many years and know this is exactly what you do.

BUTRICK: My relationship with the community and everybody else was extremely friendly. It was a small community. It was a terrible situation locally, physically, and everybody realized that and we all got along together very well, including the Ecuadorians who were very fine people. I had many interesting experiences there, but I won't recount them.

Q: If you have time I would like to hear some of them.

BUTRICK: Well, I perfected my colloquial Spanish in Guayaquil. One day while at the Club, where I was usually the only foreigner present, and sitting around the table with four or five Ecuadorians discussing the phonograph records of that era. How you adjusted the needle, how sharp a needle should be, whether it should be tight or loose, if the record was a little bit uneven how you played it, and the speed you played it and all this sort of thing. I thought to myself, "Why in the world are these people talking at such length about records?" Finally it occurred to me that they were not talking about phonograph records at all, they were talking about sex...in terms of a phonograph record!

Q: This is the sort of thing that is not taught at the normal school in the United States.

BUTRICK: They were always playing or plotting games of some sort at the Club. One time there was an Ecuadorian warship in the harbor and they got the idea that they could take over the warship, the four of them. And they really did. They went out and when the captain met them on the gangplank and took them to his room, they bound and gagged him and took over the warship. They held it for about three days and then got off very peacefully. They were arrested and held for a while but they were from affluent families and nothing came of it. But it was amazing that they had arranged all of that rather openly in the Club.

There were other things that were very amusing, but life on the whole was not very pleasant on account of all the insects, especially the grillos that came in the thousands.

Q: Grillos are...?

BUTRICK: A form of cricket. Even the streets were covered with them. When the automobiles would go along the street they would crack as you went over them. They could get into your house no matter how tightly you had it screened. We also had scorpions and all kinds of insects.

The kitchen at night when I would come home would be a menagerie. There would be rats running around, scorpions and all kinds of insects in the kitchen of the home where I lived, which was attached to the office. So it was a pretty tough life.

Q: Did they give you any extra pay for going to a post like that in those days?

BUTRICK: Well, you got time and a half towards retirement. I didn't get any extra pay. I served in unhealthful posts for a great deal of my early career. I accumulated considerable time so that I could have retired much earlier than I did. But I never got an extra penny of pay.

JOHN F. MELBY
Peru Desk Officer
Washington, DC (1941-1943)

John F. Melby was born in Oregon in 1913. He received a bachelor's degree from Wesleyan and a master's degree and doctorate degree from the University of Chicago. He entered the Foreign Service in 1937. His career included positions in Mexico, Venezuela, the Soviet Union, and China. He was interviewed in June of 1989 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

MELBY: When I got to Washington, I wanted an assignment in the Department, and I conned my way into being assigned to the American Republics Division. I was put on the Peru-Ecuador desk. And I was there, on that desk, for two years. MELBY: This was July, 1941. And I was there two years.

The interest was not planned, believe me, but I still remember--my wife had not joined me in Washington at this point, I still had an apartment there before she came--I'd been out to dinner with some friends, on the evening of July Fourth. And when I got back to my apartment, I turned on the radio. There was an announcement that Peruvian forces had invaded the Ecuadoran province of El Oro and just wiped it off the map, pretty much. Not that there was anything there, because there wasn't, not much. But it was all the people there had. I figured the next morning I'd better get to the office early, which I did. And when I walked into my office, the phone was ringing, and Sumner Welles was on the phone. And he said, "John, you've heard the news?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, stop that war!" and he slammed the phone down. [Laughter] And that's what I did for two years, was stop that war.

Q: You're a relatively junior officer in the United States Department of State, and there's a war between Ecuador and Peru. And you're ordered to stop the war. May I ask the question: how does one go about this?

MELBY: Well, it would take all night to tell you that. It's a question of getting the Peruvians to

stop it. And buying off the Ecuadorans. Arranging for concessions to them. It was a very complicated problem, actually.

Q: *But you took this seriously--*

MELBY: Darn right. Welles wasn't kidding. He meant do whatever had to be done to stop the hostilities.

Q: *And you were able to contact our embassies and try to work out--I mean, we were playing the good neighbor in trying to stop two of our other neighbors from ripping the hell out of each other.*

MELBY: And I worked with the Ecuadoran and Peruvian embassies in Washington.

Q: *And you were involved in that rather famous boundary commission that came along and drew a line that kept--*

MELBY: I set it up.

Q: *Because I've interviewed other ambassadors who always had trouble with that thing.*

MELBY: Of course it turned out it went on forever.

Q: *Yes. We're talking about up into the '60s, anyway.*

MELBY: When I was on it, I was involved in the first one and we had the first aerial survey done of that boundary. Because nobody knew where the boundary was. And I had to arrange with the Pentagon to get the American Air Force to go down there. The men who were involved, actually, ended up in the long run being good friends of mine. Paul Cullen was in command of them. And they photographed the whole boundary. The argument on the thing went on for years after that.

Q: *I wanted to concentrate on another aspect of your career, but this is really a solid example of a time when the United States got involved in something and at least stopped the fighting. Maybe there's no final solution to something like this, but at least you found a way to stop the fighting.*

MELBY: And there's never been any fighting since. That one attack in 1941 was the last actual hostilities that have ever taken place.

Q: *Every once in a while, I think Ecuadorans come up and throw stones at our embassy because of that. Other than that, I think that's the major hostility.*

MELBY: See, part of the settlement had to be that Peru wanted half of Ecuador's territory, the Amazonian part of it. This is what Welles had to deal with at the Rio conference in 1942, was to con the President of Ecuador into agreeing to this, of giving up half of his territory. Because Peru had the support of Brazil, Argentina, and Chile. And the blackmail that Manuel Prado [y

Ugarteche], the president of Peru, was pulling on us was that if we didn't somehow force the president of Ecuador to agree to those terms, that Prado would keep Peru out of joining us in the war effort. And he would keep Brazil and Argentina out as well.

So Welles just had to take the president of Ecuador aside at Rio and say, "Look, this is the terms. You've got to do it. This is your contribution to prosecution of the war against Germany."

And the president said, "Mr. Welles, you know you're asking me to commit political suicide."

Mr. Welles said, "I know. And I'm still asking."

The president agreed, "All right, I'll do it." And that's the way Peru got the additional part of the Ecuadorian Amazon. And they thought there was oil there, which, actually, there was, as it turned out. But even Ecuador has some oil now, too. Ecuador has lived on that oil.

Q: You were there until spring of 1943. Then you were assigned to where?

MELBY: When the boundary dispute was finished, we were in the war and I was feeling a little foolish doing nothing, because there wasn't much going on otherwise. So I asked to take military leave, for which I got the balling out of my life from Howland Shaw, who was assistant secretary of state for personnel. He said, "Nothing doing. You know what happened to the British in World War I. It's not going to happen here." The British Foreign Office was decimated. All of them were drafted in the British Army and most of them were killed. British diplomacy never recovered from that.

I said "All right. Then send me abroad." Well, I'd always had a hankering to go to Moscow. I wanted to see it for myself. So I was assigned to Moscow.

Q: Looking back on it, obviously you went out on a sour note. Still, looking back on your Foreign Service career, what gave you your greatest satisfaction, the greatest feeling of accomplishment?

MELBY: China. Well, no, the Peru-Ecuador War. I was very young and had a lot of responsibility. Participation in the China thing; a ringside seat. Of having some, albeit a small role in the collapse and disappearance of a 3,000-year-old civilization. Tragic as it was, still, witness to what I think is probably the greatest revolution of modern times. After all, one quarter of the human race lives there. Whatever price one paid for that, was worth it.

CLAUDE G. ROSS
Consular and Administrative Officer
Quito (1941-1946)

Ambassador Claude G. Ross was born in Illinois in 1917. He received a B.A. from the University of Southern California and entered the Foreign Service in 1940. Subsequently, he served in Mexico, Ecuador, Greece, New Caledonia, Lebanon,

Egypt, Guinea, the Central African Republic, Haiti, and Tanzania. Ambassador Ross was interviewed by Ambassador Horace G. Torbert in 1989.

ROSS: I was assigned to Quito, Ecuador. A number of them went to Europe, the Far East, Latin America, one or two to Africa. My wife and I were in the old Cairo Hotel, packing to take off for California on the seventh of December, when we turned the radio on and heard the first news of the bombing of Pearl Harbor. About an hour later, we got a call from the Department of State saying, "Don't go anywhere. Stay where you are."

For the next three weeks, until about the 20th of December, I and another ten of my colleagues that they were able to catch before we left, all served in the code room of the Department of State, up on one of the top floors of State, doing deciphering, the Gray Code, Brown Code, that old strip cipher that used to cut your fingers. But we did that until finally they let us leave. We went home for Christmas and a little vacation before we took off for our first permanent post at Quito, Ecuador.

I went out as third secretary of legation and vice consul. It was a legation for the first three months that I was there. It was an interesting time. Obviously, we had just gotten in the war ourselves. Ecuador had broken relations with the Axis, but there were still numbers of Germans there. They had been well entrenched. For example, the national airline had been German-operated, and that was taken over by Pan American. But they were in a number of other things, so there was a certain amount of activity at the outset when I first got there, running Nazi agents down, closing down other German business enterprises.

About three weeks after I got there, the minister, Boaz Long, sent me down to the Ecuadorian-Peruvian boundary to take a look at Ecuador's southern province, which had been occupied by Peruvian troops. In late 1941, there had been a kind of guerrilla war that broke out between Ecuador and Peru, a lot of it over in the Oriente and the Amazon side, but some of it in El Oro province, which was the southern province of Ecuador bordering Peru. The Peruvians had come across and had occupied a number of villages on the Ecuadoran side of the border. According to the Rio Treaty in January of 1942, they were supposed to have withdrawn. The minister wanted me to go down and ascertain that fact, along with a lieutenant from our neutral observers, and also to see what condition the area was in.

So we went down, took a launch out of Guayaquil, and went up the river to a debarkation point, anchored in the river, I remember, overnight. We slept on top of the deck. It was terribly hot and sticky on the deck. During the night, the boat slipped anchor and swung under trees near the bank. I woke up in the morning and I was just covered with mosquito bites, tremendous. I thought, "God, if I'm ever going to get malaria, it's going to be now." As it turned out, I didn't get malaria.

We did this trip. There wasn't anything there. We did manage to get some horses, did it all on horseback for several days. We had to carry in our own supplies. Every one of these villages was evacuated, anyway, and everything that could be carried away was carried away. It was complete desolation.

Q: This was all Indian population there, I suppose?

ROSS: Largely. Indian or black, because this was the coast. As I say, I never saw the inhabitants in the place, so I don't really know precisely. I came back, anyway, and made my report. In due course, I know we did make loans to the Ecuadoran Government, made funds available for rehabilitation. We did do rehabilitation work in that area.

I was the third career officer at the post. When I got there, the Commercial Attaché and the Second Secretary were the only two career officers. Boaz Long was political. He was a very interesting man. He'd been a commercial traveler in Latin America in the early years of this century, an ardent Democrat. In 1913, he became first minister to El Salvador, then minister to Cuba.

Q: Gracious, that's a long career, wasn't it?

ROSS: I think he left Cuba about 1922, near the beginning of the Republican administration. Then he was out, went back into business until 1934, and then when Roosevelt came in, he went out again, first as minister to Nicaragua, then minister to Ecuador. He became ambassador when we raised it to an embassy in April of 1942. Then when he left Ecuador about a year after I got there, he became ambassador to Guatemala. By that time he was about 70 years old.

The DCM, so called, was the second secretary, an old class six, I guess, and I was there then as kind of dog's body.

Q: You were still unclassified at that time?

ROSS: I was unclassified C when I got there, became B almost immediately. There were auxiliary officers. The commercial attaché had three or four, and there were more eventually. Then there were several American clerk-stenographers, and a non-career vice consul there.

We didn't have an administrative officer per se in those days. I did what administrative duties there were to be done. I was head of the consular section of the legation, then embassy, and eventually had one non-career officer serving under me, who did most of the work. I signed all the passports and sort of double-checked everything, and trained him in the process. I did political work. I was the protocol officer. I was the Ambassador's aide. Long left after I'd been there about a year, and then we got a career officer, Robert Scotten, as ambassador. He took a liking to me and made me his aide, in the process of which I did a lot of speech writing for him and handled all his personal accounts. I didn't do the embassy accounting, but I handled his personal accounts.

Q: Balanced his checkbook?

ROSS: Yes, balanced the checkbook, made the entries in the checkbook. He was in the fortunate position of having his salary as ambassador matched by his mother, giving an equal amount of money every month. I entered these things into the checkbook. I remember vividly. He, as I say, was a career officer and had a long career all on the diplomatic side. I learned a lot about the

Foreign Service, particularly about the representation side and social side, from him and his wife. My wife had a role model in Mrs. Scotten.

Q: Which was extremely important.

ROSS: It was very important. I was at that post, as it turned out, for four years, the last three with the Scottens. It was an interesting time. In the midst of all this, not too long after I got there, in May of '42, we had an earthquake in Guayaquil, that killed one of our vice consuls, Vice Consul Slaughter. You see his name on the plaque in the Department. I was sent down on TDY to cover that position until a replacement could arrive at post. So for something over a month, I did consular work in Guayaquil.

Q: And had your own post?

ROSS: No. There was a Consul General in Guayaquil, so I was one of about four officers, I guess. I was the next to junior, because there was a non-career vice consul there. But it was an interesting assignment. I saw that part of Ecuador, which was hot and tropical and differed greatly from Quito, which is at 9,500 feet. So it was really a useful experience for me.

One of the things I had to do, being the junior career officer in Quito for the whole time I was there, I had to do courier work. The couriers came through Guayaquil. The international runs couldn't fly into Quito. The airport facilities were not there, and you could never fly in at night; there were no lights. So I had to go down and meet the courier and get the pouch. For the first couple of years I was there, I guess, it was insisted that somebody with a diplomatic passport had to make this run to meet the courier. Since there were only a couple of us in the post, and I was the junior one, I think I made about 15 trips, one every couple of weeks. It was a run not without an element of danger, because you went up over 16,000 feet with no oxygen for passengers in those days. The crew had oxygen. My wife, who became pregnant in this period, got very nervous about my having to do this all the time. Finally, I spoke to the Chargé d'Affaires, and I was relieved of that duty and they made other arrangements. I was able to get a dispensation.

Q: A little of that sort of thing is fun.

ROSS: Yes, but after about 15 in a row, it gets to be a little tiresome.

Ecuador was an interesting place in those days. We were at war, they had broken with the Axis, and the then-president, Carlos Arroyo del Río, supported the United States in the war effort. A lot of people in Ecuador did not. But he did remain a good friend of us. In the course of this, he made a lot of enemies, and his governing style also was on the arbitrary side. In May of 1944, there was a revolution. Most of the fighting, which was not all that extensive, which didn't last more than about a day, occurred in Guayaquil or in that area, so we didn't have anything much in Quito. Arroyo del Río was ousted, and a former president who had served once before for a year before he had been ousted, a man named José María Velasco Ibarra came back and was president, and brought a new team in, obviously. So we had new people to meet and get to know.

Q: Was there a major German problem later?

ROSS: Not later, no. That was pretty well ended.

Q: How about Japanese?

ROSS: Japanese had been there, but just really with diplomatic representation, a legation. That had been closed. The Italian legation had been closed, and the German legation had been closed. Eventually, this would have been about early 1945, I guess it must have been after V-E Day, the Ecuadoran Government gave us what files that remained of the German legation. So one of the tasks that I had was to read what was left, to see if there was anything in there that was valuable. As it turned out, there wasn't very much. They had gone through and taken care of that. But nevertheless, I had to read the whole thing and then send in a somewhat lengthy dispatch to the Department of the results of my endeavors.

Another thing that I was able to do there, after the revolution there was a new constitution in Ecuador, which I had to translate and send in a translation to the Department with a commentary. That was an interesting exercise.

HENRY DEARBORN

**Principal Officer
Manta (1942-1944)**

**Consular Officer
Guayaquil (1944)**

**Ecuador Desk Officer
Washington, DC (1944-1947)**

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 199.

Q: Then you were transferred to Manta?

DEARBORN: Yes, Manta.

Q: I've never heard of, I couldn't find it. Where is Manta?

DEARBORN: Manta is, I don't know, a couple of hundred miles north of Guayaquil. Its, it was

the second port for Ecuador but it was a far second, you know.

Q: This would be on the Pacific side?

DEARBORN: Yeah. It was just one day a telegram arrived there in Barranquilla saying I was transferred to Manta to open a post; there was no post there. And the reason they wanted to open the post was that three of the main black listed firms in Ecuador had their headquarters there for some reason. It was one Casa Tagua, they made buttons mainly out of tagua nuts, ivory nuts we'd call them. And then there was an Italian factory that also made buttons. Oh, Casa Tagua produced the tagua nut, they were a big exporting firm. Now the button factory was the Italian one. Casa Tagua was a big exporting firm, but I guess they got the name from the tagua nuts. And then there was a soap factory owned by the Germans. Casa Tagua was German.

Q: Yeah, well what did you do there? In the first place, just to get a little feel, how does one open a post in a place that probably hasn't had one since –

DEARBORN: Never!

Q: Never, never had one.

DEARBORN: Well, first I went to Quito to spend a week in the embassy getting oriented, and what they wanted out of the post.

Q: So this in Ecuador?

DEARBORN: In Ecuador.

Q: In Ecuador.

DEARBORN: Yeah. And so I, that was actually the first time I'd ever seen an embassy. I never saw an embassy when I was in Columbia because I was just there in the consulate. And so that was very interesting to me, to see how it was set up. And they told me - I talked to the intelligence people because intelligence was the main thing they wanted out of this place, that's why they were opening the post - to have someone report to them on the activities of these black listed firms and who was doing business with them. But I was to be under the supervision of the consulate general in Guayaquil, and so I went from Quito to Guayaquil, and it was very large at that time, the consulate general in Guayaquil. And I got a chance to see how that worked, and then I went up to Manta and stayed there maybe a week, maybe less, looking around for an office. And I found this very nice old Spanish gentleman who had an exporting firm near, and he was just finishing a house where he was going to have his office on the first floor, but the second floor was going to be rented. So I, the facilities in Manta, I couldn't describe to you, they were just, there was no place that you would want to have an office. But this was a nice place. So I said, "ok, when is it going to be ready?" He said, "I think it will be ready in about three weeks." So I went back to Guayaquil and went through the files, you know, whatever they knew about that area, because it was their area of responsibility but quite remote from them, they didn't know anything about it. And so then finally I went up to Manta and settled in to my new

quarters. My bedroom was just off my office and my dining room was just across the hall –

Q: So you were still a bachelor in those days?

DEARBORN: Yes, absolutely. In fact my wife was in Ecuador and is still horrified that I ever lived in Manta [laughter]. This was a port, but it was a port without port facilities. When you, when a ship would come in and anchor out quarter of a mile or something you know, and then these things they called balandras, which were sloops, they would go out to the ship and if you were loading something large, like unloading something like an automobile, they would put flat boards across the balandra and they would run the automobile off onto these flat boards, and then they would come in at high tide and wait until the tide went out and then run the automobile off onto the beach. That's the way they had to unload big things. But mainly they were, whatever they were loading or unloading was carried on the shoulders of steeladors to these balandras and out to the ship. And there was, whenever there were passengers arriving, we always used to laugh because these steeladors were always, had to be young because they would carry tremendous loads, they would go about shoulder high and they would all look for the young girls to carry in. Everybody arrived with wet feet, of course. That was the only way to get off the ship.

Well, my main experiences I remember from Manta, some were difficult, but I liked the post. It was really like, it was like running, you received everything from the department that a much bigger post received, so a lot of it didn't really have much to do with you but then you were everything. I had to do my own accounts, which I thank the Lord for Barranquilla because it was there that I learned to do the accounts, which I always hated. But things like this would happen. I remember the crank shaft broke in the local electric plant, and as a result they only had electricity a few hours a day, and a day did not include night, it was in the daytime for industries and things. So I remember there was a time when I had to a lot of coding from the old books -

Q: Right.

DEARBORN: By candlelight! I thought I was going to go blind.

Q: Sounds like something out of O. Henry doesn't it? [laughter]

DEARBORN: [laughter] Well, this is O. Henry. And I thought I was going to go blind, and there was a fellow from Quito, an Ecuadorian from Quito, coming down to work on this with me, not on the codes, but on what was to go into the messages. He was sending the messages but I was putting them into the codes to Quito, because it all had to do with black list stuff. Anyway, I lived through it.

Q: What I'd like to ask is, I mean here is really a very small port –

DEARBORN: About 10,000 people –

Q: About 10,000 people –

DEARBORN: And no running water –

Q: And here you are, the American vice consul, never there before, no vice consul, never there before, its sort of a one industry town isn't it? I mean, the button, the –

DEARBORN: The industries, the business life of the town, were Casa Tagua, which I must say closed up just about when I got there, and the button factory was still open and the soap factory was still open.

Q: Ok, but these are... in the first place Ecuador was not at war with Germany at the time, was it? Or did it –

DEARBORN: Yes, they were expropriating.

Q: So, in a way, what were you doing?

DEARBORN: Yeah, well one thing I was doing, the main reason I was sent there was to see who was dealing with these blacklisted firms, and there were two special cases. One was a reprobate sort of person called Emilio Boen, and he, many people hated him and they were all trying to get him put on the blacklist. They would come into my office one after another telling me the inequities of Emilio Boen, and he was sort of a Mayor Hague (?) type –

Q: Talking about Mayor Hague of New Jersey who was sort of a boss –

DEARBORN: But he was sort of a petty tyrant, and people were afraid of him, and they accused him, they said, they used to tell me that he murdered so and so, that he flashed lights to Japanese submarines from his house, and all these things. So one special thing I was supposed to do was report on Emilio Boen and I spent about a month, because I could see that most of the problems were that these people wanted him blacklisted because they didn't like him. And I really couldn't believe some of the things they were saying. So anyway, after about a month of rather intensive investigation, I just reported that he wasn't an admirable character but there was no reason to put him on the blacklist. The other case was, I can't even remember his name, considering how much I forget these days I'm amazed, an old man named Julio Arbueleta had been put on the blacklist because of reports they received in Quito about his dealings with these blacklisted firms. And I spent a lot of time on him and decided he'd been put on erroneously, so I got him taken off. I never got anybody put on. But I never saw anybody who deserved to be on it.

Q: Well by that time too it really wasn't a major, I mean there really weren't many ties were there?

DEARBORN: See I was there from the end of '42 until the middle of '44. But my daily consular work had to do mostly with shipping, you know, invoices. I didn't know, there were no Americans within miles of me. But then there was another program I got involved in connected with the war, which was the priority program. These were priorities on imports, and I worked with Ecuadorian officials on this. I guess it was the use of foreign exchange and all that. They had to, you had to see whether it was necessary, and we spent a lot of time on that. It was one of my favorite places. I always remember Inspector Merle Cochran (?), did you ever know him?

Q: No I didn't.

DEARBORN: He was, he later became manager of the Monetary Fund, but he was a Foreign Service Inspector, old time Foreign Service Officer, but he was an inspector who'd covered the world. And he had just come from Europe, Paris and so forth, and he came to Manta to inspect so, you know how they don't like to stay with people from the consulate or the embassy, but when he took one look at the facilities in Manta he agreed to stay with me [laughter]. The hotel was just horrible, with bugs flying all around. Anyway, Manta had a Rotary Club by the way, but what I was going to say was, Inspector Cochran came, and he weighed about 300 lbs. He sure made an impression on that town, which I'm sure anyone still living remembers, because he was so heavy. They'd never seen anything like it. And he was scandalized because I didn't have a refrigerator in this tropical sea port town. And he said this is terrible, you've got to have a refrigerator! And I said well I don't really need one, the little house boy runs down to the shore early in the morning when the fishing boats come in and he brings in the fish and they have a slaughterhouse just up the road and we eat the meat the day, you know its still jumping up and down when you get it. Well, he said, I think you have to have a refrigerator. So he demanded that they send me a refrigerator. About the time it arrived was when the crank shaft broke, so I was only able to run it about 6 to 8 hours a day and during the night it would sort of keep the cold in. It was alright. But things were very rudimentary. As I said, there was no running water, the water was delivered by a little caravan of burros and they would take it upstairs and dump it in a little barrel and the little houseboy would pump it up to the roof in a big barrel and then I'd be in the bathroom taking my shower just like in New York City [laughter]. But things were very rudimentary.

Q: Well, you for a short while went to Guayaquil?

DEARBORN: Two months I think. Because I closed, you know, I felt very sad when I had to close the office that you created, you know. Anyway, I closed the office –

Q: I assume no one replaced you?

DEARBORN: No, the only other person who ever served in Manta was a vice consul who was in Guayaquil when I was in Manta, and in order to give me three weeks vacation he came up. I saw his name on your list there, it was Bill Burdett.

Q: Oh yes.

DEARBORN: Bill Burdett came up for three weeks while I went off to Columbia for vacation. But the couple of months I was in Guayaquil, I was assigned to blacklist work, and nothing spectacular happened. I really can't think of much that happened in Guayaquil except, the most exciting thing that happened to me in Guayaquil...oh no, that's not true! A very exciting thing happened, it was my only revolution! My only bloody revolution. It was May of '44 when the man who, Arroyo del Rio was president of Ecuador, had served, he had a four year term and served about three and half, and he gave a speech because the opposition was zeroing in on him and he felt defensive. And he gave this speech and he said, I am an elected president of Ecuador

for four years and I will not serve one day less or one day more. And I think it was the next day, or certainly within the next week, they threw him out. This man who was president of Ecuador five times named Valesco Ibarra, came back from Argentina where he'd been in exile...but the revolution was mainly in Guayaquil, which is a very large city and the main port controlled a lot of the country and there was shooting. Especially a lot of the police and military were killed, and this gave me a lesson in contingency plans because we, all our embassies and consulates have these contingency plans that they'd worked hard on in case of something like this. It always interested me that the only person who followed the contingency plan to the letter almost got himself killed. Circumstances forced everyone else to do something different than they thought they would do. Because we lived in , we had a consul general and two consuls and about five vice consuls, and I shared an apartment with one of the vice consuls. He was a bachelor, Walter Smith. I don't know if you ever –

Q: Yes, I know Walter.

DEARBORN: There might be more than one. He died.

Q: Oh no, then I don't.

DEARBORN: Yeah, some years ago. But anyway, he and I had an apartment right over the apartment where the consul general lived. We were all supposed to do certain things, but what happened was you couldn't go out in the street because they were shooting up and down and crossways. So for a couple of days, I always remember I said to the consul general, I think I'm going out to see, I just have to go out and see what's going on. He said, "look. I forbid you to go out." He said "if you want to get killed, that's your business, but its going to cause an incident for me" [laughter]. That was Harold Williamson, I don't know if you –

Q: No.

DEARBORN: Anyway, so that was interesting.

Q: You came back to Washington where you stayed for ten years, is that right?

DEARBORN: Eleven years.

Q: Eleven. From '44 to '54.

DEARBORN: Well, really '56 because it was December of '55 when I went to Peru.

Q: Well, what did you do when you first came back?

DEARBORN: Well they called me back. A telegram came in saying, Dearborn please report to Washington immediately. One of those things. And its just like another one of those things where you drop everything, and you rush up here and they say, you're here already? [laughter] They said immediately, "so the consul general was completely baffled" and I said, "well what could they possible want to know from me that they couldn't better find out from somebody

else? I don't know anything." So anyway, when I got up there what they wanted to do was to ask me if I would take the Ecuador desk. That was the big deal. So I said, "what's the Ecuador desk?" [laughter] I'd only been in the field, I'd never been in the Department. So I said ok, why not. Well in those days, in any day, I was still Foreign Service Auxiliary, but Foreign Service Auxiliary couldn't work in Washington. So I switched from Foreign Service to Civil Service. And that's what I was for the next eleven years.

Q: On the Ecuador desk?

DEARBORN: No, no I was the Ecuador desk [laughter] so I married the third secretary of the Ecuadorian embassy and they switched me to Argentina. So I was three years on the Ecuador desk total, and then in '47 I went on the Argentine desk and I was on that for I think 5 years. Then they made me chief of _____, which included Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay. And then after that, I guess that must've been the beginning of '55 or something like that, it was a time when all ten South American countries were under one director, and they made me Deputy Director for South America. And so then I had the whole continent to worry about.

Q: Well, back in this period, '44 to '47 –

DEARBORN: Ecuador.

Q: Yes, Ecuador, what was the role of a desk officer? I mean these things change all the time –

DEARBORN: Well it was a glorious thing to be in those days. No, the reason I say that is you, one reason why it was a very satisfying thing was that you, anything in the government that had to do with Ecuador was centered at you and everybody looked to you to give answers. And it was in those days when they first started the country policy statements, and Carlton Savage (?) was up in the stratosphere supervising these country policy statements, and the Ecuador one was one of the first. I wrote the Ecuador one. Then you'd circulate it to other interested parties for other things they wanted to do with it, and then it was eventually given a stamp of approval and that was it. There were many other developments in those statements, but that was the first time when they started them.

Q: What was American interest in those –

DEARBORN: Well, the main thing I was concerned about in those days was that we were negotiating for permanent base rights in the Galapagos Islands. Ecuador offered us, and we took, an airbase in the Galapagos Islands during the war and our military were interested in having them permanently on an island called Seymour (?) Island. So Ecuador, as one fellow in the Department put it, Ecuador looked on this as their rich old uncle in Ireland that was going to die and leave them millions, because Ecuador wanted to get the most out of it and we wanted to give as little as we could. For a couple years we were going back and forth about this thing, in fact twice during that period when the draft boards were zeroing in on the Department I was safe from the draft twice because I was working on these negotiations. My toe and the Galapagos Islands really kept me out of the war.

Q: Did we ever, I can't recall –

DEARBORN: It was a big letdown. I forget just what year it was, probably '45 or '46, and we were bickering over XM banks and special deals with Ecuador for the island, for the base. One day we got a communication from the Defense Department saying they didn't want them anymore. That long range aircraft had negated the necessity for the base, so the rich old uncle in Ireland died and didn't leave any money at all! It was very sad. But I think the Ecuadorians still have a base out there that we left.

But that was the main thing. And then the other thing was, we had a lot going on with Ecuador, they were on our side during the war, and one big program we had was getting balsa wood, this didn't have too much to do with me but with Ecuador, getting balsa wood for the Mosquito aircraft of the British out of Ecuador. They're the world's biggest producer of balsa. And then, I don't know, people would always come through the desk on their way down there and get briefed and... I don't know what else to say. I remember the day I went into the director, Bill Braden was the assistant secretary of Latin American, and Ellis Briggs was assistant secretary director, and I went to one day to tell him I was going to marry the third secretary of the Ecuadorian Embassy, he took it with great aplomb. He said, well I've always found Latin Americans make very good Foreign Service wives [laughter]. Then he told his staff meeting the next day, I wasn't there but I heard about it, he said I know I've been encouraging closer relations between our desk officers and the embassy, but I didn't know anyone was going to go this far [laughter].

GEORGE S. VEST
Consular and Economic Officer
Quito (1949-1951)

Ambassador George B. Vest was born in Virginia in 1918. He received an undergraduate degree from the University of Virginia and served in the United States Army during World War II. He went back to the University of Virginia to earn a Master's degree in History and passed the Foreign Service Exam in 1947. In addition to Ecuador, Ambassador Vest served in Bermuda and Canada. After serving as ambassador to the European Community and as the Director General of the Foreign Service, he retired in 1989. Ambassador Vest was interviewed in 1989 by Charles Stuart Kennedy.

VEST: So then my wife and I were sent in '49 to Quito, Ecuador, which we loved. [Chuckles] That was our punishment. But the real thing was, we were terribly fortunate. Our difficult post was our first post. I had the kind of backing from her and we had the kind of background which made us survive it and be quite ready that we were going to live by our standards and what we thought someone should do when they represented our country regardless. And if you couldn't stay in the Foreign Service doing it that way, we'd get out. Well, it was sort of the first time when I was prepared to quit, and periodically in life, you have to be prepared to quit.

Q: Well, what about in Quito? This was a positive experience?

VEST: It was a great experience. It was very simple. I worked then for Ambassador Jack Simmons and his wife, Caroline Simmons, two of the most marvelous human beings you could have. They were simply wonderful to us. And I can still remember the two of them came -- we invited them to come and have supper in the little house we lived in -- and Ambassador Simmons said to me, "George, have you ever looked at your file in Washington? Because when you leave a post, you know, you can see what's been on your file." And he had just come back from Washington.

And I said, "No. When I came through Washington, I didn't bother to look in my file."

He said, "Well, you know, you have just about the worst file of any junior officer I've ever known." Which I knew was no surprise. [Laughter] He was a wonderfully engaging man. He said, "But we are going to do something about that." [Laughter] He was a great boss. Maury Bernbaum was his deputy, who was a wonderfully kind, thoughtful number two.

Q: Later ambassador to...

VEST: Later ambassador in Venezuela.

Q: Venezuela and Ecuador.

VEST: And Ecuador. And between the Simmons and the Bernbaums, we just had wonderful opportunities. As they did in those days, I worked in the consular section, I worked with the USIA on the side, which was then part of the regular Foreign Service, as did my wife. I worked in the economics section. You know, I just was given every break.

Q: So this was your time to blossom out?

VEST: They had been without an administrative officer for almost nine months. So for my first six months I did that, until they got in, finally, an administrative officer. So I had a chance to do everything.

ROBERT A. STEVENSON
Consular Officer
Guayaquil (1950-1952)

Ambassador Robert Stevenson was born in Vermont in 1918. He received a B.S. from the University of North Carolina in 1938 and served in the U.S. Navy in the Pacific theater during World War II. He joined the Foreign Service in 1947. In addition to Ecuador, Ambassador Stevenson served in Costa Rica, Germany, Chile, Columbia, Malawi, and Washington, DC. He retired in 1978 and was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1989.

STEVENSON: Costa Rica was a very interesting post to get started at. Then much to my chagrin, I was assigned to Guayaquil, Ecuador.

Q: *Why to your chagrin?*

STEVENSON: Well, I thought that I should go to another Embassy. I had been doing consular work and I wanted to get back into political work. I thought, well, if I go to Guayaquil, it will be just consular work and a hot, tropical port. It turned out to be quite an interesting experience.

Q: *I might say, for the dates, you were in San José from '47 to '50, and from Guayaquil from '50 to '52.*

STEVENSON: 1950 to '52. Right. Guayaquil was still the old Foreign Service. I can remember getting two messages in Brown Code, and I had to go to the vault and dig out Brown Code books and look up the words in the books. That was pretty far back. I used to put on a white suit every morning and white shoes, and I did feel like an O. Henry vice consul. In San José and Guayaquil we still kept the "Miscellaneous Records Book." They contained many weird and interesting entries. For example, Miss Mary Byrd of Cartago, C.R., (who used to ride her horse side saddle to the Embassy residence July 4th party) a cousin of Admiral Byrd, came to me and asked me to record her will. She was then in her 90's. I copied it into the Miscellaneous Record Book. I wonder whatever happened to these old books.

Q: *Guayaquil was known as the white man's grave or something. Thomas Nast died there.*

STEVENSON: Yes. Yellow fever was a real scourge. People from Quito, before the control of mosquitoes, used to hate to come through Guayaquil because they ran the risk of getting yellow fever in passage. Then an earthquake, I think in '42, killed one of our vice consuls and his wife, when the building collapsed.

We found it an interesting post. One of the junior officers there was Peter Vaky, who later became Assistant Secretary for Latin American Affairs. I don't know if you have him on your list or not.

Q: *He's on our list.*

STEVENSON: Then after Guayaquil, two years there, I was sent over to --

Q: *In Guayaquil, did you get involved in any political situations there at the time?*

STEVENSON: Velasco Ibarra was running again, the perennial candidate. I must say when I think back and remember the people I met in Latin America who later became president of their country, it was a fair number -- or Presidents whom I met. I guess going back to Costa Rica, there was José Figueres. I got to know Figueres a little bit. I met Otilio Ulate, and was on the delegation when he was finally inaugurated. I got to know Mario Echandi who followed Figueres as President in 1954. During the revolution I met Daniel Oduber, a young Captain in

Figueres' forces, and President in 1974-78. Then there was Luis Alberto Monje, who later became President. In Guayaquil I met Velasco Ibarra when he came to Guayaquil during his political campaign. The Consulate General reported they thought he would be elected. The embassy reported they didn't think he'd be elected. He was, again, for about the fourth or fifth time. But we were just lucky. We just guessed it right.

Q: How were relations between the embassy and Guayaquil?

STEVENSON: They were good. Communication by road was very difficult. It was still not possible in the rainy season, and even in the dry season, it was a very rough road. George Vest drove a Model A Ford down and paid a visit one time, George and his wife.

The naval mission had a Beechcraft in Guayaquil, and I recall once in the two years I flew up to Quito on it. But some people flew up more often than that on this naval mission plane. I remember it was always kind of hairy because you had to fly in through these high mountain passes and you had to make sure a pass was open. It was quite a trip. By train, I never made it. There was a train. There was one place called the Nariz del Diablo, where the train had to back to get around a corner, and a couple of times locomotives had fallen off at that point.

Q: In other words, you weren't --

STEVENSON: You weren't enthusiastic about going by train, no. I did fly up one time. I'd say we operated pretty independently, but with all due regard for the embassy. Paul Daniels was the ambassador when I was there, and I got to know him a bit. I met him when he came through Guayaquil en route to Quito. When he came through, his little girls stayed with us a couple of days. It was still an old-fashioned Consulate General.

Q: You had two posts in Latin America, more the tradition type posts that one thinks of when one does think of O. Henry stories. What was your impression of the Foreign Service and of the Latin American circuit at that point, by the time you left in 1952?

STEVENSON: I was very favorably impressed with the people I dealt with. Tap Bennett, incidentally, was the desk officer then for Costa Rica and, I think, for Ecuador too somewhat later. Bob Newbigin and Allan Stewart -- those are some of the old names.

Anyway, as you asked me, I was very well impressed with the Latin American crowd and I enjoyed my tours in Latin America. I didn't particularly want to go to Germany, where I went next.

PATRICK F. MORRIS
Point IV Program Officer, USAID
Quito (1953-1955)

Mr. Morris was born and raised in Montana. Educated at Georgetown University,

Mexico City College, and San Marcos College, Lima, Peru, Mr. Morris served in the US Army in Europe during World War II, where he was captured and imprisoned by the German Army. He joined the newly established Point IV program in 1950 and worked with that agency and its successors in various senior level capacities in Washington, D.C., in Paris and throughout Latin America. His final posting was in the Dominican Republic, where he served as Director of the US AID Mission. Mr. Morris was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2007.

Q: Today is the 7th of March, 2007. Pat, you were in Ecuador from when to when? 1953 to when?

MORRIS: 1953 to 1955. Let me see, yes, it was just a little over two years. I arrived in the middle of March of 1953 and I left about the first of May, 1955.

Q: Okay. How would you describe the Ecuador situation and our interests in Ecuador in 1953?

MORRIS: 1953 we were still, of course, in a post-World War II mode in Latin America at that time and the overall U.S. policy toward Latin America was still operating pretty much on the basis of World War II in which our primary interest had been to keep the shipping lanes open between Latin America and the United States so that we could continue to receive exports from the Latin American countries, strategic materials such as copper and food stuffs, coffee, cocoa, sugar and so forth from the Latin American countries. Then we had a number of military, strategic military bases in Latin America and in Ecuador there had been, during the war, an air base on the Pacific coast, on the Salinas Peninsula. So we described our interests still in 1953 as our interest in Ecuador was protection of the Panama Canal from the south and making sure that the United States had access to cocoa; cacao, coffee; rice; and bananas which were the primary exports of Ecuador at that time. Of course I had started with the Institute of Inter-American Affairs in Lima and the interests of the U.S. Government, first of all initiating the Institute programs was to make sure that they, in case of economic blockade from Germany and maybe Japan would be able to produce enough food stuffs to supply their own populations. In the area of health: to improve the basic health of the indigenous populations so that they could become more self-sufficient in terms of providing, through a growing labor force for their needs. And later on the Institute got into education programs using the same philosophy. So that when I went to Ecuador this was the general mode and the programs that were operating in Ecuador at that time under the Institute of Inter-American Affairs were an agricultural program, a health program and an education program.

The agricultural program was a holdover from a Department of Agriculture research effort. The Department of Agriculture had at that time and for a number of years after that an Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations and they had established in a number of Latin American countries research programs, agricultural research programs in basic grains and potatoes and a number of other tropical products such as bananas and balsa wood and quinine to fight malaria.

Q: Quinine comes from the bark of a what?

MORRIS: It comes from the bark of a tree, actually that grew wild in the jungles of Ecuador and Peru and well, it was the Amazon Basin. So the Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations had set up research programs to improve the quality and quantity of some basic products, tropical and otherwise. In the highlands of Ecuador of course it was basic grains. But in Ecuador that program had been absorbed by the Institute of Inter-American Affairs into its agricultural activities. But it had not operated on the same basis as the Institute programs had. The Institute programs, as I explained with regard to Peru, were all cooperative servicios in which the servicio was part of the ministry, the corresponding ministry, and there were co-directors of those servicios. The OFAR (Office of Foreign Agricultural Relations) program in Ecuador, the OFAR research program in Ecuador, this was strictly a U.S. Government operation. While it hired locals all of the senior staff was American and they directed all of the activities. So when I arrived in Ecuador they were just beginning to move toward operations using the servicio model for their activities.

In health this was a long-standing, very well operated Institute of Inter-American Affairs program which had concentrated on potable water supply for the small rural towns, villages and some fairly large towns which did not have potable water. Hospital administration and nurse training; those were the three areas that the health servicio had been operating in.

The education servicio was concentrating on rural primary education. I think that is generally what the situation was in Ecuador when I got there.

The political situation was interesting from the point of view that there had been a regular tradeoff between military coups and democratic elections. I arrived at a time when the first successive democratic election had taken place. In 1948, after a military coup, there was a democratic election and Galo Plaza became president. He was president for four years and in 1952, I think, yes 1952, he was replaced in another democratic election by Velasco Ibarra. José Velasco Ibarra had already been president of Ecuador twice before. He had been elected both times and he had been overthrown in earlier coups. So this was his third time as president.

Velasco Ibarra was a great orator and a very honest man but not a very practical man and even though he as an individual was honest and did not profit monetarily during his presidency, it was nevertheless a very corrupt regime because all of his supporters took advantage, of course in ministerial positions, feathered their own nests and were not particularly interested in furthering national interests.

So this was the general atmosphere that we were operating in but there had been good progress, especially under the health servicio. The number of rural water systems had- there were in the neighborhood of 50 to 100 new rural water systems opening every year and these were operated by the local municipalities. The servicio, which was a joint Ecuadorian-U.S. Government operation would make agreements with local municipalities and get a commitment from the local municipality that they would pay half of all of the cost of putting in the local system and the servicio would pay the other half. The servicio money, the United States Government provided grant money for the operation of the servicios but they had to be, those funds had to be matched on at least a 50/50 basis and in some countries where projects became very popular the local governments were willing to put up even more money. So in some countries in certain areas the local contribution was up to 75 percent and in Ecuador I think it was around 60 percent that the

local government was putting in and then the municipalities were putting in 50 percent more for all of the water supply projects. In addition to providing funds the servicios also trained the engineers who would run the municipal water supply; train the bookkeepers, teaching them how to bill customers and so forth. So it was a very complete system and it was a very successful system and I think that during the 15 years or so that the servicio operated they had a tremendous rate of success.

Q: In the first place, could you tell me what does doing a water system involve in a village for example?

MORRIS: Well first of all you have to locate a source of clean water and usually it might mean building a reservoir or it might mean digging deep wells. But whatever it took it required resources on the part of the community and at least half of what the servicio did really was just organizing people to do the job. But once a reservoir was built, say, there had to be a little filtration plant to assure that the water was not contaminated and so forth. And all of these things- the servicio had engineers, local engineers, usually one U.S. engineer who would be head of that particular division and then they would train the local municipal engineers to run the system. As I have mentioned before, in Ecuador, that certainly was the most outstanding operation that the Institute had.

Q: Did you find you were getting involved with politics? I mean the rent man or the mayor or something would want to get- I mean-

MORRIS: Well it is interesting that usually the communities themselves - there was local participation and therefore the community's greatest needs were taken into account and the politicians who were interested in staying in office, in Ecuador unlike a lot of other Latin American countries, there were locally elected officials so that they, up to some point, were responsible to the electorate. So if they wanted to stay in office they had to do things which the people wanted and of course almost everywhere a clean water supply was a number one priority. And so we did not have very much interference. There were the usual kind of things where a supplier might try to bribe somebody to get a contract, either for hauling rock or for whatever, but on the whole the servicio itself had a sterling reputation for not either getting involved in politics or for being corrupt in any way so that the municipalities on the whole knew that if they were dealing with the servicio that they would get what they contracted for. The interesting thing is that the program was so popular and the servicio had limited resources in terms of making commitments for water supply that there was sometimes a delay of one or two years from the time that a municipality approached the servicio until the time that they could begin to work on the water supply because there was just a limited number of projects that they could work on at any given time.

Q: Well what was your role in this?

MORRIS: I went from Peru to Ecuador as a program officer. That is a good question because it leads into the changes that were taking place in Washington at the time. The Institute of Inter-American Affairs had operated on the basis of individual programs, health, agricultural, education and each one of those divisions had an office in Washington and they operated pretty

much independently of each other; there was no real coordination. There was the agriculture servicio that reported directly to the ag office Washington; the health servicio that reported directly to the health office Washington and the education servicio that reported to their office in Washington. And although they were part of the same organization, the Institute of Inter-American Affairs and there was coordination in Washington, they were fairly independent in the way they operated in the field. So the servicio directors, the American servicio directors knew each other but may have gotten together or may not have gotten together and they each went their own way.

Well when Truman started the Point Four program the TCA, Technical Cooperation Administration, it was organized differently and the Institute of Inter-American Affairs was incorporated into the TCA as the Latin American branch of TCA but the Institute had to reorganize itself in the model of the rest of TCA, which had insisted on having a country director in each country, a program office in each country and a controller in each country. This was quite a different model from the way the servicios operated; the servicios operated through their individual offices in Washington; each servicio had an American director and the local servicios had what they called a business manager. There was an American business manager and a co-business manager from the local country. There was no thought of program officers for planning joint programs so that when I left Peru and went to Ecuador the Institute was just changing over from the servicio approach to the TCA approach and the TCA had already named the country directors in all of the Latin American countries. In Peru the head of the agricultural servicio became the country director. In Ecuador the head of the health servicio became the country director. I came in as program officer, a new office which had just been instituted in Washington and the idea was that the country director would coordinate all of the activities of the TCA in the country and that there would be joint planning of projects. And the program office had the responsibility of making sure that each one of the servicios would budget, plan its programs and then clear them through the country director, and the program office was responsible for making sure that there was joint planning, there was joint programming and that the budgets, all of the budgets from all of the servicios then came to the program office and the program office had responsibility for making sure that all of the figures added up and didn't exceed the amount of money that had been allocated to us. This also became the basis for presentation of future projects to the Congress, the congressional presentation. So I was the first program officer in Ecuador and I put together the various elements and began to consult with the various organizations to present this information to our offices in Washington.

Q: Pat, when you were talking about the early 1950s, the Eisenhower Administration came in, you mentioned bananas. And one cannot help thinking of the United Fruit Company and its role in these small countries, particularly in Central America but also I imagine in Ecuador. Could you talk about the agricultural situation, how we saw it and sort of the American role and the pressures fruit companies might have, whatever the situation was and what you were doing on that?

MORRIS: This is very interesting because Ecuador I think was unique in the way the banana industry developed. United Fruit and Standard Fruit were the two large American enterprises dealing in bananas in Latin America. They started in Central America and had large plantations, very advanced. They had whole agricultural sections which worked with the people and helped

establish the latest, most modern agricultural practices to increase production and to get them to market. This was industrial agriculture. And they, those two companies also had brief interludes in Colombia using the same techniques that they used in Central America with mixed results in Colombia. But as in Central America and in Colombia there was an aura of imperialism connected with the enterprises and there is no doubt in Central America United Fruit and Standard Fruit really ran the areas of the country that they operated in and had tremendous influence on the governments.

Q: Hence the name "Banana Republic."

MORRIS: Hence the name "Banana Republics." And those companies were interested primarily in the bottom line; they were not interested in any particular development of the countries themselves and stayed out of politics as long as their own interests were not threatened. But at any time that their interests became threatened they moved in with a heavy hand and took care of the situation.

I learned just recently, it is interesting that I would not have known it before; I learned just recently that United Fruit did have a plantation in Ecuador but for some reason they really stayed below the radar. When Galo Plaza became president, Galo Plaza was a very interesting guy.

Q: He became president when?

MORRIS: He became president in 1948. And when Galo Plaza became president he had a degree in agricultural engineering from the University of Maryland. He spoke perfect English and he spoke Quichua, which is the Native Indian language because his family had owned large haciendas in the highlands, and he had grown up with the Indians, the local serfs, peons. So he spoke perfect Quichua and he spoke perfect English because he was born in Brooklyn. His father was counsel general of Ecuador in New York City and they had a house in Brooklyn and Galo Plaza was born while his father was counsel general. There is the story of the, I cannot remember which New York daily newspaper it was, but when Galo Plaza was elected president the paper's headlines were "Local Boy Makes Good." Galo Plaza was born in Brooklyn.

But Galo Plaza was a convinced democrat; that is with a small "d" but he really believed in democracy, having lived a good part of his life in the United States. He really believed that it was important to do whatever you could to make sure that democracy flourished in Ecuador. He, I do not remember the name of his agricultural minister at that time, but they decided that they would institute a program of small holder ownership for banana plantations. United Fruit that was there, evidently Ecuador was a little too far away from the U.S. to get bananas to market early enough so that United Fruit, as far as I know, had no influence whatsoever on what happened in Ecuador. Galo Plaza's instituted a program of small holders for banana cultivation in the coastal areas of Ecuador. This resulted in thousands of 10-acre, 15-acre plots all over, in all of the coastal areas. Then those bananas were marketed mostly through local merchants or middlemen to the larger banana companies. That was the way it started and later some of those local merchants became big enough so that they had their own shipping arrangements; in fact, they owned their own ships taking bananas to the United States.

Q: Did we get involved in those?

MORRIS: We did. Shortly after I arrived there was an outbreak of a banana disease known as sigatoka and this was just devastating for the banana farmers. I think that the OFAR program had begun even before the sigatoka outbreak some basic studies on banana diseases. But with the outbreak of sigatoka it became a priority for the Ecuadorian Government so this was a perfect match for us to work with them in finding a cure for sigatoka. One of the unheralded heroes of Ecuadorian banana cultivation is a man named Russ Rossier. Russ Rossier was with the Department of Agriculture, a research guy, who headed the sigatoka research project in Ecuador. There was a banana research station in the Ecuadorian lowlands and Russ lived there at the station and he had about oh, maybe six or seven other local Ecuadorian pathologists, plant researchers working with him. They were experimenting with all kinds of different things; they were mixing oils with different chemicals and setting out the usual research plots to test how the crops reacted to these various things. At one point—they were fumigating these plots by airplane — and at one point the oil that was loaded into the plane was by mistake just pure oil; it had no chemical in it at all. And it was that plot, the plot that was sprayed with no chemical in the oil that rendered the best results. This then became the formula for preventing sigatoka and over time eliminating the disease as an economic threat.

Q: ...but in other parts where you were working.

MORRIS: Well, you have to talk about it almost in international terms. The campesinos throughout Latin America have lived in abject poverty and the Industrial Revolution passed Latin America by. Right through the end of World War II you could say that mercantilism was still the basis for trade. These were countries that produced raw materials, did not fabricate much of anything. At the end of World War II that began to change and you began to see local industries grow and prosper. But the lot of the people who lived in the rural areas had not changed a bit; did not change at all. There was talk of land reform and it happened in Bolivia but it did not happen in Peru or Ecuador to any large degree except for this experiment that I mentioned in the lowlands of Ecuador where the small holder banana plantations caught on and those growers in the lowlands advanced rapidly to becoming middle class, lower middle class maybe. Their lot was much superior to the highland Indians who still lived on these large haciendas and were day laborers for all practical purposes.

Q: How did you find working there with the government in your particular area? I mean, you say it was a democracy but rife with corruption. How did this play out from your work?

MORRIS: We had very good relations with the government. They were enthusiastic about our programs because they worked. This was a time, of course, when the United States was— after World War II and the United States was admired all over the world so that we were— it was easy for us to work with government ministries and to promote our programs and to be accepted. We stayed away from getting involved in anything that was close to political and in fact, as a result, we really did not, and this is an institutional problem, not just the Institute of Inter-American Affairs but the whole U.S. Government; we did not really address the social issues, we did not address the social issues. We worked around the edges so that we did not promote land reform; we talked it up but we did not promote it. At that time, if you recall, the United States had

engaged in land reform in Taiwan.

Q: Yes. And in Japan.

MORRIS: And in Japan, exactly. And these were examples that we were aware of and we talked about them, we talked to the locals about them and we suggested they might do something about them but there was never, on our part there was never any real effort to try to promote land reform. And of course even though the United States had engaged in land reform in Taiwan and Japan there was a very, very strong lobby, if you will, in the United States which was against the United States ever getting into any of this kind of thing. And I think that that particular attitude persisted during almost my entire time in Latin America.

Q: Well then you left Ecuador in?

MORRIS: Fifty-five.

LAWRENCE NORRIE
Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Quito (1957-1960)

Lawrence Norrie was born in Pennsylvania in 1903. He received a B.S. from Springfield College and an M.A. from Columbia University. He worked extensively with the YMCA and later directed German youth programs after World War II for the U.S. Government. Mr. Norrie joined USIS in 1950 and served overseas in the West Indies, Ecuador, and Austria. He was interviewed by G. Lewis Schmidt in 1990.

Q: That was what year that you were sent to Ecuador?

NORRIE: It was about 1957, I guess. That was another great experience for me. Quito, Ecuador, was the headquarters of the embassy. We had our offices in the embassy, we had a branch office in Guayaquil, and we had an America House in Quito and another office in Guayaquil. As you know, Quito is 9,500 feet high. Some people have difficulty living there, but we found it very congenial. We loved the people. There was much to be done there. Political education became a major interest of ours, to let people see how America lives, how they work, how they play, and what their facilities are for a good life. But also how they govern themselves.

Q: Did you have formal educational resources to deal with the public there?

NORRIE: The University of Quito and the University of Guayaquil -- also other groups, yes. We didn't have too much access to the university at first, but through the help of one of the leaders in Guayaquil, we were able to get some funds to build a residence for non-communist youth at the university and to help them develop their own press, their own paper, and to enjoy some other activities through our auspices, e.g. English classes at the America House.

Q: While you were there, did you ever know a man by the name of Dr. Bustamante?

NORRIE: Oh, yes.

Q: Because when I was Acting Director for Latin America, I remember going with him one day. I think that we had provided some of the material, soccer balls and equipment, as well as other sports equipment.

NORRIE: I do remember him. The military attaché at the embassy also supported his work. So did the Marines stationed there.

Q: No, I was speaking of Bustamante in Ecuador.

NORRIE: No, I didn't know him. I'm sorry. I was thinking of the Bustamante in Jamaica.

Q: I went with him way out into one of the small towns up in the Andes. He had all this equipment which USIS had furnished him, and he gave it to the boys' athletic club that was in this small town. I remember them giving three cheers for Dr. Bustamante. I have several pictures of that event.

NORRIE: I remember receiving some soccer balls and other equipment from USIS, requested by our U.S. cultural officer at USIS. The Otavalo Indians were one of our audiences. We showed films for them. We had a strong film program there, with a couple of vehicles to take the films around into the hinterlands, and a very good man to show the films.

Q: You said you built these dormitories for non-communist students. I gather from that, that there was at least some, or perhaps a fairly substantial, communist influence and sympathy in the university itself.

NORRIE: No doubt about that, I guess. Our job was to start with assumptions that our program was needed, and that those interested would come to it, and whether they were communists or not, they would benefit by it. The students at the University in Guayaquil came very generously to the program. They liked what they saw in the films, and speakers provided by the State Department, musicians, talented people, authors, and so forth, would come there, and they would flock as an audience.

Q: Did you have any overt and identifiable opposition from the communist groups to the program?

NORRIE: Not to our program. I don't recall any directly aimed at our programs. The film program was well chosen in Washington. The films were carefully selected. That is, they developed films, took the pictures, and shipped them, of things that actually existed in the U.S.A. The Cultural Exchange Program was also well received.

Q: They could relate the films to the actual life of the people in the U.S.A.?

NORRIE: That's right. This would flabbergast people when they saw the sea of automobiles parked around the Lockheed factory, automobiles driven by workers at that factory. They couldn't believe it. But it became part of their impression of American life.

Q: In connection with USIS activities at the time of your assignment to Quito, when we were talking last night off the record, you told me about the cooperation of the ambassador in taking you to see the president and asking him how you could most help him to carry out his program in his own country. If you don't mind, I'd like you to put that experience on tape and tell us what came about as a result.

NORRIE: The president at that time was Galo Plaza, who later became the head of the Organization of American States. He was a fabulous person. We also had a fabulous ambassador, I thought. He was always cooperative and willing to help in our program. It was Ambassador Ravndal, who is gone now.

At one point not too long after we got there, it developed that Ambassador Ravndal wanted me to go with him to see the president and talk about how he could get a better press, a better public. Because, as Ravndal said, "My job is to make sure that the public knows who you are and what you are as president of this country, in order that you will stay in office and do the good work that you've cut out for your country."

The president said, "I don't need money. I don't need manpower. The thing I lack is a public audience. I have no newspapers; they're all controlled by the opposition. I have no radio, I have no other outlets. If you can help me in that regard, you'll be of great assistance and I will appreciate it, but I can't think of anything else."

We went back to the embassy and brought together the staff, and discussed with them what could we do. It developed that everyone thought that a newspaper outlet was the main thing needed. We discussed that, or the ambassador did, with the State Department, and in due time, a printing press, tons of newsprint, which was unavailable to the president of the country down there, arrived in Guayaquil. We went down to receive it. There came the problem of where to put it and who's going to run it. We found, without too much trouble, through the government's help, a building in Guayaquil, which was Ecuador's largest, most populated city.

The question of where to run it revolved around getting an editor who would be pro-administration. We found one working in USIA, who had just been let out, and he went to work for the president in that newspaper as editor. I think he enjoyed the new experience. That newspaper has grown ever since.

Q: I hope it still remains a pro-U.S. paper!

NORRIE: I don't know how it ranks politically anymore. I've been out of that field for a long time. You have to remember I retired 21 years ago.

Q: It gave Galo Plaza his press outlet.

NORRIE: It gave him his press outlet. He was a very brilliant president and, as I say, became the head of the Organization of American States.

Q: Had the paper become rapidly self-sustaining?

NORRIE: Yes, yes. It got adequate advertising and help, especially from U.S. and international interests.

Q: So that it wasn't any further burden to USIS. It just operated on its own?

NORRIE: On its own, yes, from my understanding. I left Ecuador not too long after that, but my understanding is that it developed rapidly.

After Ecuador, I went back to work in the Agency.

Q: Before leaving your discussion of Ecuador, how about saying a word on Leonard Bernstein's visit there, which you spoke of earlier when we were not recording.

NORRIE: Oh, yes, I should mention that one of the presentation groups that came there was Leonard Bernstein, who came down with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra. He was a hit from the moment he arrived there until he left. One famous anecdote: He heard of the reed players, people who play with reeds up in the mountains, and he wanted to hear them. So after his last performance in Quito, which was at night, a group from USIA took him in a car up to this village, which was sound asleep when we got there, but they got up in a hurry for Leonard Bernstein and played in a smoky little cottage with their reeds. He sat there. I can picture him now, resting in a hammock. Finally, he got up, made some notes, and believe it or not, the next night in Guayaquil, his orchestra arranger produced a piece for the Philharmonic Orchestra that sounded like the reeds and followed their tunes. It was great. Down in Guayaquil, they thought it was fabulous. [Laughter]

Q: It's too bad you didn't have any kind of tape recorder like we have today.

NORRIE: I think we did. I'm sure the whole concert was taped, because we did show it.

Q: I mean up in the village itself.

NORRIE: Oh, yes! We should have, yes.

G. HARVEY SUMM
Political Officer
Quito (1958-1959)

G. Harvey Summ was born in New York in 1919. He received a degree from the

City College of New York and joined the U.S. Navy during World War II, where he was stationed in Lisbon. He joined the Foreign Service in 1948, serving in the Dominican Republic, Brazil, Ecuador, Cuba, Angola, and Washington, DC. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1993.

Q: You left in 1958 and finally got yourself a political officer job.

SUMM: In Quito, Ecuador.

Q: You served there for a couple of years. What was the situation in Ecuador when you got there?

SUMM: There was a democratically-elected government in, a conservative regime. Ponce was president.

You have asked me my impressions about various ambassadors. Ambassador Ravndal was at the airport to meet me.

Q: Christian Ravndal, my God!

SUMM: I never expected that. He was a marvelous man. His wife, who was Austrian, took my Brazilian wife in hand and was a great help to her. His views were rather conservative, mine were rather liberal. But he was extremely fair in letting me call shots the way I wanted to...

Q: What was your position in the political section?

SUMM: Chief. It was a two-man political section.

Q: In your reporting how could you handle the two views? What were you seeing and what was he seeing?

SUMM: I remember Ambassador Ravndal calling me into his office one morning. He had been at a dinner party the night before and some of the people in Ecuadorian society had complained to him that the US by supporting agrarian reform was doing something extremely radical, if not communistic. This was not directed towards me personally, but I also had labor union connections and the Ambassador wanted to know if this was a problem. I frankly said to him, "Mr. Ambassador, it is not so much that we are supporting this, it is that this country badly needs agrarian reform, it hasn't had it. Those Ecuadorians I know who support it are by no means radicals. These are reformers." And that was it. He accepted my viewpoint.

There was a mayoral election in Quito and much to the surprise of the Embassy a populist was elected. Again the Ambassador called me into the office and asked what it meant to us. I said, "Mr. Ambassador, I don't really know this fellow too well, but I know some people around him. I think he really sounds more radical then he in fact is going to be." Then Chris said to me, "Well, get to know him." So, again I admired this detachment of his...whatever his personal views it behooves the United States to know what is going on. He encouraged me and I did get to know

these people.

Q: At that time what did you see as American interests in Ecuador?

SUMM: Not very great. Again Ambassador Ravndal used the term "to make this a showcase for democracy." Ecuador had practically never had democracy. Here was the third straight time a president had been elected. The idea would be that through our AID program we would try to make them a showcase. I was very dubious about this because their institutions were such that they did not indicate any such thing would be possible. But I tried working with the AID mission to encourage health, education, agriculture at the grass roots level.

I was also labor reporting officer there. I enjoyed that. I remember getting drunk with a bunch of labor leaders. I don't like to drink. We sat up in the stands in an arena and they passed a whisky bottle back and forth and I took a swig out of it. I remember driving home that night, fortunately without accident. But it helped me gain their confidence more easily. They, too, were not radical. They just wanted improvement in their lives.

Q: Were we having problems with fishing in those days?

SUMM: No. That was before the 200 mile limit issue.

Q: How about the Peruvian boundary?

SUMM: There was a dustup during my period there. Our Embassy in Rio was the one that had primary responsibility for this. We merely reported some of the reactions of the Ecuadorian officials.

Q: Were there any major developments, problems while you were there?

SUMM: No.

GEORGE F. JONES
Political Officer
Quito (1958-1961)

Ambassador George F. Jones was born on June 27, 1935 in San Angelo, Texas. He attended Washburn College, followed by the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy and Stanford University. He entered the Foreign Service in 1956, wherein he served in countries including Ecuador, Ghana, Venezuela, Austria, Guatemala, Costa Rica, Chile, and Guyana. Ambassador Jones was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on August 6, 1996.

JONES: Toward the end of the training we got our assignments and I was assigned to Quito, Ecuador.

Q: Were you married at this time?

JONES: No. The first day that I walked into the State Department we were met at the door by Max Krebs, who I guess at that time was running the A-100 course, and I will always remember that he asked a series of questions to everybody who came in and one of them was "Are you married?" and I said "No," and he looked at me with a very stern expression and he said "Get married, otherwise you'll go overseas and you'll marry some foreigner." Which is exactly what I did. [laughter]

Q: So when did you go to Ecuador?

JONES: 1958.

Q: You were there from 1958 to when?

JONES: From November 1958 to November 1960. That flight, a Pan American flight from Texas (because I went back to visit my mother and take a few days of leave before going) stopped at every capital in between, Mexico City, San Salvador, Guatemala, Panama - a real milk run. I will always remember looking down and thinking that I'm actually outside of the United States, the land down there is foreign.

Q: Can you describe Ecuador in this 1958-1960 period? What was the situation there at the time?

JONES: It was very different--I was just in Ecuador last month, and the Ecuador of 1958 was very different from what it is today. The Embassy was very different. I was stunned and rightly stunned as it turned out when I got off of the plane to find almost the entire Embassy at the airport to meet me. I discovered later that didn't happen at any of my other posts. There was a kind of feeling then that this was a far off, isolated, backwater of the universe kind of place, and that we all had to hang together. So the DCM and everybody else was out there to meet me. The DCM was Ed Little, a very fine man who was later an Ambassador someplace in Africa. The Ambassador was Christian Ravndal, a man very much from the old school. I remember that he had everybody on the American staff to his residence at Christmas and he read--I can't remember if it was St. Luke, or Dickens, or what, but I remember being cautioned by the Administrative Officer that the last thing that I wanted to do was to be late for that command performance. I was being picked up by another officer and he was late and we both got there late. Fortunately I was able to explain that it was not my fault, but I remember the terror I felt at having done exactly what she had told me not to do. So it was a pretty different kind of Embassy from any Embassy today. And a different country.

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

JONES: There was a conservative President, Camilo Ponce Enriquez, and it was a country that had a very turbulent political history, lots of military coups and overthrows. But it seemed at that point to be in a period of stability, temporary as it turned out. The economy very much turned

around bananas, this was before oil was discovered. The large landholders were still very politically powerful and the Indians, who were perhaps a quarter of the population were very much out of everything, the economy, politics and everything else. Presidential elections were held in 1960, and again, one of those fortuitous things happened, my boss Tom Rogers, chief of the political section, came down with hepatitis and was out of the office for several months and I was by myself in the political office and got to do almost all of the reporting on the political campaign. It was clear that the Embassy and Washington and most of the elite were hoping that Galo Plaza Lasso would win, he was a large landowner, but one with a social conscience. He was pro-American, somebody that we could easily deal with and get along with. But his opponent was Jose Maria Velasco Ibarra, who was a populist in the great Latin American tradition and it should have been obvious to me, had I had any greater experience or political smarts, that if you had a free vote which you did, that Velasco was going to run all over this aristocrat who hobnobbed with foreign countries. Which is exactly what happened, but I failed to predict it and the message that I wrote on behalf of the Embassy predicting the result was absolutely wrong. I had my first run in with CIA at that point. I had gone around and talked to all of the political leaders...

Q: You had a position as a political officer?

JONES: Yes. Another one of those fortuitous things, I was supposed to be in a rotational program, and I had spent about nine months in the economic section, and then I went to political and was supposed to rotate next into the Consular Section to stamp visas. But then Tom Rogers got sick and they decided they couldn't rotate me out of there and so I spent the rest of the two years in political. Never got to Consular, I'm one of the few foreign service officers never to have had a consular assignment in my whole career. So I went around and I talked to all of the political leaders and each one said his own party was going to win and that wasn't very helpful. If I were doing it today, I would do it very differently, but at that point I didn't know of anything better to do, I thought I would go around and talk to other people in the Embassy who had been there a lot longer than I had, and had been in the Foreign Service a lot longer than I had, and see what they thought. One of the people I talked to was the station chief and he said that it looked pretty close, about 50-50 and that Plaza seemed to be gaining. That sort of confirmed what other people were saying and so that's what I wrote. Then in a staff meeting after the election, we were all sitting there stunned at Velasco's unforeseen landslide, and the station chief blandly denied that he had said any such thing. [laughter] That was the first, but not the last time, that I was absolutely furious at an Embassy staff meeting. Ed Little had to shut me up and calm me down.

Q: I might put in for the record that one of the things in a political section of an Embassy, one of the things that you try to do is gain points back in Washington by saying that you called the election correctly. If you don't call it correctly, your other prognostications, or your record is somewhat blotted. How about the Ambassador?

JONES: I always thought --I guess starting from that experience, that that is actually a very bad standard. The only way to tell what the likely outcome of an honest election is, is if you have a good reliable polling service, and not always then, as 1948 proved in the United States. Back at that time there was no such thing in Ecuador, there were no polls of any kind. It's either extremely easy for an Embassy because it tells Washington what the local polls are saying, or

else it's extremely difficult, like reading entrails -- how is an Embassy supposed to know how voters in a foreign country are going to vote. In Chile in 1988, where we had far better contacts and sources of information than we had in Ecuador in 1960, polls were not permitted by the dictatorship, and we had no idea how the plebiscite would go.

Q: Was Ravndal the Ambassador the whole time you were there?

JONES: He was there almost the whole time. I think about a month before I left, Maurice Bernbaum came in.

Q: How did Ravndal operate?

JONES: Ravndal was very much old school, very formal, and distant from his staff. He was on Mount Olympus and the only direct human contact was with the DCM. The DCM is often the bridge in an Embassy, even today, between the Ambassador and the rest of the staff.

Q: What about the Ecuadorian society, we're talking about in the 1950's and these things have changed, (I never served in Latin America) but one of the criticisms laid on, in many areas of the world is, an Embassy tends to associate with the ruling class and gets absorbed in that and often isn't very sensitive to what else is happening. You were the new boy on the block, how did you observe the Embassy, its contacts and where it stood in the society?

JONES: I've always felt that accusation was unfair. The places where I was, my whole career, the Embassy was doing its damndest to have as wide a circle of contacts as it possibly could. I was never told in my entire career -- with one single exception, there was a period when you were warned not have any contact with the local communist party, there was a belief, rightly or wrongly, that if the U.S. Embassy had any contact with the communist party it would lend it prestige and credibility that we didn't want it to have. With that one exception I never ran into any effort to limit contact with the opposition or to limit contact to one level of people or whatever. I think part of the reason that gets said is that people don't understand that it's the primary function of an Embassy to have a relationship with the people who are in power. The thing that you've got to do first, your top priority is to have frequent and close contact with the government and the people who are behind the government and who may influence the government. Because they are the only people who can decide things the way you want them to go. But as I said, every Embassy I ever served in, also tried to have contact with youth, with labor, with journalists, with every other sector of society.

Q: What about with the Indians? You said that they had about a quarter of the population, I would think that this would have been a difficult group to make contact with. For one thing were they out in the forest?

JONES: In the interior of the country yes, largely. Although we also saw many Indians in the streets of Quito as well. It's true, we had very little relationship with the Indians. There was nobody in the Embassy who could speak any of the Indian languages and in defense of that, precisely because they had no role in the system, no influence on the system, it was a very low priority for us. Now today, particularly in this last election that took place this year, there is a

block of Indian members of Congress. There was even talk of electing one of them as president of the Congress, which is an extraordinary development. So if I were in the Embassy in Quito today, having contact with representatives of the Indian movement and knowing what they were thinking and saying would certainly be a priority for the Embassy.

Q: How did you find moving within the Ecuadorian society? I notice that your wife is from Ecuador, so I assume that there was at least a contact there. [laughter] How did you find things to be at the social level for a young officer?

JONES: Easy to do. Ecuadorians are very friendly, open people. Latins in general are, with a few exceptions. I found them extremely hospitable toward a young American. You gradually learned that there were ways of doing things. One of the interesting things about a foreign language is it's not just that you translate a phrase into another language, but the way things are said and the way things are put, reflect the whole culture and a way of looking at the world. So along with learning Spanish I also learned something about the way people relate to each other in a Latin culture. Like every culture it's different, it's unique, and it has unique characteristics. I enjoyed it. One reason that I kept going back to Latin America is that I liked the area and I liked the people. I liked the fact that you could go to another Latin country and although there were significant differences from one to another, it was also very familiar because the cultural background was there. It wasn't like going to a totally strange country, there was a large element of familiarity every time you changed posts.

Q: How were Americans perceived in Ecuador? We had early on, but not too far away, a real dust up in Bogota, when Marshall was there--Nixon came through and had a very difficult time. This was not a completely tranquil time and Ecuador was not Colombia, but it is still up in that area. How was it?

JONES: Nixon had been through Quito on that same trip, that was before I got there. As I recall Quito was one of the places where it went better for him than it had elsewhere. When I was in Chile years later, a couple of friends and contacts of mine published a book called Chile and the United States - Una Relacion Esquiva and both I and my Chilean friends spent some time debating exactly what the best translation of the word Esquiva was, but we came down with ambiguous as the closest to it, an ambiguous relationship. I would say that's not just true of Chile, but of Latin America in general. There is a strong sense, which has grown in the time that I've been familiar with it, that the United States is the most important country for Latin America. It didn't used to be.

Q: It used to be very European oriented.

JONES: I remember when Douglas Dillon came down after Velasco Ibarra was elected President, I was asked to go to their lunch and sit behind them and be available as an interpreter. It turned out that they didn't need an interpreter because they could both speak in French. For any Latin American of Velasco Ibarra's generation, knowing French was the natural and expected thing to do. The whole cultural outlook and sense of affinity was toward Europe. And a lot of the economic relationship, certainly before World War II, was overwhelmingly with Europe. It only changed with the destruction of the European economy during the war. That has gradually faded,

the overwhelming choice of language, of place to study, now for Latin Americans is the United States. The overwhelming number one trade partner is the United States. For a lot of Latins in the nearer countries, those with a lot of money or even not so much, THE place to shop is Miami.

Q: At the time we're talking about it was still in the transitional period?

JONES: Oh yes, still in a transitional state. But think even then there was an awareness that the United States was a very important country for Ecuador and good relations with the United States were important. But they didn't like a lot of things about us. As I've been suggesting, a lot of the relationship was unavoidable, was essential, they had to trade with the United States because the economy of Europe was destroyed and the United States is closer. Anything you have to do that you don't have any choice about, you tend not to be very happy about. There was a lot of unhappiness with the lack of choice in the relationship with the United States. Of course this was particularly felt on the left. There were people on the right who were unhappy about it too, for somewhat different reasons. The left didn't like the United States policy, its economy, and saw correctly that U.S. influence was exporting our political system, our economy, and that with every day that passed they would have less choice about being carbon copies of the United States, as they saw it. So there was certainly resentment. I felt very little of that in a personal sense. I think that's maybe one thing that I liked about Latin America, obviously there are some exceptions, but with most Latins, they can be violently opposed to your policies and make a furious speech about the United States and then sit down and have a very courteous conversation with you. The tradition of manners that you must have in dealing with another person, and that you can have a warm and friendly relationship even with an opponent, is dominant. It always has been I think.

Q: Did the U.S. guarantee of the Peruvian/Ecuadorian border, which keeps coming up and began back in the early 1940's I think in order to keep the two from squabbling with each other, we acted as a guarantor and it has come back to haunt us again and again. Did that come up at all while you were there?

JONES: I spent a good chunk of my career working on border disputes. Because Latin America is full of them. Ecuador/Peru, Venezuela/Guyana (twice from both sides of the border) and Guatemala/Belize. That's a good illustration of the ambiguity. There certainly were lots of Ecuadorians--every Ecuadorian bitterly resents the loss of land to Peru. Peru was the aggressor, there is absolutely no historical question about that, and it got to keep the fruits of its aggression. The treaty of Rio de Janeiro ratified its gains and a lot of pressure was put on the Ecuadorian government to sign the treaty because we were just getting involved in World War II and we didn't want problems on our southern front. Informed Ecuadorians were aware of that and resented the U.S. role but at the same time they also knew that if anything was ever going to be done about it, if there was ever to be any modification of the treaty, any rectification of the wrongs, they would have to have the United States on board in order to do it. It really wasn't possible for them to be antagonistic to the United States over the border issue because what they had to be was persuasive.

The open hostility was mainly toward Peru and in the fifty years since there have been repeated border incidents between Ecuador and Peru and the United States as one of the guarantor

countries of the Rio Treaty has had to become involved in every single one of them.

Q: Any fishing problems in those days? Tuna wars, or was this later on?

JONES: I don't think so, not that I recall during the period that I was there. The main events of that period were the border situation which was perpetually threatening to heat up, and the lead-up to the elections in 1960. There was supposed to have been an Inter- American conference of the OAS in Quito in 1960 which got called off. I can't remember now why it was called off-- maybe due to the border problem, it seems to me that Peru was threatening not to attend if it was held in Quito. They built a new building to host the conference which never occurred.

Q: Did you meet your wife on this tour, or did you meet her later on?

JONES: Yes, I met her on this tour. I met her not long after I arrived in 1958 and we dated and we got married in April 1960.

Q: Did you have any problems marrying a foreign national at that time?

JONES: Oh yes--not any problems really. At that time you still had to go through the formality of submitting a resignation, a written, formal resignation. Then the Department considered it and considered your future spouse and decided whether or not it would reject the resignation, which I'm happy to say it did.

EDWARD S. LITTLE
Deputy Chief of Mission
Quito (1959-1961)

Ambassador Edward S. Little was born in Ohio in 1918. He received an undergraduate degree from Swarthmore College and then attended the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. He served in the U.S. Navy during WW II. Ambassador Little joined the Foreign service in 1957. In addition to Ecuador, he served in Spain, the Dominican Republic, Switzerland, and Chad. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1989.

LITTLE: Then they offered me the job of DCM in Quito -- both a good career opportunity plus getting out of that sticky mess.

Q: In Ecuador your ambassador was Maurice Bernbaum?

LITTLE: First it was Chris Ravndal, he was ambassador from when I arrived in September 1959, until May-June of 1960. Bernbaum came in in October of '60. I had two separate ambassadors.

Q: How would you describe Ravndal -- his method of operation?

LITTLE: Both of them were excellent ambassadors and excellent chiefs. Ravndal was sensitive to such things as policy issues. He got around the country a lot, I think even more than Bernbaum did. Ravndal had a faculty of a photographic memory and he would write a speech in Spanish, let's say twenty pages. He would take page one and memorize that, then take two and so on until he had all twenty of them. And so he would make a speech in Spanish as if it were extemporaneous and it was just all up in his mind -- phenomenal. He ran a good open shop, as did Bernbaum. No restraint on saying, "Well, Mr. Ambassador I think we ought to do so and so." In either case open-minded, intelligent, balanced people.

Q: *What were our interests in Ecuador at the time?*

LITTLE: We had the usual type of aid mission with emphasis on education, sanitation, agriculture, that type of thing. I think they were effective. Working with the Navy in terms of joint training exercises with our Navy which made an annual trip around South America. I just want to add one more point; there was to be the Twelfth Inter-American Conference in Quito in 1960. One of the reasons I was sent there was because I knew the Washington scene. But that conference never took place.

Q: *You were there during the Eisenhower Administration?*

LITTLE: Correct.

Q: *You left in '61 before the Kennedy Administration so you weren't into the Alliance for Progress.*

LITTLE: About the time I left, the Peace Corps was announced and I wondered how that would work, I was sort of skeptical. No Peace Corps volunteers came when I was there. In contrast when I was in Chad there were fifty Peace Corps volunteers, and they were good.

Q: *How were relations between Quito and Guayaquil? I'm speaking about the consulate there. Did it work? Apparently they are really two quite different worlds.*

LITTLE: Yes they are.

Q: *One is up in the mountains and at Guayaquil you're right down on the coast.*

LITTLE: An active port town.

Q: *In Ecuador there's quite a difference between the people.*

LITTLE: Yes.

Q: *Was this reflected in the consulate?*

LITTLE: Well there was no problem with coordination. Ward Allen was the consul general. He kept very close touch with the embassy. The ambassador or I would go down there fairly

regularly.

Q: Did you have any problems with the government on your side getting the right information and talking to the right people?

LITTLE: No. I think it's fairly relevant that Ravndal had a scheme where about every six months he would organize a deep sea fishing party. He knew a man from whom he could rent the boat and accommodate twelve. It would be him, myself, one or two from the embassy and the rest were Ecuadorians. The Minister of Foreign Affairs on one trip. The Minister of Defense. The ambassador said, "No business is to be discussed on the trip." And of course, business was discussed, but after Ravndal left there was about a four-month gap. I had no trouble seeing the Foreign Minister or Defense Minister because the connection had been established on the fishing trips. A good technique.

Q: It sounds like an excellent way. I've never heard of that before.

LITTLE: Terrific.

Call up for an appointment, go right in, and you could talk freely. The association had been established by the ambassador's technique of a week-long fishing trip.

Q: Excellent.

LITTLE: I think that's responsive to your question.

Q: That's right. How does one operate in the country?

LITTLE: He knew he was leaving and he particularly wanted me to come along on the fishing trips for that very reason. That's the kind of man he was.

Q: What type of government did they have in Ecuador at that time?

LITTLE: They had a democratic government. They had an election in June of 1960. Velasco Ibarra was one of the two candidates. He had been president two or three times before. Galo Plaza was the other candidate and he also had been president before.

Velasco, who was a demagogue, won. I think Ravndal had planned to move on in any event but his sympathies were not exactly with the demagogic Velasco. Velasco won the election, there was no question that he would take over. No threat of coup, although there are always threats of coup in Ecuador. Actually Velasco was overthrown by a coup about two months after I left in the fall of 1961. The military took over.

Q: He had a drinking problem, didn't he?

LITTLE: No, that was Arosemena. When I was working for Secretary Rusk in 1963-65, Arosemena became president. Carlos Arosemena. He came up on a state visit. At the state dinner

I was told that he knocked over a candelabra and nearly burned up the eighth floor of the State Department. I was not there, but that was the story.

JORDAN THOMAS ROGERS
Political/Labor Officer
Quito (1959-1961)

Mr. Rogers was born in South Carolina and raised in North Carolina. After graduating from the University of North Carolina, he served with the United States Air Force in WWII. Entering the Foreign Service in 1946, he served at a variety of foreign posts in Europe, Latin America and Asia, primarily as Economic and Political Officer. His final overseas post was Rawalpindi, Pakistan, where he was Deputy Chief of Mission. In Washington, Mr. Rogers was assigned to the Department's Staff Secretariat, to the Department of Defense as Foreign Affairs Officer and finally as Economic Officer in the Department's Latin America Bureau.

Q: Then after that period of somewhat over a year, you were suddenly transferred to Quito, Ecuador. Tell us about that. How did that come about?

ROGERS: Well, I think what happened was, one, they were going to have a meeting of foreign ministers, of American foreign ministers in Quito and so they thought they had better bolster up the political section temporarily. Ravndal was then ambassador in Quito. And I think Ambassador Ravndal has either a strength or a weakness, depending on how you look at it: he likes to deal with people he knows. He didn't need to have an extensive conversation with me again over whether I played bridge! So I suspect I was sent there because he asked for me. So I went there and my predecessor, Harvey Summ, was held over, so the two of us were there. Well that was fine, because the meeting was about to occur. Well then the meeting was postponed and then it was postponed again. In fact, it never was held.

Q: You were there but the meeting was never held?

ROGERS: So eventually Harvey Summ was transferred and there I was. Quito was a much more comfortable place to be in than BA. The Ecuadorians liked us. I was put back in the political section. They had a presidential election while I was there. I also was working as sort of a labor contact or labor attaché and that made me in effect a part of AID. So I had lots to do and I enjoyed it. I also got hepatitis while I was there.

Q: That you didn't enjoy, I understand.

ROGERS: Right; and it was a smaller office and I enjoyed Quito. I enjoyed the labor work, we were trying to push labor unions in a direction which was neither too far to the left or to the right, and I believe we were having some success. Adlai Stevenson and Douglas Dillon were both there, and I was control officer for both. So I thought Quito was a much more interesting place

for me than Buenos Aires. And the Ecuadorians were not nearly as standoffish as the Argentines.

Beyond that, Sarah and my family were happy there. Sarah had her last child, a son, and the girls were growing older, went to Spanish-speaking schools and learning the language, we were able to travel some around a very beautiful country. So all in all, if you're happy in your assignment and your family is happy, what more can you ask?

MAURICE BERNBAUM
Ambassador
Ecuador (1960-1965)

Ambassador Maurice Bernbaum was born in Illinois in 1910. He received a degree from Harvard University in 1931 and joined the Foreign Service in 1936. In addition to Ecuador, Ambassador Bernbaum served in Singapore, Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. He retired in 1969 and was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1988.

BERNBAUM: Well, it varied. When I was in Ecuador as DCM, we had a small, lean staff. I thought we functioned very well. I was DCM executive officer, occasionally I'd write political reports, economic reports; always working with the people in charge. Actually at Quito I was also Political Officer as well as DCM.

When I returned to Quito as ambassador I found a great many more people there. I didn't have the feeling that we were much more efficient.

Q: This is a charge that has often been levied. Why had it grown?

BERNBAUM: Well, bureaucracy, the demands of Congress for information, the progressively greater curiosity of the State Department, the interest of the other government departments to have representation. We would find commercial attachés there. Of course, we always had military attachés, but one good example of this; when I arrived in Quito as ambassador, we had one armed services attaché, who covered the three services. I think after the Bay of Pigs problem, President Kennedy was supposed to have made some comment about our ability to have good relations with the military, to know what they were up to. So I had a request to appoint an air attaché. I checked around with our armed services attaché, who in effect said we didn't need one. And after exchanging about two or three telegrams each way, I found myself forced to accept one. Well, the man had nothing to do. He was just a pest, he was always on the back of the MAG to fly their plane and to do things. Eventually I had a request to appoint the Naval attaché. Here we were, two miles above sea level, and they wanted a Naval attaché. Well, I was able to ward that one off.

I learned later, this is very interesting, that after I left Ecuador we had a reduction in force. And there was an effort to eliminate the air attaché. And our ambassador had become accustomed to having an air attaché, fought tooth and nail to keep the guy, which was an indication of how

things worked.

Q: Well, my understanding, I speak now as a professional Foreign Service Officer too, that the prime function of an air attaché is to have an airplane which can fly you around the country, and for an ambassador often this is considered desirable by an ambassador who likes to use the air attaché's airplane.

BERNBAUM: Well, it's not really the real function of the air attaché.

Q: Granted. But I would say it's conceivable that this is the practical use of one.

BERNBAUM: Actually when I was in Ecuador I did have access to U.S. airplanes, but they were in the Air Mission there, and they were always ready to collaborate with me whenever I felt that I needed a plane to furnish one.

Q: If we could now go to how did you become, get appointed, to Ecuador as ambassador? We're talking about the fall of 19 . . . ?

BERNBAUM: This was in the fall of 1960.

Q: 1960?

BERNBAUM: Yes. Well, I think probably one of the reasons was that I had been in Ecuador before. We were having the problem of an inter-American conference at Quito. And we had a boundary dispute between Ecuador and Peru. The political appointee who had been appointed to be ambassador.

Q: David Karrick, who had been Commissioner of the District of Columbia.

BERNBAUM: That was it.

Q: He died four days after being sworn in as ambassador.

BERNBAUM: That's right. And so the question arose as to whom we were going to send. I think probably people in the bureau who were conscious of the need to have somebody with experience and background in Ecuador, because of the inter-American conference that was going to take place there, particularly through Ecuador's dispute, decided to recommend me. The first thing I knew about it, I had no indication whatsoever that I was going to be tapped was a telephone call from Loy Henderson asking me whether I would be interested in being an ambassador.

I might say my wife was devastated. She wanted to stay in Argentina, enjoying it. She said, "Can't you hold it off?" I said, "Lightning doesn't strike twice in the same place."

Q: Of course, this appointment was under the Eisenhower administration.

BERNBAUM: Yes. And it was reconfirmed. I had not yet been confirmed by the Senate, so after arriving in Ecuador as an interim appointee, I was asked to return to Washington to be confirmed. I was then sized up by the Kennedy group in the White House, who apparently decided I was all right. And so the appointment was renewed and confirmed.

Q: When you went to Quito in 1960. Did you have any instructions of things you were supposed to do? Goals, problems to solve or to be aware of?

BERNBAUM: Specifically the Peru-Ecuador boundary dispute and the inter-American conference to see what I could do to minimize the friction between the two countries.

Q: Looking at it from some hindsight, but how did you feel about the Peru-Ecuador boundary dispute as an American having served in Ecuador? How did you deal with it?

BERNBAUM: Well, I felt that we were placed in a very difficult position, because when you get into boundary problems you have a tremendous amount of nationalism and emotionalism. And rational arguments don't frequently prevail. My feeling was that the best way of trying to resolve the problem was to get the two parties to talk. And, if necessary, to go to arbitration, with the idea that if they agreed to an arbitration, perhaps the decision would settle the problem--take say the Ecuadorian government off the hook, or the Peruvian government off the hook. This was one of the main things I was trying to do while I was in charge of South American affairs, and I became very much involved in the Peru-Ecuador dispute. Made a number of trips to both countries. On a few occasions almost got them to talk to each other, and then things would fall apart.

But this was really the basis of our policy throughout the whole period. Not to take sides, but to get them to talk. And I remember two conversations. One when I was on my way from Buenos Aires to Quito when I stopped off at Lima. Had dinner at our embassy, where I stayed, and the Peruvian foreign minister had been invited, so that we could talk. I listened to him, and he said their legal position was absolutely impeccable. And I said, "Well why then wouldn't you be ready to accept some kind of arbitration? You know, wouldn't this settle the problem for you?"

And he said, "If I were to try that, the government would be overthrown." He said, "Because Peru has been in the position of having lost wars to Chile, having lost territory, and this is the first time we beat somebody. And we're not going to let the spoils of that victory go, even take a chance of having that happen." He said, "The military wouldn't stand for it."

Later, after I arrived in Ecuador, I made a point of seeing the various past presidents. I mentioned this problem to one of them. He said that he had learned that the only way you could solve a boundary dispute was to have two strong governments in power who could take the flak from a decision which might not be approved by everybody. He said you've never had a strong government in Peru, and one in Ecuador. They've never coincided, and you never could get a decision.

Q: Well, the situation was -- Peru had fought a small war with Ecuador?

BERNBAUM: They'd invaded Ecuador, and got as far as Guayaquil. They were interested in annexing a large part of Ecuador, and that's when we stepped and the other guarantor countries stepped in.

Q: This is the Rio Pact of 1942, is that it?

BERNBAUM: Not the Rio Pact. That's just what it was called. But the war was on.

Q: We're talking about World War II.

BERNBAUM: Yes, World War II was on. This happened in about '42, and so we forced, well more or less coerced the Peruvians to withdraw and to accept far less than they had originally wanted, and in a sense we would coerce the Ecuadorians to accept some loss. The result was that the Ecuadorian president and foreign minister, who signed that treaty were killed politically.

But we and the Brazilians and the Chileans became guarantors of this treaty. And the demarcation, or the boundary, was proceeding when an aerial survey conducted by our Air Force revealed the existence of a watershed that had not been known before. And the Ecuadorians seized upon that as a basis for attempting to renegotiate the boundary.

Q: This was by the time you had arrived, or just before?

BERNBAUM: This happened before I arrived. And that was one of the problems. The Ecuadorians were interested in revising the boundary so that they would have direct access to the Amazon, whereas under the old agreement they would not have had access. The Peruvians claimed that the old agreement was theirs signed, sealed and delivered. The boundary markers were being established and there was no reason not to proceed. So they wouldn't talk with the Ecuadorians about it. And our problem was to try to get them both to talk about it.

First to, perhaps, sign a commercial treaty, because they had no commercial relations across the border. And the idea was if we could get them talking on the basis of a commercial agreement, perhaps then there would be more of a basis for continuing the conversation politically. And when I was in Peru at one time I saw the Prime Minister and various people. I thought that he had become convinced that this was the thing to do, and I left feeling we were going to have a commercial agreement, but apparently the opponents prevailed on him and he canceled the idea.

Q: Well, by December of 1960 you, I think, at that time you'd just about arrived, hadn't you?

BERNBAUM: I arrived about October.

Q: Ecuador had abrogated the treaty?

BERNBAUM: No. The new president, Velasco Ibarra, made a statement saying that he would not honor the treaty. That the treaty was null and void. And that presented us with a problem. The Peruvians were pressuring the guarantors to denounce the Ecuadorian statement as a violation of the treaty, and my problem was to try to get our government to abstain and not take a

position. But we did take a position against the Ecuadorians, and as a result the embassy was stoned, attacked, and we had quite a messy situation.

Q: Yes, I notice on this the State Department spokesman, Lincoln White, came out regarding possible collective action if Ecuador maintained its position opposing the treaty.

BERNBAUM: I don't remember that strong a statement.

Q: Anyway, I read this in a paper.

BERNBAUM: But I do remember that we made this statement supporting the Peruvian position. I remember speaking with our assistant secretary at the time. I said, "For goodness sakes, you know damn well it's not going to solve the problem. By taking sides we're going to be on the wrong side of a nationalist issue in Ecuador, and we're going to have an awful lot of trouble." And he said, "I know," but he said, "the pressure here is too great."

Q: Well, where was the pressure coming from in Washington?

BERNBAUM: The former ambassador to Peru had become Counselor of the State Department.

Q: Oh my.

BERNBAUM: And he was predisposed . . .

Q: Who was this?

BERNBAUM: Ted Achilles.

Q: Ah, yes. Yes. This is a case of localitis, you think?

BERNBAUM: Yes, this was localitis.

Q: But this was not coming from business interests, or from the president, it was really internal?

BERNBAUM: It was an internal matter, and one problem the Ecuadorians always had was that they were always outmaneuvered diplomatically by the Peruvians. The Peruvians would have an ambassador in Washington who had been there for 15 or 20 years, knew everybody. They did the same in Brazil. Same thing in Chile. The Ecuadorians were always changing their ambassadors. So they never really did have the kind of clout in these capitals that would permit them to get their viewpoints across effectively.

Q: Well how was this resolved?

BERNBAUM: It's never been resolved.

Q: But I assume the stoning of the embassy stopped at a certain point.

BERNBAUM: Well, they had gotten it out of their system. We had a bill for broken windows and so forth, and as a result we instituted security measures. We built a fence around the chancery, which was very ugly and I always tried to get rid of it, but I think it's still there. Other security precautions were taken. But we never did have another problem of that kind, because this one event demonstrated to me that we should always make every effort possible to stay on the right side of a nationalist issue, and certainly not to be on the wrong side, because the only thing that would get the crowds moving was nationalism. And we had other problems.

I think of the Bay of Pigs.

Q: How did the Bay of Pigs, we're talking about the Bay of Pigs in Cuba, the American sponsored attempt to overthrow Castro. Well, how was that a problem as far as we were concerned in Ecuador?

BERNBAUM: The left wing elements in Ecuador used that to try to rally the crowds against the embassy, but they couldn't do it. The people just weren't that interested, whereas they had been greatly interested on the boundary dispute. It was a nationalist issue involving Ecuador.

Q: Well, did the boundary question come up every time you had a conversation in Ecuador, or did it sort of die down after a while?

BERNBAUM: We were continuously making efforts to try to get them to negotiate a commercial agreement. The Ecuadorians were always very partial to that. We never had any problem with them. The problem was to get the Peruvians to do it. And after my effort had failed, the Brazilian foreign office tried it. The foreign minister made a trip to both countries -- that failed. Then later apparently the Peruvians had a change of heart, and they sent an ambassador to Quito who had Ecuadorian relatives. I think one of his grandparents had been Ecuadorian, and the idea was that through his contacts in the place, he would be able to work out an acceptable agreement. And I, of course, worked with him for that. But that never went through.

Q: Well, what were our other interests, besides keeping from getting involved between Peru and Ecuador, what were our interests in Ecuador?

BERNBAUM: Well, very early in my period there we had the Alliance for Progress. Our prime interest was to further the Alliance for Progress in Ecuador -- to get them to accept our assistance and make use of it. We had a problem there.

The Ecuadorian government, of course, was very much interested in whatever assistance we could give them. They were always a bit suspicious of our motives; they never could quite believe that we didn't want to get some political advantage out of it. I always tried to assure them that wasn't so. But one of their big problems was that most of their revenues were earmarked for autonomous agencies. It was very difficult then for the government to furnish its share of the projects which were being financed under the Alliance for Progress. That was one of the problems that I had all the time. I used to travel around the country pushing for collaboration. I

used to spend a lot of time with the president, who was not very pro-American. He had had problems when he was in the Embassy in Washington.

Q: Well now, you were also there at the time when there was a overthrow of one president, and the vice president was put in.

BERNBAUM: This is the president that I am referring to.

Q: Arosemena?

BERNBAUM: Yes.

Q: And that must have put a bit of a strain on our American relationship, because he came out of the left the same time when we were concerned about Cuba and all that.

BERNBAUM: He was a really complicated individual. His father had been president of Ecuador. He came from one of the first families in Guayaquil. He was more or less a maverick in his community. He was addicted to drinking. He was a dipsomaniac. And somehow or other he always seemed to be interested in stirring things up.

I remember one time as vice president when he insulted the Chinese ambassador, he was a bit drunk at the time. And another time when he insulted the Colombian ambassador. He always wanted to stick needles in people when drunk. We used to have some conversations about that. His problem was that he couldn't stay away from the bottle, and that made life with him somewhat difficult.

Q: Well, I read that he is described as being a leftist. I mean, was this real, was it because he was just being contrary, or was there concern that he might move closer to Castro when his brand of communism?

BERNBAUM: Well, that problem did arise. I had a feeling it was more based on his own personality than any ideological preferences. He was under pressure from the military to break with Cuba, and he didn't want to break with Cuba. I'll always remember this, I can tell it now.

I was playing golf one Saturday, and his aide came along to say that the president wanted to speak with me, so I left the course. This was always a topic of conversation between us. He was always kidding me about playing golf. And I said, "Mr. President, you did a terrible thing. I was about to win that tournament, and you pulled me off the golf course."

He said, "In a good cause." He said, "I'm being pressured by the military to break relations with Cuba. What do you think about it?"

I said, "That's your baby, not mine." And he tried in every which way to get me, to commit me, to tell him what to do, and I wasn't going to do that. And finally he said, "I'm wondering whether I shouldn't have a plebiscite in the country on that subject. What do you think about it?"

I said, "I will then express an opinion. You'd just divide the country. It seems to me that would be silly. In that case I'd suggest it would be far better not to break, than to have a plebiscite."

That ended the conversation. Later that evening the Minister of the Interior visited the embassy to tell me that the President had broken with Cuba.

Q: Well, what was he trying to do? To get you to commit yourself and then to say . . ?

BERNBAUM: He was probably trying to be able to say that he was forced by the U.S. to break.

Q: Well, at that time it was our policy, wasn't it, was it at Punta del Este or someplace? Wasn't this our policy to try to have the South American countries break with Cuba?

BERNBAUM: Oh sure. But the question was, how do you do it? We had Adlai Stevenson visiting. He made a swing around Latin America shortly after Kennedy was elected. One of his purposes was to convince the various governments to break. I remember a conversation we had with President Velasco Ibarra, who was not at all sympathetic. He thought we were a country of cultural barbarians. He was more or less a Francophile, and an Americanphobe. But he did respect Adlai Stevenson, who was one American he thought was a really fine individual. Every time Stevenson would make a point, the old man would rebut him by saying, "Well, governor, in page so and so of the book you wrote, you said something to the contrary." Or, "You made a speech on a given date where you said something to the contrary." And finally Stevenson had to give up.

But aside from that, we never expressed an opinion to the government about what they should do.

Q: Then Washington was not pressing you to do anything, or were you saying leave it alone, or how was this working, because it was a problem for us at the time?

BERNBAUM: I was not being pressured at that time, no.

Q: And were you getting much direction from Washington under the early days of the Kennedy administration?

BERNBAUM: Well, there were two problems. One was that President Kennedy had made an imprudent comment to Arosemena's brother that he might invite the Ecuadorian president to visit the United States.

When I heard about it I wrote to oppose the invitation because of Arosemena's dipsomania and corresponding unpredictability. So the invitation was held off for quite a long time. Finally the Ecuadorian president let it be known that he was awaiting for an invitation.

There was another problem when there was pressure from Washington interests to get me to do something when Velasco Ibarra was overthrown. At that time there were three candidates for the presidency. The vice president, who was then in jail.

Q: *The vice president was in jail?*

BERNBAUM: He was in jail.

Q: *Why?*

BERNBAUM: On the ground that he was plotting against Velasco. The president of the Supreme Court was another candidate for the presidency. And I forget whoever else. There were three candidates. The situation looked rather hairy in Washington, and so I had a few phone calls asking what we should do. I advocated not doing anything. I didn't care who was president. Any one of them was perfectly all right, and there was no reason why we should in any way get involved. They accepted that. And eventually it turned out that way. Arosemena became president, and things worked out well until he was overthrown.

Q: *Well, we at least weren't tainted with having meddled.*

BERNBAUM: No, we stayed out of it. We just refused to get involved. And there was absolutely no reason to get involved, because any one of these people would have been a perfectly good president from our viewpoint.

Q: *Well, turning again to the coming in of the Kennedy administration. You had been a relatively short time in Ecuador.*

BERNBAUM: Yes.

Q: *And you were brought back. Do you feel was Kennedy sending out a signal that he was going to use the Foreign Service more, as ambassadors?*

BERNBAUM: Well, there were directives. One written by Eisenhower earlier, and one written later by Kennedy. And the idea was to emphasize the predominant role of the ambassador in embassy operations, in that his views would override those of other agencies that were represented in the embassy. This was a very difficult thing to enforce, but, generally speaking, I never had any problems with any of the representatives of the other agencies. We all collaborated very well.

Q: *Well, I'd like to ask, because of the Kennedy directive, which as you say, and just before that the Eisenhower directive, really the first time there were strong signals from the presidency that the ambassador is in charge. But again, this is an unclassified interview, but how well were you served by the CIA do you feel?*

BERNBAUM: I never had any problems with them. Any time a proposal was made to conduct an operation, I would query them for the reasons. If there was no really serious security involved, say for example something involving the Communist party, I saw absolutely no reason whatever for an intervention, a project by the CIA. And invariably the station chiefs would always say "Fine, we just won't do it." Sometimes they would be asked by their home office to consider the

problem, and in a sense I was taking them off the hook. But I never had any problems with the CIA station chief, nor with anybody else.

Q: You weren't embarrassed by something taking place that you didn't know about?

BERNBAUM: Well, I think there was one case shortly after I arrived. There had been rioting in Guayaquil. And at that time we had a station chief who seemed to be running for election in Ecuador. He wanted to be a very popular fellow. He was a very attractive personality.

A Jesuit priest was caught in Guayaquil with ammunition, guns, and was accused of fomenting rioting. He was quoted as saying he was doing it under the supervision of the CIA. I asked our station chief about that. He said, "Absolutely not." I never was sure that this was so. I remember the Minister of the Interior calling me to complain about it. I reminded the minister that some time before, during a previous administration, he had headed a delegation to me asking whether we would support a coup against that government. I then said, "You remember what I said, don't you? Lay off. It's not the thing to do." And I said, "Do you think that an embassy that made that kind of a recommendation in the past would support any of the activities that this priest said we were engaged in?"

He said, "Forget it."

But I was never sure about that station chief, whether he told me the truth.

Q: What about the American military? The military in the Latin American countries always plays a major role, and when our military people go there there's often the complaint, the accusation or what have you that when military man talks to military man, sometimes it's more in the interest of the military, whether it be American or the other country, than in the interests of the country. Did you feel you had control over our military?

BERNBAUM: I had heard those statements, but I never had any reason to feel that was true where I was, either Ecuador or Venezuela. We always worked closely together. I always had confidence in the military people there, that they were following our policy, and not bypassing it.

As a matter of fact, there's one factor that I think limited strong military influence. That was the fact that by and large our military people were not well equipped to do their jobs. Very few of them spoke Spanish.

Q: That's amazing.

BERNBAUM: The Army attaché I mentioned earlier was a great exception, and his relationships with the Ecuadorian military were very warm and cordial. But very frequently when the question of an assignment arose, I'd have to say "No, I won't accept this fellow. He doesn't speak Spanish." I must say that the commanding officer in Panama, the first one I dealt with, supported me entirely. But the later one prevailed on me to accept a few people who didn't speak Spanish. They were not successes.

Q: *Did we have much of a military aid program, a MAG?*

BERNBAUM: We had a MAG, yes.

Q: *MAG stands for...?*

BERNBAUM: Military Assistance Group or something. Mill group we used to call it.

Q: *Were we giving much equipment to the Ecuadorian military?*

BERNBAUM: Training. It was mostly training, and there would be some equipment, usually on a sale basis.

One of our problems with the Ecuadorians, particularly after the military junta took over, was to prevent them from buying military equipment. We refused to sell military equipment. We didn't think they needed it or could afford it. I do remember one occasion when they were thinking of buying some war ships from England. I went to Washington and used that as a basis for returning and saying "We take an awfully dim view of this, because you need every cent of your money for the economic development of the country." I do recall they refrained from buying the war ships.

Q: *To backtrack just a little bit. You said that the Kennedy administration brought you back to sort of look you over. What were they looking for do you think?*

BERNBAUM: What I looked like. How I spoke. And I think the man with whom I spoke.

Q: *Who was that?*

BERNBAUM: Ralph Dungan, had a pet problem -- the AID Program. The "servicios". He had strong feelings about the "servicios", he thought they ought to be abolished completely.

Q: *The "servicios" are what?*

BERNBAUM: Technical assistant units.

Q: *Technical assistance?*

BERNBAUM: This would be an organization set up to train people in the various ministries to do their jobs. The idea was that this would be a funnel. You'd get the Ecuadorians to go through this training period so that they could be qualified to do their jobs within the government. And apparently the system had become a bit hardened to the point where the Ecuadorians who were going through the system became officials of the system. And so you didn't have that training advantage that we used to have before. They became more or less adjuncts of the ministries. Dungan was zeroing in on that, and I happened to agree with him in that the system had become hardened. But when Dungan asked me if I thought we should abolish it, I said no. "It can serve a useful purpose -- the thing to do is to reform it, not abolish it. Apparently that wasn't strong

enough to make him feel that I was unqualified to do the job.

Q: But did you feel any sort of change in the way you were conducting yourself or your mission between Eisenhower and Kennedy, as regards dealing with Ecuador?

BERNBAUM: The only difference was the Alliance for Progress. That became the dominating feature of our policy. Other than that no difference.

Q: How effective was this in Ecuador, and what form did it take?

BERNBAUM: Well, intensified training and the granting of loans to do the job that we thought should be done in the country and that they wanted. The main obstacle to that was what I described before. The inability of the Ecuadorian government to furnish its part of the cost. We were asking them to furnish only about 20% of the cost of these projects, and we were extending loans on the basis of no interest for ten years, and in fact were gifts. But I do think that a lot of good had been done, but eventually it deteriorated.

Q: I read a book quite recently in which the author made a tour through Ecuador, and referred to corruption being quite endemic in this place. Did you find that this was a problem?

BERNBAUM: Especially down on the coast in Guayaquil area, yes it was bad.

Q: How did you deal with this?

BERNBAUM: By trying to maintain tight control over these projects. Every so often I'd find somebody, you know, some prominent local businessman who'd try to take advantage of the program. For example, through currency exchanges. They'd want to be paid in dollars instead of sucres, dollars being worth more than the sucres in terms of the number of sucres they'd get. I remember on some occasions having ministers intervene with me to try to get us to do it. I'd always say, "Look, if you want to feed the kitty of some local businessman, do it yourselves. Don't ask us to do it."

Q: And this was accepted?

BERNBAUM: I remember one time the president called me and one of his cronies . . .

Q: Was this Arosemena?

BERNBAUM: Arosemena. One of his cronies down in Guayaquil had tried to get one of these special arrangements. The minister, who was very close to the president, had tried to get me to agree to it. I refused. Finally the president called me in and he asked me about it. And I said, "I told your minister the reasons why we can't do it."

He called the minister and said, "Is this true?"

And the minister said, "Yes."

The President said, "All right, I'm embarrassed. Forget about it."

But obviously you couldn't prevent corruption, but to the extent we could, we tried to get strict compliance with the loan agreements..

Q: How did you see the left wing anti-American force in Ecuador? Did you find it threatening to you, to our purpose there?

BERNBAUM: I think the most threatening period was during the early part of my stay there. During the Velasco Ybarra period. He had a few left wing ministers in government who were quite anti-American, and who were in some cases, particularly in the case of the Minister of Education, interested in getting the Communist bloc in there to do some technical assistance. We always maintained cordial relations with the ministers, but let them know that if that was what they wanted, they were on their own, and they weren't going to get any help from us. Usually those projects were frustrated. After that, I don't think there was any particularly strong left wing influence in the government.

Q: Were the Cubans sponsoring guerrillas or anything like that? I would not think that Ecuador was a prime target.

BERNBAUM: We had some minor guerrilla activity, that, as far as I remember was not very serious. The Cubans were implicated but I was never sure to the extent to which the implication was based on logic or fact.

Q: Was the tuna war going on while we were there, or not?

BERNBAUM: Very much.

Q: How did we handle that?

BERNBAUM: That was one of my big problems.

Q: It was on the front page of the American papers for a period of about ten years.

BERNBAUM: Well, the three Pacific countries, Ecuador, Peru and Chile, were acting in concert about tuna fishing. Their objective was to assess very high license fees on tuna fishing in their waters. They claimed they had a 200 mile limit on the ground that we had started the problem by claiming a 200 mile limit off our coast for petroleum drilling. We had a continental shelf, which goes out about 200 miles and permitted the exploitation of petroleum.

As the Ecuadorians explained to us, they had no shelf. Although they couldn't use a continental shelf as the basis for their policy, they claimed they had the same right to 200 miles that we did and that usually led to conflict, because they would impound U.S. tuna ships outside of the 12 mile limit. The situation came to a head when during the Kennedy administration, the tuna fleet decided to force President Kennedy's hand, by sailing en masse into Ecuadorian waters, and were

intercepted.

This happened while I was at home to attend my son's graduation from the Exeter Academy in New Hampshire. The Secretary wanted to send somebody there to negotiate the situation but the Ecuadorians refused to accept a negotiator on the grounds that it was really an internal matter. So I had to return. They couldn't refuse to talk to me since I was the ambassador.

I think the fishermen paid the fine, which we reimbursed. That produced a feeling on our part that we had to reach an agreement with the Ecuadorians on this situation. As a result much of my activity was confined to trying to reach an agreement. Fortunately I found a rather receptive ear in the Foreign Minister, who felt that the conflict was leading nowhere.

Q: Was this Arosemena?

BERNBAUM: No, actually this happened after Arosemena. It was the military junta. We negotiated a confidential modus vivendi. A confidential modus vivendi, in which they agreed to the 12 mile limit, and established norms for the levying of taxes.

Before I left Ecuador, the next Foreign Minister suggested that we cancel the modus vivendi, and that the government would do its best to apply its provisions, but without a formal agreement. I thought that was a good idea, because obviously the agreement was eventually going to blow up. We agreed in Washington when I went back, to do that. But some way or another it never happened. I was in Venezuela at the time. It never happened. The modus vivendi did blow up, and the tuna war started up again.

Q: With this junta that took over, I noticed in the paper and reading for this interview that one of the precipitating factors in Arosemena's going was a banquet he had had with you, a dinner that he had had with you the night before. Could you describe what happened?

BERNBAUM: As background, Arosemena had been involved in various incidents due to drunkenness. One of them was when he met the Chilean president at the airport in Guayaquil and was drunk. It was said that if it hadn't been Christmas he would have been overthrown then.

Later, Admiral McNeil, president of the Grace Line, visited Ecuador with his wife. The president gave a banquet for them, because the Grace Line had participated in the inauguration of a new vessel. The president's wife had been invited to visit the United States.

His apartment was above the presidential office, so I showed up there, where I expected the party to take place. He was there with a few of his ministers, including the Foreign Minister. He was already half gone. As I walked in he said, "Ambassador, have a drink."

I said, "Well, Mr. President, let's go downstairs, we'll have the drinks down there."

We got him down there, and he made a speech decorating the admiral. He neglected to mention my presence. Whenever he was annoyed with the U.S. for one reason or other, he'd neglect to recognize my presence. So I knew something was up.

During the soup course at dinner, he arose -- by that time he was really pretty much under the influence of liquor -- and made a long rambling speech in which he attacked the U.S. government for exploiting Ecuador without mercy. Well, of course, you can imagine the reaction at the table.

He turned to me and said, "You agree with me, don't you, Mr. Ambassador?"

I didn't know whether to laugh or cry, so I said, "No, Mr. President. When you're speaking of the government, you're speaking of the American people." He had spoken highly of the American people as being distinct from the government.

Then he turned to one of his ministers at the other side of the table, and said, "Paco, you agree with me, don't you?" Well, this minister at that point was studying the molding on the ceiling. Finally he said, "No, Senor President."

Arosemena got up, and staggered out of the dining room. Dinner continued, and finally we finished. The various ministers came along and said, "You're not going to make anything of this, are you?"

And I said, "No, under those conditions. I don't know what brought it on, but I'm sure he wouldn't have done it if he was sober." I remember it was a sub-secretary of Foreign Affairs who came along and said, "It makes no difference what you say." He said, "The three chiefs of the armed forces who were at that dinner have just decided that this is it. This man's gone too far." And they just threw him out of power.

Well, what happened the following day was that we were giving a farewell luncheon for our Armed Services attaché, and one of the members of the newly appointed junta, Colonel Gandara, came over to bring his wife. This is quite a coincidence, but it was interpreted by virtually everybody as indicating that we were in on the overthrow.

I asked Gandara at the time, "What's going on?"

He said, "Well, we decided that we just had to oust him." He said, "If we hadn't done it, the ranks would have done it." And then he left. Arosemena was flown to Panama.

I reported the incident to the State Department, and it was reported quite accurately in Time Magazine.

Q: How would you describe the military government that took over?

BERNBAUM: That was very interesting. Gandara visited me after the military government had taken over. And I asked him what their policy was going to be. And he said, "We want to take advantage of the Alliance for Progress. We don't have any great ideas about what to do, and we'd very much appreciate suggestions from the U. S. government, as well as financial help."

And I said, "How long will the junta stay in power?"

He said, "If we stay in power longer than a year, we will continue in power, because the appetite for the goodies will be too strong. So what we've got to do is to get things done and get out before the year's over." I reported that back home. That was encouraging, that this man was interested in implementing the Alliance for Progress. We did what we could, but our bureaucracy was a bit too cumbersome to get many of the things done that we'd hope would get done.

In any case, we recognized on the basis of that conversation, not the first, but more or less in the middle of the recognitions. At the end of a year I called on the Colonel, who had then become a general. I said, "How about it."

He said, "It's too late. The appetite has progressed much faster than I had expected." There was a lot of graft going on. The chief of the Air Force and chief of the Navy were very much involved in graft, and this created some problems with us.

Q: A quick turn back to Ecuador. How were relations between the Consulate General in Guayaquil, which has always been a rather prominent consular post, since the opening of relations with Latin America, and Quito and the embassy there?

BERNBAUM: They were always good in my time, both times.

Q: Was it a useful post there?

BERNBAUM: Yes, it was a useful and very important post. We always used to encourage them to give us economic and political information. Both the DCM and the ambassador used to go down to Guayaquil periodically to meet with the people there. That is to get to know our people in the Consulate General, and also to meet the leading citizens of Guayaquil. We never had any problems.

There was one time during the McCarthy period, this was after I left, when a Consul General there, seemed to be a very staunch McCarthyite. I remember at a dinner party he gave for me, hearing him sound off in front of Ecuadorians about the homosexuals and the Communists in the State Department. That infuriated me. I wouldn't have minded so much if he had confined it to me, but here were Ecuadorians at the table and he made these comments. But that was the only sour note that I ever knew of in Guayaquil.

I'd like to mention something that I perhaps might have discussed during our conversation about my stay in Ecuador. I remember the missile crisis.

Q: The Cuban missile crisis?

BERNBAUM: Yes. We had gotten the message the day before asking us to let the government know what we were planning to do and why. This was before the announcement was made. So I did get in touch with the government.

The president was ill. He was in no condition to do anything. And also there was a funeral down in Guayaquil that he had to go to, so I spoke with the vice president and a few of the other ministers about it. I found a really tremendous amount of support for what we were doing in the missile crisis.

Q: They saw that this was introducing an unnecessary element into Latin America.

BERNBAUM: That's right. And they expressed their support completely for what we were doing, and I understand that the same message came through from every other Latin American capital. They were on our side.

RONALD D. GODARD
Peace Corps Volunteer
Ancon (1964-1966)

Ambassador Ronal Godard was born in Oklahoma and raised in Oklahoma and Texas. He was educated at Odessa College and the University of Texas. After a tour with the Peace Corps in Ecuador, he joined the State Department in 1967 and was posted to Panama, the first of his assignments in Central and South America. These include Costa Rica, Chile, Nicaragua, Argentina and Guyana, where he served as Ambassador from 2000 to 2003. His Washington assignments also concerned Latin American Affairs. During his career the Ambassador served with the Organization of American States, was diplomat in residence at the University of Illinois in Chicago and was Political Officer in Istanbul. Ambassador Godard was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2004.

Q: I think that in the case I mentioned it was inadvertent. But anyway, what were you told about Ecuador, and how did Ecuador first hit you?

GODARD: We had some history as I recall. I served on the coast the whole time. However, most of the body of knowledge they had was about the Andean Indians. While that was the majority of the Ecuadorian poor people, there were an awful lot on the coast, as well. I was first sent to a place outside Guayaquil; then I served up on the Colombian border.

As I say, the theory we were taught in Missouri didn't fit. There were some things I recall, such as some sort of anthropology work that had been done on the nature of peasant societies that I found interesting and which furnished pretty practical insight on the workings of impoverished villages. However, it was not exactly applicable to the coast where I was. We had some Ecuadorians who were brought in to tell us about their country. None of that, of course, prepared me for a really underdeveloped society, as Ecuador was near the end of 1964. I'd grown up as a child of a working class family, but I'd never seen people begging in the streets like that. I'd never seen some of the diseases that you find in their society or and malnourished children, and that sort of thing. So it was a pretty big shock.

Q: How did it work? Did they parachute you into the jungles of coastal Ecuador?

GODARD: To the contrary. On my first assignment, I was selected for a special position in the village where the workers probably had the highest standard of living in the country. I was in Ancon, Ecuador, which was, back in those days anyway, an oil camp run by Anglo Ecuatoriana, a British-Ecuadorian company. The workers were housed in barracks and company housing.

My job was to teach English. I had wonderful training in community development and was assigned to teach English. I organized my classes. The company had wanted to do this, and it was the chief way for them to teach their workers English which was pretty much necessary for them to rise in the hierarchy of this particular firm. I taught some basketball classes and worked, and that was about it. My time was pretty well taken up with the classes.

I stayed in the bachelor's dorm there, where I had a shower where you could get hot water with this flame thrower kind of heater apparatus. So I was living pretty well. In fact, I was very unhappy because that's not what I had anticipated doing. I was all fired up for helping the poor people of Ecuador, and now, here I was working with the cream of the crop, as far as the proletariat in this country was concerned. I actually discovered some sort of politics in this. Somebody, I don't know if it was at the embassy level or at the whatever, was very concerned about a guy there who had studied at Patrice Lumumba. What was the name?

Q: This is the University of Moscow.

GODARD: Right. He had been there to study and was back in as one of the labor leaders in the village; he was actually a friend of mine. I think they had wanted an American presence there as a counterweight for some reason.

Anyway, I asked for a transfer to an area where there were real development needs, and they gave it to me in spades. I went to the poorest part of Ecuador. I was sent up to Esmeraldas province, which is an impoverished province up in the northwestern corner of Ecuador, right on the coast again, right next to Colombia. In that village, interestingly enough, there was an African American population, descended from slaves dating back to when the Jesuits were allegedly bringing people in from Africa for plantation labor along the coast. This population was in the majority, although there was some sort of Mestizo population as well. I worked there my second year.

Q: Let's go to the first year. Was the language of the laborers Spanish? It wasn't an Indian dialect or anything?

GODARD: It was all Spanish. Same was true up in Esmeraldas.

Q: How did you find the oil workers?

GODARD: Very receptive. Anxious to learn English. Very apt students. I had books and I made up my own curriculum. I enjoyed that part. That's when I really learned that I did like teaching, and I enjoyed the interaction with the students. Also, we were always having little birthday

parties for students and had little social events. So I saw a lot of them socially. I became very close to the family of one of my students and I was sort of adopted into that family, and saw a lot of them. So it was a very pleasant experience and I enjoyed it. It was not a hostile environment at all. There was also an American engineer and his family, when he discovered there was a local Peace Corps volunteer, I occasionally got invited to their place.

Q: What was your impression of employer/employee relations there?

GODARD: It was not a hostile time. I think they had signed a labor contract before I got there, so they weren't in intense negotiations or anything. I think the company was to a certain extent one of these sorts of benevolent types, if you will, because they had the best benefits in the country. Everyone felt very pleased to have a job with Anglo-Ecuadoriana in Ecuador in those days. I remember that most of the hierarchy was Ecuadorian, not British. There was some British element there, but it was very small.

Q: Get any feel for the Ecuadorian government in action out there?

GODARD: It was so removed. In fact, while I was in Esmeraldas there was a coup and I didn't hear about it until a week later. I knew the central government was there, but what I heard about was local politics on the coast. There's this division in Ecuadorian society of the *costeños* and the *serranos*. The regional aspect of the *serranos* run everything and sort of who wants to know anything about them anyway, because they are all a bunch of *serranos* in the government and we have a governor here in this province, a local mayor and that sort of thing and everyone just pays attention to them. There were no health clinics that I was aware of. There was no real government presence. Esmeraldas was, to a certain degree, almost a missionary area, which had some agricultural extension, but the government presence was very minimal.

Q: You moved up to this northern place. What was the village like?

GODARD: There was a town; it was very tropical. I lived in a thatched hut. Back then it was an area that produced a lot of tropical goods for export. Mahogany-type wood and that sort of thing. There was a little port and there would be these strange little ships that would come in to pick up these big logs. I remember one time a Greek ship came in with Greeks and other nationalities on board. They were there for several days to load, and sort of took over one of the little cantinas there. They brought their own records; and I'd go there and watch them dance; it was like Zorba the Greek. It was a very interesting cultural experience. All kinds of strange people came to there.

It was kind of the end of the world; there were no roads in. There was a railroad. I recall they had a kind of a truck on rails that came in and brought passengers every other day. There was a train once a week. And there was a military base there, a naval base on the outskirts of town, because it was right on the border with Colombia.

The people, extraordinarily poor, living in grass-thatched huts. I replaced two other volunteers who had been there. They'd just transferred out. Carried on with their work, with a youth club that was a football team. And we had regular meetings, organized projects. Tried to get

something started with the agricultural cooperative. That didn't quite ever get off the ground. But I brought a lot of baby chicks down through the Heifer Project, and one problem was lack of protein in their diet. There was fishing there, but not enough of it. They didn't eat as much fish as they should. But they did raise chickens, and so I was trying to upgrade the quality of the chicken. I didn't know anything about chickens until I came into Peace Corps. But I put out a lot of chickens that I brought down. Then followed up with families that took them on and trying to get them to keep them around to go into egg production, but very often they wound up in a pot before they reached that stage.

Q: I imagine your Spanish really developed in this.

GODARD: Yeah, I thought my Spanish was pretty good until I came into the Foreign Service. It was certainly more than adequate for dealing with people at the village level, and certainly adequate for explaining, teaching English class, and I did some English teaching while I was in San Lorenzo. There was great demand for that. In my group, some people were quite surprised at how well I could manage on streets. Others had more trouble than I did.

Q: Were there any problems with Colombia at the time?

GODARD: No. There were no border issues. It was the very poorest border, and I made a couple of trips into Colombia on the border. I went to Tumaco, was the Colombian town on the other side of the border. I shouldn't have done it, I didn't have permission, but I had an outboard motor. That was the only way you got around down there, by boat, and I took a couple friends with me and we went out to Tumaco and hopped around a little while. And then later on, I took vacation and really went into Colombia. Went down to Cali. This is before the drug problem, I'm sure there was some elements of it, but it hadn't become a huge issue at that point. Colombia has had such a violent internal history, but I don't remember this. I look back and remember the history. I don't think this was a period when the violencia, for instance, when the conservatives and liberals were killing each other. I don't think this was a period when that was going on extensively. It seemed to be a fairly tranquil time.

Q: Did you have any contact with the embassy in Quito, or the consul general in Guayaquil?

GODARD: At the embassy, I remember briefing at least once. We had a Peace Corps conference where we pulled volunteers together and we had a briefing, somebody from the political section came down. All I remember is a pink, portly little guy who didn't impress me very much. Then there was a Foreign Service officer who visited me in my post in San Lorenzo. He was sort of an adventurous type. He was from the political section, and he did impress me. And we talked a little bit about his work. I got interested in the Foreign Service way back in high school when a friend of mine had gone to Bowie State, and part of the Bowie State program was visiting various federal agencies, finding out what they do, and he'd been particularly impressed by what he heard about the Foreign Service. He was telling me about this and I thought, gee, that sounds pretty cool. I sort of filed that away and maybe that's what I had in mind when I went into the Peace Corps. I don't remember being quite determined at that stage, but I may have already had it in mind. But it reconfirmed when I met this Foreign Service officer in Ecuador, and talked to him a little bit on what sort of things he did. I didn't have a clear concept of what Foreign Service

officers really do. Not until I started my first job.

KEITH C. SMITH
Political Officer, Assistant to the Ambassador
Quito (1965-1967)

Keith C. Smith was born in California in 1938. While attending Brigham Young University he received his bachelor's degree in 1960 and master's degree in 1962. His career includes positions in Mexico, Venezuela, Hungary, Washington D.C., and an ambassadorship to Lithuania. Mr. Smith was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in February 2004.

SMITH: In any case, he did not send his memo around to others at the Consulate. However, a week later, the CG received a call from Washington reporting that he would have to give up one of his junior officers to be immediately transferred to Quito, Ecuador. Who would he recommend? So I was transferred from Tijuana to Quito within two weeks. This turned out to be a great career and personal move for me. I spent the next two and a half years in Quito, a fantastically interesting country. I worked for an ambassador who was secure personally, wanted people to tell him when they disagreed with him and was a terrific human being. In fact, he encouraged us to disagree with him. The two DCMs I served under in Quito were also impressive professionally and great to work with. The tour convinced me to stick with the Foreign Service. By the way, the CG in Tijuana was retired after his first "Foreign Service" assignment. He was never promoted.

Q: So you went to Quito in Ecuador and you were there from when to when?

SMITH: I was in Quito from January 1965 to mid-1967.

Q: Who was the ambassador there?

SMITH: Wymberley Coerr was the ambassador. He was a very good diplomat; a great example of a career ambassador. And we had two excellent Deputy Chiefs of Mission (DCMs) during my tour in Quito, one of whom later became an ambassador and assistant secretary of state for inter-American affairs.

Q: What was the state of relations between the United States and Ecuador during this period?

SMITH: For most of my tour a military dictatorship ran the country. Weekly anti-government demonstrations usually turned violent and often resulted in attacks on the American Embassy. I had a dual position as executive assistant to the ambassador and political officer. I couldn't have asked for a better job. I worked for a wonderful ambassador, and the political section work was very interesting. My Spanish improved rapidly in Quito because I spent a lot of time in direct

contact with Ecuadorians. I had many interesting experiences in Ecuador, thanks to the wide latitude I was given by the Ambassador and DCM. It was an exciting place at the time. I was able to travel a lot around the country by jeep. The people living in each mountain village had a distinct culture, although all were of the same Andean Indian background. We made a lot of good friends among the embassy staff. I did a considerable amount of reporting on political events, even though I was not a great writer. Fortunately, the DCMs were very patient editors.

One year, I took a non-credit course in the Law Faculty at the National University. Being a “student” enabled me to closely observe the political turmoil at the university between the pro-Chinese communists and the pro-Cuban communists, and the fighting of both of those groups with the pro-Moscow wing of the student federation. The Embassy gave me carte blanche to have direct contact with students from all political groups, including extreme left-wing students. The class I audited in the law faculty at the university was taught by a professor whose son was a member of an anti-government guerrilla group. I met the son by chance one night when he visited his father.

I was encouraged to meet as many young Ecuadorians as possible. This threw me together with many left-wing individuals. I started working with a lot of the student leaders at the university, trying to convince them that the U.S. was not the evil empire that they had been taught. Studying at the university I often found out that the ambassador was being given false information on events by the CIA station chief, who had a large staff, few of whom ever left the embassy.

It was also a period when the U.S. had a large assistance program, called The Alliance for Progress. We had about 300 AID people in the country and there were 300 Peace Corps volunteers in the country, so Quito was a large embassy at the time. Even the military assistance and attaché offices were large. Part of my job was to do a management study of the whole U.S. mission; civilian and military. I became somewhat unpopular among a few groups as a result of my conclusions, particularly regarding the expenses of the defense attaché. When the ambassador found out that he was financing events for a defense attaché who had a representation fund twice as large as the whole State Department contingent, the attaché had to finance all of his own events. There were a lot of policy problems that we discovered during the investigation. A fair amount of money was being wasted by USAID. They had even brought Americans in to help on tax reform who had been convicted for tax evasion by the IRS. They were being paid salaries about 50% more than the ambassador was earning. Some changes were made as a result of my study, but it was hard to reform the functions of USAID.

Q: Well, it sounds like you knew what you were doing.

SMITH: It was an incredible time for me. I was even able to spend considerable time with Peace Corps leaders and with some volunteers. It was really great to get in a jeep and drive through the countryside. There was a Peace Corps representative in Ecuador who was a first-tour FSO and on loan to the Peace Corps. We became good friends and traveled some together, although he had to be careful not to be identified too much with the embassy. After my experiences in Tijuana, I began to believe that Quito represented the real Foreign Service.

Q: I was in personnel at one point, not at this point but a little later, and you know, if you have

mid-career sort of senior people, where the hell are you going to send them? Tijuana was probably the first name that came up, which is a bad show, but you have to try to bury these people somewhere.

SMITH: We had a lot of good junior officers in Tijuana, but the quality was poor in the mid and senior ranks there. There were one or two mid-level people who were very good and were in Tijuana because of family health reasons. At the senior level, there were some people who were obviously difficult to place. The Consul General was one of the most extreme cases I met in my long career. Fortunately, Tijuana was his last post. In fact, it was his first and last Foreign Service post. He had been a "Wristonee," a Washington-based civil servant who was converted into a Foreign Service Officer without proper screening.

Q: In Ecuador, if you were sort of working the left wing of the situation, did you find yourself at odds with others in the political section?

SMITH: No. I had solid support within the Embassy, particularly from the Ambassador and DCM. I don't think it wasn't a problem at all. The Ambassador would personally encourage me to go out and mix it up with the leftists. There was a lot of risk at times, some of which I didn't realize early enough. I was shot at a couple times when crossing the university grounds. I went to a meeting of the student union where people started shooting at each other across the room. I spent over an hour huddling on the floor of the conference hall. I had several experiences like that at the University. On another occasion, the Agency discovered a potential threat to my life. In any case, I found the work exciting, even though sometimes dangerous.

There was one particular close shave. I remember going to the University when we heard that the army had invaded the university campus. Legally, universities were supposed to be off limits to the military. The U.S. binational center was across the street from the Central University and I went up on the roof of the center to observe events, and later went on to the university grounds. Suddenly the Ecuadorian military started running across the campus shooting and bayoneting people. At that point, I ran for the binational center just as they were closing the front door. I ran through the center's front door just as a bullet struck a few inches from me. There were a lot of panicky Ecuadorian students in the center and worried parents outside the military perimeter. The bi-national center director finally talked me into going outside and trying to get safe conduct from the military for the students who were in there. When I went outside, a young Indian soldier ran up to me and stuck a bayonet in the direction of my chest. I could see that this guy was scared and excited and that scared me. I tried to tell him that I was an American diplomat. He had no idea what that was. Finally a military officer overheard us and came over. It was a lucky break for me.

There were at least two incidents when a local Catholic priest would convince an alleged repentant guerrilla to prove his conversion by informing the American Embassy about everything he knew about the movement. The CIA station chief convinced me to meet with one in the middle of the night. It was stupid, dangerous and bizarre behavior on the part of the CIA station chief. It was also incredibly naïve of me to agree to do it.

Q: Did you get a feeling at that time that the CIA, was operating free and loose.

SMITH: They certainly were in those years in Ecuador, and I suspect in many other countries. They had too many people in the country, and yet they did not seem to be that well informed about important events. Some of the information they passed on the Ambassador was totally wrong, and that is why I was encouraged to go out and see if what they were reporting was accurate. In the Political Section, we had a local employee who was a political assistant. The Ecuadorian defense minister was kind of keen on her. She was able to learn more about what was really going on within the military government than the Agency could. Simply by reading the local newspapers, she discovered that much of the Agency's reporting was wrong.

Q: I think this certainly was an era of anything goes. Did Vietnam play any role there?

SMITH: There were a few anti-war demonstrations, but Ecuador was a long distance from Vietnam, geographically and news wise. Ecuadorians were not well informed about events in Southeast Asia, although the war was used by the left in an attempt to discredit the U.S. During the first part of my Ecuador assignment, I generally accepted the U.S. Government's position on Vietnam. In about late 1966, or early 1967, however, I was reading some classified information about the Vietnam War that had originated at U.S. military headquarters in Vietnam (MACV). I remember that the information in the report was very different from what the administration was saying about North Vietnamese intervention in the South, and the number of North Vietnamese among the prisoners of war was lower than that being told to the press. So it was a period when I started questioning the honesty of the Johnson and Nixon Administrations.

Q: How was family life, living in Ecuador?

SMITH: We lived fairly well in Quito. We had good housing. The climate was terrific, and our Ecuadorian neighbors were very friendly. The schools for our children were ok. We didn't feel any great threat from terrorism, although there were bomb threats against American homes several times. I returned to Ecuador in late 2000. The city has grown and it's now a more insecure place; much more crime. There wasn't much of that in the mid-1960s.

GEORGE B. HIGH
Deputy Principal Officer
Guayaquil (1965-1968)

George B. High was born in Illinois in 1931. He received an A.B. from Dartmouth College and a law degree from Columbia University. He joined the State Department in 1956, serving in Angola, South Africa, Madagascar, Ecuador, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, and Washington, DC. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1993.

Q: What was the situation in Guayaquil, Ecuador in 1965-68?

HIGH: Well, geographically and historically, Ecuador presented a division between the highland

and the coast. The capital, Quito, is up in the mountains and is largely influenced by people who have lived and been raised there. Guayaquil, the port city and commercial center of the country, is the main center of the coastal area. It generally contends for power with Quito. Ecuador had had a very strong leftist government under Carlos Julio Arosemena, who was very anti-U.S. Arosemena had embarrassed us in the hemisphere affairs a number of times, and finally was overthrown by a military junta.

I got to Guayaquil, I suppose, about mid-term of the junta. They were beginning to make mistakes and to become unpopular. The country was very much involved in economic development, and our AID program under the Alliance for Progress was large. There wasn't a lot of effective political life because the military wasn't allowing political meetings. Political life at the time was left to private meetings in homes and restaurants.

Q: What were you doing then?

HIGH: I was the deputy principal officer of a sizeable consulate general. I had some reporting responsibilities, mainly political reporting and contact work. I was supportive of the consul general, who was a career USIA officer, Dick Salvatierra, and assisted in the running of the consulate. My position played a sort of all-purpose role.

The ambassador at the time was Wymberley Coerr, who previously had been ambassador to Uruguay. Coerr was very interested in encouraging the military to begin to think of moving on. He was very supportive of the AID program, which was led by a very dynamic AID director. Coerr was trying to get the Ecuadorian government to be more supportive of the AID program.

Ecuadorian officials and politicians were strong advocates of the Latin American view that the United States, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank were entirely too dictatorial, setting difficult loan conditions and telling them what they had to do. They didn't like it; it was a matter of sovereignty. They were rather quick to find fault with programs and sensitive to questions about their debt management. However, they still wanted money for their own projects rather than the projects being pushed by the World Bank, AID and others.

When Ambassador Coerr visited us in Guayaquil, shortly after I arrived, he and I were driving together and he commented to me, "George, you do know what the purpose and role of the deputy is?" I sort of said, "Sure," but left it open for him to define what a deputy ought to be doing. His advice to me was, "What you should be looking for is ways of being supportive of the consul general and others and making sure that things function well administratively and managerially, and in reporting, as well."

The relationship between the consulate general and the embassy was always a little touchy, sensitive. The embassy had its economic section, its commercial section, its political section and all its relationships with the central government. Embassy officers traveled in the country. The consulate general had a large staff and a substantial USIA office, besides a Peace Corps office and a branch of the military mission located outside the building. The deputy principal officer was supposed to do some political reporting, develop contacts, and perform managerial functions. A Peace Corps office in Guayaquil, headed by a deputy director of the country

program, had a project to encourage development of a bridge between the municipal government and the poor urban communities. We in the consulate tried to be supportive of that mission.

When it came to our political reporting, the basic question we addressed was what did political activity in our region mean to the United States interests, what was really going on. Guayaquil traditionally was a major center of opposition politics. We had a vantage point on those politics. For its part, the embassy had countrywide responsibility and clearly felt it alone had a national view. Naturally enough, we occasionally differed on emphasis.

This period came at the time when countries did CAPS papers -- Country Analysis and Program Systems, I believe they were called. When it came time to drafting those papers they were written and analyzed in the embassy. Not even the consul general was invited to go to Quito to participate in the discussions, which seemed to me to be a little bit foolish.

We had some awfully good people at the embassy in Quito. The Ambassador was very sharp. The DCM was Jack Crowley, who was very knowledgeable and very supportive of us. He came down to visit Guayaquil from time to time. Being filled with localitis and convinced that the coast and not the sierra drove the country, we were convinced that the embassy people didn't come down to see us often enough. Jack was the exception.

But what was happening, and we could report on this, was that the military was beginning to come into public disfavor. They weren't solving the problems of the country. The labor organizations, Free Labor and the Communist- controlled Federation of Labor, were becoming increasingly active. The political parties were beginning to stir. Some of the politicians who were run out of the country at the time of the military takeover perceived that the climate was improving and came back. There were street rallies which we reported on. It was easy enough to meet with people who were significant political figures in the past and were likely to be significant in the future. We could report on those conversations.

While we were there, the president who had been overthrown earlier, Jose Velasco Ibarra, came back to Ecuador and started to politic. He had his first mass political demonstration in Guayaquil with many thousands of people there. So you could report on things like that. You could analyze what this implied to the military's ability to hold on, the military's ability to deal with the process.

While we were there, Ambassador Coerr made what turned out to be a major mistake. When the military left government, it turned over power to Otto Arosemena, a cousin of Carlos Julio. Otto Arosemena didn't have the same leftist politics as the overthrown president, but he had a strong nationalist bent himself and liked to exploit situations for his own personal gain. He was there as a transitional president until national elections could be called.

While he was still in office there was a major inter-American conference of presidents in Montevideo. It brought the leaders of the hemisphere together. President Johnson was there and all the chiefs of state. Otto Arosemena chose this occasion to berate the United States for its assistance programs and the conditions imposed on loans, and in the process to make a name for himself as an inter-American leader. His main speech was very critical of the USAID program and the Alliance for Progress. This naturally annoyed the Johnson Administration, it was taken

as cheap politics.

Because of that and because of other Arosemena statements at home, Ambassador Coerr decided to make a speech trying to answer the questions raised and to get a dialogue back on track. He came down to Guayaquil and gave the graduation speech at the American School there. The American School was one of those international schools that got financial support from the US government and the business community. It offered bilingual education to Ecuadorians and American schooling with strong Spanish courses for Americans. A lot of the students were Ecuadorians, mainly from the middle and upper classes.

My wife and I went with the Ambassador to the school, not knowing what he was going to say. He had talked over his speech with his staff in the embassy and possibly had given Washington an idea of its content. His theme was: To make economic development work we have to go at it like a team. If you have two or three players going off and doing their own things, a football team is not as effective as one that really pulls together and cooperates. The image was that Otto Arosemena was one of those divisive players. Well, the transitional president took umbrage at what Coerr was saying. He charged that the Ambassador was trying to make him look stupid, a "pendejo," was the term Arosemena used, and two days later Coerr was declared persona non grata.

The impression left with us in Guayaquil was that Washington would acquiesce, but it would be some time before Ecuador received a new ambassador. But I don't think that Washington felt very comfortable that Coerr necessarily handled the situation as well as he might, though many in government and the media in the U.S. came to his defense. There was a long period when Jack Crowley, the DCM, was Chargé.

And that is about the time that I left Guayaquil. The country was moving closer to open elections which would return Velasco Ibarra to office once again. Later, Velasco would be overthrown one last time. When we left the military was drawing back. Ecuador was doing pretty well economically. Much more petroleum had been discovered, this time in the jungles of the oriente. That spawned some nationalist sentiment.

One night, when the Petroleum Minister was visiting Guayaquil and after some kind of reception, I went to dinner with him and his entourage. The one point he made to me was his determination that Ecuador's petroleum would be exported through a petroleum pipeline that went to an Ecuadorian port. Petroleum was an Ecuadorian resource and, even if it was cheaper, as the United States and the bankers were saying, to connect Ecuadorian production to pipelines running through Colombia, that just wouldn't be appropriate. And Ecuador constructed its petroleum port. The Ecuadorians were feeling pretty good about oil when I left.

Q: Were tuna wars much of a problem then?

HIGH: Tuna "wars" were very much a problem and our commercial officer in Guayaquil, Charles Prindeville, was very much involved in reporting those incidents and helping to free the fishermen detained by Ecuadorian patrol boats. American tuna boats would be picked up by the Ecuadorian ships and usually taken into Salinas, a small port which was in the consular district

about two hours away from us. Prindeville generally went to Salinas to meet the boat captains and the port authorities, while the embassy in Quito was in touch with officials in the capital and the fishing companies to work out payment of the fines. Nobody was shot, though there was always concern that something might get out of hand.

We were at the executing end, if you will, of encouraging the Ecuadorians to treat the fishermen decently, to free them and to get them out to sea as quickly as possible. The fishermen were losing money while on shore. Several years earlier the military government had entered into an agreement quietly with the United States to turn their heads in the other direction while the boats fished. When the military was replaced by Otto Arosemena, that private agreement became public knowledge and all hell broke loose. That was the end of the agreement, and patrol boats again began to pick up boats fishing in waters claimed by Ecuador.

Another phenomenon we experienced in Guayaquil was the anniversary every January 28th of the treaty that settled the war between Ecuador and Peru in 1941.

Q: The United States was one of the guarantors.

HIGH: Yes, along with Brazil and Chile, though in Ecuador the United States was seen as the principal guarantor. Each year at that time the Ecuadorian government reiterated its position that the treaty was invalid and that the territory taken by Peru ought to be returned. Its national motto was "Ecuador is an Amazonian country." January 28th was a school holiday and in Guayaquil inevitably the high school students took to the streets and started throwing rocks at the consulate general building. The police kept them away at a short distance.

Q: You wanted to say something about the Peace Corps.

HIGH: Ecuador was one of the first countries to receive the Peace Corps when it was established by President Kennedy. Because of that, it received very special attention from the Peace Corps organization. When we arrived in Guayaquil, a fellow by the name of Bill Gerschwind, with a social worker background, was the Peace Corps representative there. His special project was to relate his volunteers to the poor sections of Guayaquil and help them build bridges to the municipal government to secure help for the authorities. Politicians were famous for making promises to the poor neighborhoods at election time and then ignoring them once they were in office.

Gerschwind became engaged with the poor barrios in a number of ways. He assigned some volunteers to assist AID projects. For example, when AID sent two Hispanic accountants to Guayaquil to help the city develop a better tax system by reassessing its valuation base for property, Gerschwind had volunteers work with them and assist them in the barrios suburbanos. He got volunteers into other projects that were related one way or another to social services from the city. He was instrumental in having a whole group of volunteers, something like 20-25 of them, specially trained in the United States, to be assigned to Guayaquil. The idea was that they would live out in the barrios suburbanos, the poor sections, at night and on the weekends. In the daytime they generally would have some kind of responsibility in the city government. It was hoped that this would encourage contact between the poor sections and the city government, and

that barrio leaders would come to have experience and trust in the municipal authorities and secure greater benefits from them.

It was a nice concept and while Gerschwind was there it showed promise. But he left on transfer and his replacement wasn't as experienced or dedicated to that program. The replacement hadn't been in on the creation, and his major previous experience was local politics back home. He was a decent fellow but not really married to the project.

Next, down come these 20-25 volunteers, a mixed bag, many of whom had been targeted for this special project. Some of them had been on peace marches down in Alabama. Others had gotten into political activism by working with the problems of the poor or the disadvantaged in the United States. They came to Ecuador with a determination to use their U.S. experience in an Ecuadorian environment.

What they found upon arrival was that the wealthy in Guayaquil, who previously had been very supportive of the Peace Corps program and were interested in what it was doing, invited them to their homes. They saw them simply as another group of volunteers, but suddenly discovered that these people had a different orientation. The wealthy weren't as keen on what these volunteers had in mind. So that kind of contact, which may not have been ideal anyway, was broken off very quickly.

These volunteers tried to bring social activism to Guayaquil, and it didn't really work. It was resisted quickly. There was resistance and disinterest among government workers, and many of the volunteers were not all that keen on living right out in the middle of the barrios suburbanos.

Another part of the problem was that the municipal government in Guayaquil under military government, or any other of government, for that matter, was traditionally very unstable. The mayor who had approved the original Peace Corps project and was very supportive of it subsequently was thrown out of office (for other reasons). The new mayor wasn't quite that keen on it and had his own program priorities. Moreover, the re-evaluation of property for tax purposes was not welcomed by politically influential property owners. So that initially promising Peace Corps project imploded.

But then you had 20-25 volunteers, many of whom were political activists, suddenly cast loose on the Peace Corps program in Ecuador. What to do with them? Some of them were sent out into the countryside and got involved there. Some of those worked out and some didn't. Some were sent up to Quito where there were other volunteers. Some would encourage Indians in Quito to strike and demonstrate in front of grocery stores that only served Indians out of the back door. It was a very conflictive period, not all of which was really bad. Maybe it was just as well for the Ecuadorians to be reminded that that wasn't the way you deal with Indians.

My sense was that there was a lot of unrest in the Peace Corps programs after the specially trained newcomers lost their project. This led some volunteers to turn their attention inward -- to how the Peace Corps was run. One account was recorded in a rather distorted book by Paul Cowan. It recounted his experiences there as a volunteer.

Certainly the original project in Guayaquil was a failure. Some of the displaced volunteers grabbed hold of something that was useful. One fellow who was an architect designed a model house, cheap construction, for the barrios suburbanos of Guayaquil. But the soul-searching that followed that project didn't seem to carry the Ecuadorian program very far. One point raised, however, was the desirability to have host nation personnel participate more closely in Peace Corps programs, and that suggestion was expressed by volunteers in other countries, as well.

A final point to be made is that during our tour in Guayaquil: my wife pursued her occupational therapy interests very effectively. Dr. Emiliano Crespo, a prominent, community-minded physician, was influential in Guayaquil and very interested in medical rehabilitation. Supported by friends in the Lions Club, he established a small rehabilitation center for the handicapped, and Beth set up an occupational therapy department there.

She was also instrumental in encouraging a young Ecuadorian woman to go to the United States for training in occupational therapy. That lady returned to Guayaquil, helped bring occupational therapy to Ecuador, and established her own vocational rehabilitation program with a sheltered workshop in Guayaquil. We still visit her impressive work on trips we make to see our son and his family, who live in the city.

STEPHEN F. DACHI
Fulbright Professor
Quito (1966)

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: It was while I was on the ship that I got a call from the State Department to see if I was interested in being a Fulbright professor of dentistry in Ecuador the following summer. I said, "Yes." I went back to Lexington. I had about 10 months before going to Ecuador. I decided to teach myself Spanish, which I did. I never had a teacher, but because of all these other languages I already had, I managed to make a good beginning on my own. I started reading the Spanish-language Ecuadorean newspapers. Just like in Guinea, I became fascinated by the politics of Ecuador. You can see it developing. The summer of 1966 I went down there. I was exposed to the consulate, and the Peace Corps. I made enough progress with the language that I ended up giving all the lectures in Spanish.

Q: Where were you?

DACHI: In Guayaquil and, briefly in Quito. I also stopped in Guatemala and Costa Rica on the way down to visit some of my former colleagues who had come to see me in Kentucky. When I got to Guatemala, the first place I set foot in Latin America, they had me lined up to teach a two-

day seminar. This was a not unusual, I used to do a lot of lecturing at dental meetings in the U.S. So, my host said, "How are you going to do this?" I said, "I am going to do it in Spanish." He was absolutely astonished because he knew me from graduate school when I didn't speak a word of Spanish. Anyway, I went down there and did the whole thing in Spanish. It's easier to give a lecture in Spanish than it is to have a conversation, because during a lecture the people don't speak back to you.

Q: You're in control.

DACHI: In control of the vocabulary. I needed an interpreter for the question and answer period.

When I returned from Ecuador, I decided I had to do something about finding a way to a career change. In 1966, the first class had graduated in Kentucky. I had become a full professor. I had published 35 papers in the scientific literature and had written parts of a book. I said, "What am I going to do now? I am 33 years old." After doing this in Kentucky, I didn't know what else I was going to do in dental education. So, I decided I was going to attempt this transition.

ROBERT K. GEIS
Cultural Affairs Officer, USIS
Guayaquil (1966-1968)

Robert K. Geis was born on October 28, 1939 in Havana, Cuba. He received his B.A. from Rice University in 1961 and pursued his post-graduate studies at American University until 1963. He entered the Foreign Service in 1962, wherein he served in countries including Argentina, Romania, Ecuador, Russia, Trinidad, Tobago, and Italy. Mr. Geis was interviewed by Lewis Hoffacker on April 21, 1999.

GEIS: But it was now time to move on and to leave Romania, and I was going to be assigned back to South America, to be precise, to Guayaquil, Ecuador. Guayaquil was not the most appealing post in South America, but this was the Vietnam era and I was happy, as a young newlywed, to be anywhere but Vietnam. I was assigned as a vice consul and cultural attaché to USIS in Guayaquil. The program issues at this time were dominated by Vietnam and anticommunism, the Alliance for Progress and the Peace Corps. Explaining the United States in the '60s was a real challenge, but we made use of the excellent binational center program. We had a very fine center in Guayaquil, and we had branch centers in coastal Ecuador, too. Some of the specific programs that we had ranged from such things as a company of performers doing *Showboat*, came to us from Los Angeles. And then while I was there, there was a major exhibit of the Gemini capsule in Guayaquil and in the coastal provinces. I also worked during that period with the State Department overseas schools program. We assisted the local school, which was the Colegio Americano de Guayaquil, the American High School in Guayaquil, assisted it in getting grants from the State Department, which were given to certain binational secondary schools. As usual, I enjoyed getting to know artists and writers of Guayaquil and the capital, Quito. The Ecuadorians, especially the people of the coast, which are known as *Costeños*, were

lively and fun-loving and thoroughly enjoyed their fiestas. The dance rhythm that was most popular was the *cumbia*, and the Ecuadorians, the Guayaquileños, would party till late into the night. On the down side, Guayaquil had some of the grimmest slums in South America.

Another interesting cultural experience that my wife and I had at that time was to visit the Amazon jungle of Ecuador. The Summer Institute of Linguistics missionaries had an establishment out in the jungle, and this was of considerable interest to my wife, who was a linguist. And they were in the process of translating and recording the local languages, which had not been written in any form, and then translating the Bible into these languages. It was very interesting to be out there. We had our first experience in lepidoptery as we went around catching butterflies here and there, and it was interesting to see how the missionaries lived. They had such amenities as freezers, and I'll never forget looking into one of their freezers and seeing a little monkey sitting in a plastic bag next to a frozen fish that looked completely prehistoric. I guess it had come out of the rivers.

Q: *What denomination were they? Do you remember?*

GEIS: Oh, no I don't.

Q: *But they were Protestant.*

GEIS: They were Protestant, yes, absolutely. And it may have been more than one denomination, as a matter of fact.

Q: *But you didn't run into the fundamentalism that is the issue now.*

GEIS: Well, not extreme fundamentalism, no, I wouldn't say that. I mean, they were very much dedicated to the proposition of translating the Bible for proselytizing the natives, but there certainly was not the extremism. And on top of that, they were very fine linguists who were, indeed, preserving this language. I mean, it had a significant purpose, too.

So however, time was approaching to return to the United States. I was selected for and returned to Washington for a mid-career training program, which was supposed to bring us up to date with things going on in the U.S., and this was the late '60s, and a lot was going on. We were supposed to hone our skills in contemporary issues such as economic and sociopolitical changes in the U.S. It was, as I said, a period of great ferment in Washington and in the country in general.

DAVID J. DUNFORD
Rotation Officer
Quito (1966-1968)

Ambassador Dunford was born in New Jersey and raised in New Jersey and Connecticut. He was educated at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology

(MIT), Stanford University and the National Institute of Aerospace Technology of Spain. Entering the Foreign Service in 1966 Mr. Dunford became an economic, commercial and trade specialist serving in Washington, Helsinki, Cairo (Economic Minister-Counselor) and Riyadh (Deputy Chief of Mission). In 1992 he was appointed Ambassador to Muscat, where he served until 1995. Ambassador Dunford was interviewed by Elisabeth Raspolic in 2006.

Q: At that time, how did you- how were the selections made for your initial assignments? Were you able to bid or did they just come in and tell you where you were going?

DUNFORD: We bid in general terms. I asked for Latin America because I had a smattering of Spanish and thought that region made sense. Other people asked for different geographic areas. We had an assembly at the end of our six weeks in the A100 course. Assignments were announced and I learned that I was going to Quito, Ecuador. We had a pool to be won by those who got the best and worst assignments, as determined by a class consensus. I was out of the running for either. I recall that Mogadishu and Vietnam were in the running for the worst. That was about a year before almost all entering FSOs had to go to Vietnam. One of our classmates, Stephen Haukness, was assigned to Vietnam and was killed there.

I went home brimming with the news that we were going to Quito and my wife greeted me at the door, telling me we were going to Quito. She guessed. She had found a map of Latin America and looked for the capital she knew the least about. Quite amazing!

Q: Did you have a family then, did you have children then?

DUNFORD: My wife Sandy but no children at this time. I met Sandy in California; I was going to Stanford and she was, at that time, working in a bookstore and my next door neighbor in an apartment complex.

Q: What was your assignment for your first tour?

DUNFORD: In those days they had rotational slots for junior officers. I went to Quito on a cruise ship, another thing you cannot do anymore. We sailed from New York, stopped in Jamaica and Cartagena, went through the Panama Canal, and stopped in Buenaventura, Colombia. Buenaventura at that time was the poorest place I had ever seen, despite its name. We disembarked in Guayaquil. We took a dog, a golden retriever puppy, with us on the ship. As we marched off the gangplank in Guayaquil, the dog began to bleed just before it was time for an Ecuadorean vet to examine him. We were mortified. The vet looked him in the mouth and smiling up at us, he said: this dog “esta cambiando de dientes.” He was telling us that the dog was losing his baby teeth, puppy teeth, and not to worry.

Q: And so the dog survived?

DUNFORD: The dog survived, yes.

Q: So how did the rotations work out? Did you spend time in each section or just two or three

sections or how did it go?

DUNFORD: I spent some time in all four of the major sections and, even though I left Quito three or four months early, I got quite a smattering of training. I began working for Mary Murphy, personnel officer. Her first task for me was to go through her files and make sure there was no classified material in them; that was a thrilling assignment. And it only got more exciting when I got to analyze Ecuador's social security law. At least it was in Spanish so it exercised my language skills.

Q: Still for her?

DUNFORD: Still for her. Then I moved to the budget and fiscal section, which proved to be a good thing because by April- I arrived at post in early January and by April I still had not been paid and it was getting to be a considerable strain. We were living off a State Department Federal Credit Union loan. I found out in the budget and fiscal section that there was a form that should have been sent in when I arrived at post. My first task in the section was to send in the form announcing my arrival at post so that I could be paid.

Q: You should have increased the amount, too.

DUNFORD: Other than that I do not remember much about the budget and fiscal section except I worked for a guy named Jim Weiner who became quite a good friend.

Q: Did you work in the consular section?

DUNFORD: I did. In fact, looking back on my career, that was one of the most powerful positions I ever held. We were in Ecuador where virtually every Ecuadorean wanted to travel to the United States and he or she had to either go through me or my boss, who was also a junior officer. The actual Consul position was not filled. My boss, named J. Lamar Merk, taught me most of what I know about consular work.

Q: He was first tour also or was he second tour junior?

DUNFORD: I think he might have been a second tour officer. But he was a character and he was tough. His basic philosophy was the equivalent of having "no" on a sign around his neck. I began to appreciate that it was not a bad idea to be tough when I learned that down in Guayaquil the consular section had lines around the block waiting to get in. Subsequent investigation revealed that travel agents were allowed to wander through the consular section as well as some other questionable practices. In Quito, the lines were quite manageable because, unless you really had a good case to go to the United States, you did not.

Q: Did you do immigrant visas also?

DUNFORD: I did both, immigrant and non-immigrant. There were only two Americans in the section.

Q: And ACS? American Citizen Services?

DUNFORD: Yes, getting people out of jail. The case I remember the most, because I made a mistake, involved an American who was running around in the Hotel Quito naked and drunk. I was on call that night so I went over. He had calmed down a little bit so I worked out a deal with the hotel whereby he would not go to jail if I held his passport. J. Lamar made it clear the next morning that you do not take an American's passport for any reason. My solution did keep him out of the Quito jail, not a fun place in 1967 if ever.

Q: Were there many American citizens living in Ecuador at the time? I mean, what were they doing? Were they religious?

DUNFORD: We had some missionaries. We had some oil people - oil was not produced then but exploration was underway. We had some basic businesses, banks and that sort of thing. It was not a large American community but it was larger than in many countries.

Q: Well, where did you go after the consular section? What came next?

DUNFORD: I went to the political section. Bob Phillips was the political counselor and I worked with a guy named Fred Padula, who is still a good friend. He quit the Foreign Service after Quito and went to be a professor of Latin American history at the University of Maine. Dick Howard was also in the section. Fred and Dick were my mentors. I did some traveling around the Ecuadorean countryside with them and wrote some reports. It was my first real exposure to reporting.

Q: This was at the time when one still sent air grams, as I recall.

DUNFORD: Yes, there were still air grams and everything you did had to be typed on a manual typewriter and you would carat things in sometimes.

Q: It was the political section that got you out into the countryside a little bit, then?

DUNFORD: Yes but, back during my second month in Ecuador, I was sent down to the port of Salinas to deal with the arrest of six American tuna boats by the Ecuadorean Navy. This was a recurring problem and Salinas was in the Guayaquil consular district, but ConGen Guayaquil did not have enough people. The underlying issue was Ecuador's claim of a 200 mile territorial limit, which we did not recognize.

Q: You mean the international- territorial sea, waters?

DUNFORD: Sea, territorial sea. Several of our tuna boats got picked up by the Ecuadorean navy and brought into a port called Salinas. Sandy, my wife, and I went down to Salinas to hold the hands of the crews while we tried to negotiate their way out of port. I believe they had to pay a fine. It was not arduous work but it got me out of Quito. I thought it was an enlightened policy by embassy management to send a young guy like me out.

Q: You went out as a consular officer or as an economics officer?

DUNFORD: It was a consular role but I went out as just a Foreign Service officer who happened not have much better to do than sorting through the classified and unclassified in Mary Murphy's files.

Q: A wise move.

JOHN J. CROWLEY, JR.
Deputy Chief of Mission
Quito (1966-1969)

Ambassador John J. Crowley, Jr. was born in New Mexico in 1928. He received an undergraduate degree from the University of West Virginia and a master's degree from Columbia University. After joining the Foreign Service in 1952, Ambassador Crowley served in Peru, Belgium, Venezuela, Ecuador, the Dominican Republic, Suriname, and Washington, DC. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1989.

Q: Well, then we move to your assignment as deputy chief of mission from 1966 to 1969 in Quito in Ecuador. How did you get this assignment? This is always a sort of crucial assignment in the Foreign Service career ladder, and how did this one come about? How did you get the sort of very important assignment as deputy chief of mission to a good-sized embassy?

CROWLEY: Well, I think one of the reasons was because I had good lungs. There were a number of candidates, some of them, for one reason or another, were not accepted by the ambassador. The ones who were that were tested by the medical branch (given the fact that they had to serve at a post at 10,000 feet altitude) were eliminated. And finally, by process of elimination, I took the lung test, passed, and I was given the opportunity. [Laughter]

Q: Who was the ambassador, and how did he operate?

CROWLEY: Well, it was Wymberley Coerr, Wim Coerr. He had been there for, I guess, over a year, and when I arrived there, I soon realized there was a good deal of tension -- well, you could sense it in Washington, but you could see it better down there -- tension between the embassy and the government there on the AID program and on the conditions that were being sought by the United States for various kind of aid. In fact, it had been a little bit much, and we had rubbed the sensitivity somewhat raw.

So Coerr, I think with the best will in the world, made a speech, for which he had permission from the Department, although they hadn't reviewed the text. He told them more or less what he was going to say and the Department said, "Go ahead." He made a speech in which he very mildly put forward our side of the question. It was immediately picked up in the press, and, in fact, I remember the leading newspaper of Quito, the way they started the story it said, "In an

obvious retort to the president of Ecuador yesterday, the American ambassador said the following and the following," so the press put it right up as if it were a shootout between the American ambassador and the president.

But I still found it hard to believe when, a couple of days later, the ambassador called me and he said, "Well, it happened."

And I said, "What?"

And he said, "Well, I've been PNGed for that speech."

Q: PNG meaning made persona non grata. In other words, told to leave.

CROWLEY: Yes. And what happened was that the Ecuadoran Embassy had delivered the note here in Washington, and they couldn't find anybody on Saturday to deliver it to. They finally gave it to somebody, and they took it to the op center. And then when the senior people got it, they sent it down by immediate NIACT to Quito, because we did not have daily plane service and the Ambassador and his family had to plan to get the next convenient flight within 48 hours. So that meant that he had to be out by Monday, and the Monday flight was less than 48 hours away.

Q: What was the issue? You say we were pushing too hard.

CROWLEY: It's not only my view, but I think it's been documented by scholars who had better knowledge than I later, that the Alliance for Progress began with a great spurt of idealism and enthusiasm, mainly the personality of President Kennedy. And after President Kennedy passed from the scene, the idealism in the program began to go away, and it became much more a matter of dollars and cents. And in some cases, it became a gravy train for American business because of the tied aid.

Q: "Tied aid" meaning?

CROWLEY: Well, in other words, the United States would give you, Ecuador, ten million dollars to build a road, but you're going to have to give eight million to this Texas company which is going to come down and build it. Tied to American procurement of goods and services.

This went to the extent in Ecuador that it was a real irritant, and then it was compounded by the fact that the president realized that he could find and exploit a political issue there, you know. So, when he went to the meeting of Latin American presidents, at Punta del Este on the Alliance For Progress -- what year would that have been? Well, in '65 or '66, I guess. He was the only president who refused to sign the charter, and when he came back to Ecuador, he received a tremendous ovation. Thousands of people went to the airport, because he was standing up to the Yankees. He portrayed U.S. aid as a program in which the U.S. Government and companies were taking advantage. And he even issued a stamp which showed him there pounding his fist on the table in Punta del Este and saying, "By God, I won't sign it!"

Q: Were we tempted to just say, "Okay, if you don't want it"? [Laughter]

CROWLEY: Unfortunately, Ambassador Coerr had tried to make what I thought was a very reasonable speech, but the president thought, "Ah, this is another chance to kick the Yankees." I think he regretted it later. In fact, we were told by various sources that he had regretted it, but there was no way to reverse his decision.

Q: You mean the president of Ecuador?

CROWLEY: The president of Ecuador regretted having taken such a rash decision.

Q: Wasn't there a lingering anti-Americanism going back to our role in -- was it '42 or something like that -- of the Ecuadorian-Peruvian border dispute where we ended up as a guarantor of boundaries which the Ecuadorians didn't like, or something like that?

CROWLEY: I didn't detect a lot of -- of course, there was a lot of anti-Peruvian feeling; it has been for years -- I didn't detect a lot of anti-American feeling based on that. Because after all, the boundary was delineated. It has never been fixed, but it was delineated by a Brazilian geologist, and that boundary was then guaranteed by the guarantors.

However, other geologists in the area dispute the physical findings that he made there about watersheds, and the Ecuadorians said right away, "Ah, he picked the wrong watershed. He meant that one. He didn't mean this one." And in the meantime, the poor fellow had died, and so now nobody knows what he really meant.

So it's a stalemate, and they have never been able -- they were supposed to proceed with putting in the markers. The markers have never been placed there because Peru says, "No, that's the watershed," and Ecuador says, "This is the watershed." But I didn't detect a lot of blame against the Americans.

Q: Were we able to move away from this issue? One, did it leave you as chargé for a while?

CROWLEY: I got a lot of experience in a hurry, yes. I was what used to be called FSO-3, which I guess is called FSO-1 now. The ambassador departed. I got a cable from the Department -- or not a cable really, a letter -- from Bob Sayre, who was then the deputy assistant secretary, and he said, "We are not intending in the near future to replace the ambassador here because of this offensive treatment that we received and, therefore, you will be chargé for a while." And he knew that my only previous experience really was as desk officer. I'd never even been a chief of section. But he said, "Jack you have to run it." And he said, "I mean, you have to run it." [Laughter] So I got the word about that.

About six months later, they sent the deputy inspector general down, the late Spencer King, on a kind of a special look-see, and I must say I was pretty nervous. But as he was leaving, he made me feel a lot better by saying he thought I was doing pretty well under the circumstances.

Q: Well, what do you do? I mean, here you are, a relatively junior officer in the system. A

persona non grata of an ambassador is really a major step. This is not a minor incident. This means relations are bad, and one of the weaknesses of the whole diplomatic system, not just the American one, is that the worse the relations get, the more the day-to-day work devolves upon less and less senior people as you withdraw. I mean, it's a peculiar system. But what do you do? What type of instructions were you having? How did you see the situation? What were you trying to do?

CROWLEY: We were instructed to just go on with business as usual, no new programs. The AID director proposed -- since it was the AID program which was the source of the irritation -- he proposed to have a major review with the senior Ecuadoran officials of the AID program and see if there were areas where we could reduce the tension and try to look at some of their criticisms. So that was approved, and he then launched on this with some of his staff.

On the other side was an Ecuadorian Foreign Service officer whose name is Jaime Moncayo. The reason I mention his name now is that he's the current Ecuadoran ambassador to Washington, but then he was one of few young economists that they had in their diplomatic service.

This review took place over a period of several months, and it did not have a satisfactory conclusion, and as a result, AID withdrew the AID director. So we had a chargé in the embassy and a chargé in the AID mission.

Q: But the AID mission continued?

CROWLEY: Yes, but with no new programs, only the continuation of what was going on.

Now, in the meantime, what was exacerbating the situation even more was that we were having the constant seizures of our fishing boats off the coasts because of the difference in interpretation of international law. At that point, we were still recognizing only three-mile territorial water and ten miles for a fisheries zone, I think. We also held tuna to be a migratory fish which anyone could follow into anybody's territorial sea.

That was our interpretation, and the Chileans, Peruvians, and Ecuadorans were holding out for 200 miles. This is what they based their claim on an action that President Truman had taken during -- I'm sorry, President Roosevelt. It was during World War II, so I guess it was President Roosevelt -- when he declared a 200-mile security zone around the United States, which was intended to be just for the war. But the people down there said, "Well, that would be a good idea to do that permanently, so we'll just say everything in that zone is ours and it's our fish and our security."

So over the years, we had a lot of problems with them, and it's interesting to see how it's turned out. Basically, they have won, you know. That now is the accepted position. The Law of the Sea Conference has come down on their side, but at that time it still hadn't. And every time we had a seizure, we had to go in to the Foreign Ministry to protest. We had to send a consular officer down to the port to make sure that the crew was all right. We had to negotiate about the catch and all that, because that would cause the inflammatory headlines in the paper. Fortunately, this troublesome president's term was ending.

Q: Which president was that?

CROWLEY: Otto Arosemena was his name. A new president was elected, the old man, Velasco Ibarra. Washington, at one point, was thinking of sending a new ambassador before Velasco Ibarra was elected, and I advised Washington that I thought that would be bad -- it sounded a little self-serving -- but I said, "Why should we reward Arosemena with a new ambassador? Let's wait and send a new one to the new president," and they finally did agree to that. And that's when Edison Sessions came down and relieved me, because I had been chargé for 11 months, and we started a new regime. But the fisheries problem remained and the AID problem was only somewhat improved.

Q: We were improving the AID problem by mainly toning it down?

CROWLEY: Mainly, yes, cosmetic things. Also Velasco was not as tempted as Arosemena was to keep making issues out of it. But I was there less than a year with Ambassador Sessions, and then I left to come to the National War College. And after I left, the fisheries problem became worse, and we retaliated by cutting off their military assistance, at which point they kicked out the MAAG.

Q: MAAG means military assistance group.

CROWLEY: Advisory group. I wasn't there when that happened, but that is the way it evolved. It hit bottom, and we've been, I think, coming back up since then.

Q: We seem to have more problems in Ecuador than in many other places where, in many ways, we shouldn't have these issues as much. It's pretty much a democratic country. I mean, it's had its military juntas coming in and all.

CROWLEY: I think their policy in terms of the fisheries was more severe because they had, unlike Chile and Peru, they had actually incorporated into the constitution of Ecuador that the territory of Ecuador extended 200 miles to sea. And, of course, it also extended 200 miles back from the Galápagos Islands, so they had a hell of a lot of water, but not very much area in between. [Chuckles] And they also were more energetic in enforcing, going after the poachers.

The Peruvians and the Chileans sometimes would say, "We saw one of your boats out there, and you better get it out or it's going to be in trouble." The Ecuadorians would just go out and take it, you know, and shoot some shots across the bow and bring it in, and they'd say, "We've got one of your boats." So they had a much more energetic policy.

Q: Well, did you find yourself in a position where some of our people who were fishing said, "Hell, we'll buy an Ecuadorian license," and we said, "You can't do that," or something like that?

CROWLEY: You're exactly right. That's right, yes. And, finally, I think that was acquiesced to. It was after I left, but at the time, Washington was adamant that they should not buy the licenses.

Q: Did you find yourself with screaming skippers of ships saying, "You got me into this, you get me out"?

CROWLEY: Well, they were being compensated. You know Congress had passed a law to compensate them for any fine that they had to pay and also for any catch that they lost. The fishing industry is small in this country, but it has a lot of clout. I think, partly, because it's kind of romantic. You know, man against the sea, and everybody says, "Gee, those guys are brave out there, and they're picking on our fishermen." So they suffered really very little financially.

SAMUEL D. EATON
Deputy Chief of Mission
Quito (1969-1970)

Samuel D. Eaton was born in New York in 1923. He served in the U.S. Army Air Corps during World War II and entered the Foreign Service in 1947 after receiving his undergraduate degree from Drew University. In addition to Ecuador, Mr. Eaton served in Bolivia, Brazil, Thailand, Columbia, Peru, Spain, and Washington, DC. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1990.

Q: What was the political situation in Quito at the time?

EATON: Perhaps I should say one more thing about the experience in Lima before we go to Ecuador.

Nixon came in and he asked Rockefeller to go around Latin America and do a report. So, in the AID mission in Lima, we developed recommendations. And I developed recommendations. I had strong ideas as to what should be done, and one of them was to work hard to reduce the nondevelopment-related conditionality on AID programs. After all, the whole concept of AID programs is to provide effective development of systems, the purpose is not to achieve other objectives, and that we ought to improve the focus of them. And so we spent a lot of time on recommendations which we provided to the Rockefeller mission. Insofar as I know, they were never read, never taken into account. And the final Rockefeller report, I thought, was worthless. Worthless, absolutely worthless.

Q: Do you have any idea why it was worthless?

EATON: Well, I think that the people who were involved in writing it were inexperienced staff people for Rockefeller. He himself had little concept, although he had a lot to do with Latin America, of what the issues of the time were.

I got to Quito and the ambassador there said, "Have you read the Rockefeller report?"

And I said, "I have."

He said, "Isn't it great?"

And I said, "No, it's lousy."

It really was. Disillusioning. Rockefeller had an excellent reputation with respect particularly to the role he played in Latin America. He certainly, to my mind, did not live up to that reputation in this report.

Q: In Quito, who was the ambassador there?

EATON: Edson Sessions. I had known him in Thailand. He had been AID director in Thailand when I was there. He was a friend of Everett Dirksen.

Q: Everett Dirksen, by the way, was the head of the Republican Party in the Senate.

EATON: Edson Sessions was a very talented, bright engineer and a good businessman, who had made a fortune in difficult years as an engineering consultant in Chicago and then gone on to other things. He had been AID director in Thailand. He'd been ambassador in Finland. He had been deputy postmaster general. He retired after each of these jobs and got bored and then went to see his friend, Everett Dirksen, and asked for a new appointment, and he got it.

He was a very interesting person to work with and a very able man, but he was miscast as ambassador to Quito. He had no idea. He didn't speak the language, couldn't communicate with the people there. He did very well when he was in a session with somebody with an interpreter.

His view of the issues was curious. For instance, he once told me that he thought that his principal role in Ecuador should be to persuade the Ecuadorians to adopt English as their national language.

Q: Good God!

EATON: You know, that is an indicative in outlook. An indicative of why we are right in having a peeve over the consideration that goes into political appointing.

Q: Well, what was your role as deputy chief of mission then?

EATON: Well, he had had an illness and was somewhat constrained because of that. He and I had a very good relationship. And he was a good businessman -- he knew how to delegate, so he let me do a lot. And he wasn't there very long after I arrived. A few months later, he left and I was chargé.

Q: You were there about a year and a half?

EATON: Not that long, less than a year.

Q: In this very short period, were there any principal concerns with the Ecuadorian government?

EATON: Not great concerns. I guess one of the primary concerns was a consular one, the problem of Ecuadorians wanting to come to the United States. Our consulate was besieged (you can appreciate this) by Ecuadorians, many of them recommended by important families, who obviously wanted to come to the United States to stay even though they said they wanted to come temporarily. And some of these families got the foreign office to support this. So the consul was under great pressure and one had to resist that.

I remember one incident which was very interesting. It was a case of two Ecuadorians who came to the States. They were separated out at Miami and questioned, because they were in transit, apparently, in Miami, and then they were going to be in transit in New York, and then they were going on to Canada. But there was something about their record that made the immigration authorities believe that they were not really in transit. So they were returned to Ecuador and they were not permitted to go on to New York.

They knew somebody, who protested to the Foreign Ministry, and the under secretary of foreign affairs called the ambassador and myself in protest to us that they had been mistreated and that their intentions were just to go on in transit to Canada. So the ambassador, who was very good on this type of issue, said, "Well, we'll look into it very carefully, of course." So he asked me to do that.

We asked the immigration authorities to describe to us very precisely what had occurred and to tell us exactly why they had done what they did. And after we got all of the background we could, I invited the two men to come into my office, along with a consul, and I said, "I want to go over what happened with you. And, certainly, if anything happened that's untoward, we want to do what we can to amend what has occurred."

But in the process, we drew them out, and one of them (who was less wise than the other), said, "Oh, we weren't doing anything wrong. All we wanted to do was to get on to New York, and then we were going to visit with our family and stay there, and then we were going to go to work." Well, that was the end of the story. So we duly reported back to the Foreign Ministry. There were a lot of things like this that went on.

DALE V. SLAGHT
Fellowship, Organization of American States
Quito 1970-1971

Mr. Slaght was born in Oregon in 1943. After serving in various capacities on Capitol Hill and in the Department of Commerce, he joined the State Department under the Commerce-State Exchange Program. As expert in commercial and trade policy, Mr. Slaght had assignments as Commercial Attaché and Minister Counselor at US Embassies and Consulates in Uruguay, Panama, Germany,

Canada, Soviet Union and Mexico. He also served as Mexico Desk Officer at the Department of Commerce. Mr. Slaght attained the rank of Career Minister. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: Where did you take your course, and what were you doing? This is American U, and you were doing it from when to when?

SLAGHT: From '68 to '72. I worked in the dorm as a resident advisor to cover costs, and the second year I was teaching assistant of Professor Said. The third year I was given a fellowship from the Organization of American States to do my dissertation research in Ecuador. The fourth year I spent writing my dissertation.

Q: What was your dissertation on?

SLAGHT: The Ecuadorian relations with Peru over a 20 year period from essentially '50 to '70.

Q: This is a damn little piece of property. Brazil and who else is a player?

SLAGHT: Argentina. And the United States. The ABC: American, Brazil and Chile. Yeah, that's interesting that you know that. It was an interesting piece because one reads Ecuadorian literature, and you read American scholarship on Ecuadorian relations, it's always anti-Peruvian, very strongly negative about Peru. Going back to the war. A few things happened in the period of '50 to '70. Oil was discovered in a small part of land that Peru actually ceded to Ecuador as part of the big deal. Now, Peru got the lion's share, but some part in the northeast part of the country ended up in Ecuador's hands, and Texaco discovered oil there. The thought of calling for a redress of the issue and a re-negotiation of the treaty was never an issue after that.

The major political issue at the time was not with Peru but with the United States on the fishing limit. Two hundred mile fishing limit. It was Yankees Go Home, and Fuera los Yanquis, and the Peruvians Are Our Brothers because they have the same issues. What I did was play around with that issue, how the images, the elite images--the military, the political and the journalistic views Ecuador toward Peru--changed in 20 years and then described why. It was a nice little piece.

Q: I did an oral history a long time ago with John Melby. He had the Peruvian-Ecuadorian desk in the State Department in 1942 or '43 or something like that. One day he got a telephone call from the Under Secretary, Sumner Wells. Wells said to the effect that, we got a war on, what the hell are these two little countries squabbling about? I want you to stop that war, and hung up. In a way he sort of [inaudible] the people involved, but it happened the way we saw it at the time. But it kept coming up again, and he never could get rid of it.

SLAGHT: Yes, it was an interesting case. We were concerned about the stability in our southern neighbors during the war, and we didn't want this kind of horse manure going on and tiny little things causing problems. Anyway, the dissertation got the Outstanding Dissertation of the Year for '72 from AU. It got me a little money, and the OAS Fellowship to Ecuador gave me a wonderful experience. I was married in the summer of '70, and then I went to Quito in September and spent nine months there. Had a wonderful experience.

Q: Tell me about your Significant Other, her background and all that.

SLAGHT: Her name is Joan Salzman, German background out of New Jersey. We met at a summer job when I was in New Jersey. I spent every summer working at a playground manufacturing plant. Worked on the dock: loading trucks, unloading trucks, putting orders together for swing sets, bike racks, etc. These were municipal, heavy duty stuff for municipalities, municipalities, colleges and universities, whatever. She was a summer secretary, and I was the summer hire. We met there in the summer of '67 and we started dating in January of 1968, and I married her in June of 1970. She's seven years younger than I am. She'd barely been out of New Jersey. We were married in June and in September we were in Quite, Ecuador.

She had no Spanish, so I urged her to take some courses at the university there which she did. She got enough to get around, and for some reason she gained lots of weight there and I lost of weight. Both of us ended up going to a doctor to find out what the story was and he had no real explanation, although he said it was common for females to gain weight and males to lose it the first year or so in Quito. I'm not sure we ever had an explanation that was reasonable, but he said it wasn't uncommon, so we didn't think any more of it. We weren't ill either of us, just put on weight and I lost it.

We traveled all around the country on the bus. She would view the experience today far less positively than I. I had a great time exploring. One time we took a bus into the oriente, into the eastern side of mountains there, the Andes, as far as the bus routes would go. On one occasion it was three days by horseback to the next city, and I would have loved to get on a horse and gone to the next city three days away, but there was no way I was going to get my wife to do that.

Q: Did you run across the embassy, the operations of the embassy?

SLAGHT: Yes, I went in once just to I guess to register ourselves, just to let them know we were there. But that was the only association I had with the embassy at all. We had a friend who we'd been referred to out of AU. He had a friend in Ecuador. We got to know them, and the man's wife's father had been head of USIA in Quito. His family had stayed there, his daughter stayed when they moved on. She eventually married an Ecuadorian man, and we got to know them pretty well and through them, others. We had wonderful experiences in Ecuador. We went with these two couples once up to the northwest part of the country where you could only get to their property when the ocean tide was out. It was right on the Pacific coast. He sent his guys out one afternoon and brought back a sea turtle that they cooked up and we had that night for dinner. They chopped the legs off, and the kids drank the blood from it! Clearly, there was some civilization at some point on their property. He said if you want some artifacts, go over here to that cliff. So we went over to this cliff, it was where the waves of high tide would hit it. We spent less than an hour and dug up all sorts of pieces of pottery and I had them verified later by the Smithsonian, and they were all authentic, pre-Columbian artifacts, being little by little washed away into the Pacific Ocean. We had many other wonderful experiences down there. I'd always hoped to be assigned to Quito, but either I was too junior or later too senior for the Senior Commercial Officer position in Ecuador.

Q: In your dissertation work, were you working particularly on the Ecuadorian side?

SLAGHT: Yes. Three elite groups I was interested in: the military, the journalist -- the elite press -- and the politicians, and I did three things. I read random editorials from the two papers in the country for 20 years, one month per year to look for comments on Peru. I read the annual report on the president to the country and the annual report to the Minister of Defense. Then I went to interview people once I got the data and saw the trends and how there was far less hostility than the American scholars would have lead one to believe.

Q: Was it sort of a politician's thing that they would stir up from time to time?

SLAGHT: Yes. Occasionally they would need to do that. There is some truth in that. But that happens.

Q: Where did the military stand on both sides? Were they really equipped or could they even go to war against each other?

SLAGHT: No. Ecuador is a much smaller country than Peru, and had nowhere near the military resources that Peru had. What they felt they had was the moral right on their side, and they talked about international law a great deal, rather than who had boots on the ground. They had commonalities of interest fighting the U.S. on the 200 mile territorial water issue and on the moral issue, too.

ROBERT L. CHATTEN
Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Quito (1970-1972)

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.

Q: You're very right there, Bob, and I think all former PAOs would agree with you. What were some of your highlights in Ecuador? How did you see your program shaping up and how would you rate the effectiveness of that program?

CHATTEN: It was a program, targeted to the circumstances of the time. We arrived there just when the long search for petroleum in the eastern jungles of the country had paid off. American petroleum countries which had leases to explore for oil had come up with significant discoveries. Texaco and Gulf had a consortium of equal partnership, with Texaco as the operating partner. That, as it turned out, was a complication. They were in the midst of building a pipeline over the Andes to a loading facility on the north coast of Ecuador, with an investment of millions in a small country.

The relationship with Ecuador during the two years we were there, from '70 to '72, was essentially colored by two things: oil and tuna.

There was the presence in Ecuador of this huge American extractive industry, pouring money into the country, being extraordinarily visible, with a lot of people whose culture and whose outlook on the world was formed in the oil patch of East Texas, Louisiana, and Oklahoma. If you transpose that culture and world onto the central Andes, you can get sometimes amusing, but often complicating results. Most of their children attended the missionary school, where they were strong on the 3 Rs corporal punishment, and whatever it took to make sure the "young guns" got an education. Not all bad by any means, it was achieved to some extent at the expense of the traditional American School, which Galo Plaza had helped found in the early '40s and which had been one of the great transforming elements of the education system of the country. There was another US supported school in the middle of the spectrum, which most Embassy kids attended.

The demonstration effect that these foreign schools, international schools, were having upon society was an interesting sidebar to the prevailing climate in which we worked. It was but one of the elements deriving from an overwhelming American corporate presence, and prospects of oil wealth dancing in Ecuadorian heads.

There is no way that you can make a large investment in an extractive industry in a third world country, in a developing country, more than intellectually palatable. It is always going to come on as a rape of the natural riches of the people and the motherland. One of the great challenges to the post was working with the oil companies and their staffs and management to the American presence there as well understood and as palatable and constructive as possible. And at the same time, we had to work with elements of Ecuadorian society to get them to understand that US development of their resources represented a unique opportunity for them. If they left the petroleum in the ground, they would not have this opportunity to use the income from it for their own good, however they defined that. In a developing country, and most assuredly in Ecuador, you have a world of unrealistic expectations when you can become a member of OPEC. The government entered into a program of spending the money before they had it, of going into debt on the premise that they were going to pay it back later. There was great reason for concern that things could go sour, with the oil companies, and by extension, the United States, getting blamed.

So there was this very yeasty mix in the relationship between the two countries at the time that consumed a great deal of everyone's energies, not just USIS, but everybody else there.

The other eccentric element in the mix was the fact that the so called Tuna Wars were at their peak. The Ecuadorians, feeling expansive, had declared a two hundred mile "patrimonial sea." The question of whether they had sovereignty over two hundred miles, which is by definition inviolable, or whether they had jurisdiction over two hundred miles, which makes it kind of negotiable, became a huge issue. It arose constantly, because every time a boat from the American fishing fleet, based primarily in San Diego, would get inside two hundred miles, the Ecuadorians would seize it. And they would bring it into port at Guayaquil or some place on the

coast. The Americans would pay the fine, the Ambassador would trot off and present another protest at the foreign office and a TV crew would be invited into my office. I would sit behind the desk with the US flag behind me, and espouse what the US policy was. This itself, recycled itself over and over again for the whole two years we were there.

Oil and tuna had a dramatic impact upon the USIS program, as well as other topics. We got involved in bringing in people who had lived through these kinds of developmental experience in other countries, both Americans and foreigners. They could talk about it in a dispassionate fashion, describing what's involved in the developmental end of it, what's involved in the cultural, social, political end of it, and what might constitute a reasonable way of approaching the subject. IVs we sent to the United States, no matter what their subject, always went through San Diego, where they could sit down with the officials of the American Tuna Boat Association for a frank and open dialogue.

Q: And get a tuna dinner? Ecuador has always had a very interesting Binational Center program and I was wondering if you'd like to expand on that a bit.

CHATTEN: It consumed a major part of the time that I devoted to duty in Ecuador and, in Guayaquil, was a major part of the program. Someone a few years before I arrived in Quito had received, I'm sure, the highest possible commendation for locating a big, new, nine story BNC building right across the street from the university. By the time I got there, the Binational Center had been bombed out of that building and it was an enormous albatross, a huge drain on resources because the building wasn't paid for. And while it was a local entity, we were deeply involved during the whole course of my stay there in trying to unload that white elephant. It was big enough to be a government ministry in Ecuador, but even this most logical category of buyer was not interested in being that close to the National University either, for the same reasons that we didn't have any business being there. You can imagine that at one time, this was thought of as being wonderfully close to the center of academic life in Ecuador. The students would just be able to go right across the street. But the law of unintended consequences took over and in became a terrible mistake.

In Guayaquil, however, we had long since outgrown an old building. There was a big market for English teaching in this largest and most dynamic of Ecuadorian cities, plus, we thought, a considerable market for the kinds of library and cultural programming that in a well-ordered society you're able to conduct out of a binational center. We were able to get good support from the American business community, adding them and other upbeat leaders to the Board of Directors. The big branch post and Consulate General put together a package that was appealing for a long term loan to build a big, new building there. We put a lot of energy into it. Branch CAO Jack Parker and PAO Jack Gallagher were very effective promoters, and I was back and forth to Guayaquil a good bit on that one.

I haven't been in Guayaquil in a number of years, but I know that for a considerable period after my 1970 to '72 time, it was really a showplace and a center for a lot of things that could be done to the benefit of US interests in Guayaquil and commercial activity in the country. It was a big, hot, ugly, dirty, tropical port city and smelled and looked the part. But it also was the country's center of business and trade.

Beyond the oil and the tuna boat program concerns that I've already mentioned, relations between the US and Ecuadorian governments often were contentious over the presence there of the US Military Group. During my second year there, the government decided to throw the MilGroup out of the country.

Because of my contacts with the press corps covering the presidency, and the presidential press secretary, I was the first one in the Mission to know when the president and the cabinet had taken this decision. Keep in mind that Ecuador at that time was one of a number of Latin American countries in which the Secretary of Defense was far and away the most important person in the cabinet. (That was an important distinction between Ecuador and Colombia, where I went next.) So I had the task of telling the Ambassador he didn't have a MilGroup any more.

That mucked things up for awhile and drew a great deal of huffing and puffing from Washington. Fortunately the USG kept its head and we went on about what were more important dimensions to our business there. But, for a while, it certainly created a public affairs climate and at least a short term problem that consumed all of our attention and resources.

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.

AARON BENJAMIN
Housing and Urban Development Officer, USAID
Quito and Guayaquil (1970-1972)

Aaron Benjamin was born in New York in 1932. He graduated from Brooklyn College and worked for several years as an urban planner in the United States and abroad. He joined USAID in 1966, serving in Bolivia, Ecuador, Peru, Nicaragua, the Dominican Republic, Egypt, and Zimbabwe. He retired from USAID in 1989 after twenty-three years of service. He was interviewed by Charles Christian in 1996.

BENJAMIN: I wound up staying in Washington until November or so. I was told at that point that I was going to get another assignment. I remained in Washington until my assignment to Ecuador in January of 1970 as the Housing and Urban Development Officer with essentially the same kinds of program responsibilities that I had in Bolivia, including the Savings and Loan System and the Housing Guaranty Program. Ecuador already had a Savings and Loan System with several branches and instead of a central bank for savings and loan, it was the government's

Housing Agency that managed the savings and loan system. I was able to secure some direct funding, technical assistance, and another six million dollar guaranteed loan for the savings and loan system from a consortium of 19 Savings and Loan Associations in Pittsburgh. This was about the time when the U.S. Congress authorized U.S. Savings and Loans to invest up to 1% of their reserves in the HG Program. I spent two years, helping the Ecuadorians to operate the program. They had excellent people, and had a branch in virtually every major city, including Guayaquil, Cuenca, and Quito. The Ecuadorian S and L System was very impressive, consisting of 10 Associations, with 33,000 members. It had financed a total of 3,600 homes in a 4 year period, roughly between 1968 and 1972.

I was also able to secure a 5 million dollar loan for low-income housing and used this program to promote the "Piso-Techo" concept, that is the construction of a simple core house that could be expanded as family resources increased.

I also got involved in the upgrading of slum neighborhoods called "Barrios Sub-Urbanos" in Guayaquil, a major port city on the Pacific coast. These were squatter settlements that had no streets and were occupied by wooden shacks that had no water, sewers, or electricity. Our programs brought in utilities and a home improvement loan program to help residents upgrade their housing. We also promoted a micro-business program to help them get a start economically by channeling a \$250,000 loan through the Ecuadorian Development Foundation. The Barrio upgrading program was generally successful.

I managed two Housing Guaranty Projects in Guayaquil, one of which was particularly interesting. It consisted of 200 units for lower-middle-class families right in the middle of a large marginal neighborhood. This HG project was managed by a savings and loan branch that was located in the project. It had the effect of promoting the upgrading of homes in the neighborhood outside of the boundaries of the project. We tried everything that we knew to facilitate the upgrading process and those efforts really worked out very well.

Q: What were the relationships with the Embassy and AID? Were they reasonably good?

BENJAMIN: They were good and very productive. For example, we had Embassy economists and other support staff working very closely with us.

Q: I never served in Latin America, but I always understood that the Embassies worked more closely with the AID Missions in that region than in other places.

BENJAMIN: Speaking from my own experience, we have always had a positive and cooperative working relationship with Embassy personnel.

Q: You had good Ambassadors while you were there?

BENJAMIN: I had good Ambassadors in all the posts in which I have served. They proved to be supportive of our programs, and were always ready to help us to achieve our development objectives.

I would like to describe another particularly interesting program in which I was involved. This was a program of architectural preservation in which we worked very closely with the Mayor of Quito, Sixto Duran Ballen. He was himself an architect who eventually went on to become the President of Ecuador.

Quito, with its hundreds of old colonial Spanish structures is virtually a museum. Although AID itself did not finance the restoration of any of these buildings, (this was done by the OAS), we did help by providing some technical assistance for the program.

Q: There again, you were in a high altitude country, though not as high as Bolivia.

BENJAMIN: Quito is located at an altitude of 9,200 feet, not quite as high as the city of La Paz, Bolivia which is at 12,000 feet.

Q: So you were down at sea level almost?

BENJAMIN: Not quite, but moving downhill fast.

Q: Did you take that train trip across the top of the world in Ecuador.

BENJAMIN: You mean down through Guayaquil. No we didn't, unfortunately, although we drove that route several times. However, we did visit the Galapagos and thoroughly enjoyed that trip.

Q: I was wondering about that. It would be a sin if that wasn't a part of your foreign service experience once you were so close. The programs went pretty well there?

BENJAMIN: The programs went very well. We produced a lot of good housing, for both middle and low income families. We helped to create one of the best Savings and Loan Systems in Latin America. We also initiated a unique program of upgrading marginal neighborhoods through the combination of core housing, home improvement, provision of basic services, credit for micro business, vocational training, and the use of the Savings and Loan Association to administer loans in these low income neighborhoods. In fact, this comprehensive approach became AID's major tool in subsequent years for dealing with problems of shelter for the urban poor. Rather than following the traditional expensive housing project model, we emphasized the more economical core house and the upgrading of marginal neighborhoods, which proved to be a speedier and a much more economical solution.

Q: AID was throughout the country or in a few major cities like Quito and Guayaquil?

BENJAMIN: We had major housing and Savings and Loan Programs in Quito and in Guayaquil, and we did some work in Cuenca, which was a city to the south. Guayaquil was an important commercial city of about 600,000. Quito, high in the mountains, was the institutional capital, also with a population of about 600,000 - 700,000. Cuenca the third largest, city a center of handicrafts, had a population of about 300,000. The AID program encompassed a variety of projects including education, health, agriculture and small business in communities of all sizes

throughout the country.

Q: Now how many years did you spend there?

BENJAMIN: Two years. I was privileged to have received a special commendation from the Municipality of Quito for my efforts on behalf of that city.

FINDLEY BURNS, JR.
Ambassador
Ecuador (1970-1973)

Ambassador Findley Burns, Jr. was born in Maryland in 1917. He received an undergraduate degree from Princeton University and later attended Harvard University and the National War College. He entered the Foreign Service in 1942. In addition to ambassadorships to Ecuador and Jordan, Ambassador Burns served in Spain, Belgium, Poland, Austria, Germany, and England. He was interviewed by Henry E. Mattox in 1988.

Q: In February 1970, you were appointed ambassador to Ecuador. Then over the next year or two, you had several substantive issues that came up, one having to do with tuna boats, fishing problems, and you had some kind of nationalization of ITT property, that sort of thing.

You were, by this time, not only an experienced FSO, but you were an experienced ambassador. When you arrived in Quito, how did you go about organizing your embassy and staff? What are some of the steps? Just for the record, for those of us who have never been ambassadors and who have never faced that particular question, how do you go about organizing your embassy to suit yourself, and how do you go about establishing your authority and so forth?

BURNS: The fact that you have been appointed ambassador endows you with a great deal of authority right from the start. And what I did was exactly what I had seen other ambassadors do - - ambassadors for whom I have worked and whom I greatly admired. In point of fact, you end up working with a fairly small group, especially the heads of embassy sections and agencies whose responsibilities are the most germane to your problems.

In Ecuador, the economic issue played a much bigger role than it did in Jordan, so the head of the economic section and the head of the AID mission were both vital. The chief of the political section, the defense attaché, and the CIA station chief were the other ones that you worked closely with. The aforementioned five, plus the head of USIS, comprised the group I met with three times a week. Then there was a larger group that met every other week and included the agricultural attaché and other attachés of one sort or another, such as the head of NASA, who certainly did very worthwhile work, but whom it was not necessary for me to confer with a great deal.

Q: Did you call your first staff meeting the first day or the second day of the first week?

BURNS: I don't rightly recall, to tell you the truth. Probably about the second or third day.

Q: You not only were an experienced FSO, not only an experienced ambassador; you had a great deal of administrative experience, as well, at that point. Did you bring to the job of ambassador any administrative skills that you were familiar with or that perhaps you had not seen exercised by other ambassadors?

BURNS: I had one advantage that most ambassadors don't have. My previous position had been as Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Inter-American Affairs in charge of administration and personnel not only for the State Department, but also for AID. The most important thing at the embassy, to be perfectly honest with you, is the quality of your staff. The fact that I had had this Washington job and also had previously served three tours of duty in our central personnel office, gave me a very good idea of exactly how the personnel process worked. I devoted a good deal of time to making sure I had a crackerjack staff in Ecuador.

When I arrived in Quito, some members of the staff were just not up to scratch. In the first six or eight months, we replaced them with highly competent people. Once you get a staff of highly competent people, that takes care of 90% of your job, providing you're willing to delegate to them, which I certainly am when they're competent.

Q: You have a personnel pool, and you have people coming up for transfer. How do you select from that pool? You can't know everyone.

BURNS: I had a simple system. The personnel officer of the Bureau of Inter-American Affairs was somebody I had brought in when I was there. I had complete confidence in her judgment, and I put the whole matter in her hands. She knew exactly the kind of people I needed to have, and she got them.

Q: You didn't have, then, any administrative difficulties facing you in your assignment in Ecuador?

BURNS: I had many when I arrived, because we had an administrative officer who was not up to snuff. The security was lax, and that had to be tightened up. And it was, once we got a new administrative officer who knew exactly what to do and how to do it.

Q: Your problems, then, lasted at most six months?

BURNS: In that particular matter, that's correct. It didn't last very long.

Q: What was the most vexing substantive problem facing you when you went there?

BURNS: The most vexing substantive problem was the issue of the seizure of tuna boats. The problem involved in this matter were territorial limits of sovereignty at sea. I found that the U.S. Government was quite divided on this. Just to recall, the Ecuadorians had a 200-mile limit for fishing rights, and we had a 12-mile limit. But the U.S. Government finally came to the

conclusion after I had left Ecuador that a 200-mile limit was more practical, not because the Ecuadorians wanted it, but because it was better for us.

It had been the tuna boat lobby that fought to keep that 12-mile limit so they would not have to pay Ecuador (and Peru) for fishing licenses. Finally, after I left, the U.S. Navy combined with the sports fishermen of America swung the U.S. around to agreeing to a 200-mile limit. We particularly didn't care for Soviet ships fishing 12.1 miles off New England.

Q: U.S. tuna boats were fishing down to the 12 miles.

BURNS: You bet they were. They were getting seized for lack of license, and then they were screaming bloody murder when they would be fined by the Ecuadorians. And there was always the danger of a serious incident. Indeed, there was one occasion when an Ecuadorian warship actually fired at a U.S. tuna boat. It missed, happily.

There was one thing that the tuna boat fishermen did which helped swing U.S. public opinion against them. They killed dolphins. They entrapped them in the nets. In years past, you see, tuna were caught on a line. When I went to Ecuador, tuna fishermen were introducing net fishing for the first time. They could catch more fish with less fishermen that way, but unfortunately they were strangling and suffocating dolphins in the process.

Q: You say the 200-mile limit was more practical from the U.S. point of view.

BURNS: That's correct. We were terribly concerned, for example, about free passage of straits, and one way we could establish rights of free passage of straits was to offer the bargaining chip of the 200-mile limit in return for free rights of straits, which is what we did in the Law of the Sea Conference. By the way, the Reagan Administration never ratified the Treaty.

Q: As I recall, we espoused at one time, years ago, a three-mile limit.

BURNS: We did. That was our territorial waters, and 12 miles for fishing. One thing you could do, if you went for a 200-mile fishing limit, you could then claim a 12-mile territorial limit, which appealed greatly to the Navy and offshore drillers.

One of the things that was happening with the old 12-mile fishing limit was that the Japanese and Russians were fishing out all of our sport fish.

Q: When you would get slightly ridiculous instructions, who would you call in the Department?

BURNS: It depended. We had an excellent desk officer who was very smart. (She's now an Assistant Secretary of State, by the way.) She had contacts all over. She made the contacts. In fact, the job of Ecuadorian desk officer enormously helped her career to take off because as a result of the job, she became the State Department leading authority on matters pertaining to law of the sea.

Q: Being in the right place at the right time.

BURNS: The right place at the right time.

Q: *And doing something with it.*

BURNS: That's right. As a matter of fact, she found her husband through the Ecuadorian desk officer job. He was the Coast Guard representative at Law of the Sea meetings that she used to attend on behalf of the Department of State.

Q: *Not long after your arrival, you had nationalization takeover questions.*

BURNS: Yes. It involved IT&T. I'll be perfectly honest. I think IT&T played its cards badly. They sent to Ecuador inept negotiators who alienated the Ecuadorians. These negotiators refused every reasonable offer for quite a while before accepting an offer that was no better than, if as good as, the first offer.

Q: *It eventually was settled, and they did receive compensation.*

BURNS: They did, that's right.

Q: *It's the right of any sovereign government, of course.*

BURNS: It's the right. All countries nationalize telephone companies sooner or later. It came as a complete shock to IT&T when it happened. Another thing IT&T insisted, as part of the settlement, that they be allowed to retain undeveloped land they owned. I advised them to sell as soon as they could. By the time the negotiations were over, the government didn't care for IT&T very much, and I knew perfectly well they were just waiting for an opportunity to nationalize the undeveloped land and offer peanuts for it.

Shortly thereafter, I was in New York and saw a vice president of IT&T, and made my views plain. A lot of people in IT&T did not like my advice, but the land was sold. They got out with their money. This was a smart vice president. I wish he'd been in charge from the beginning.

Q: *You mentioned oil. Ecuador became a member of OPEC. Was it already a member at that point?*

BURNS: There was no OPEC when I was there. OPEC was formed as I was leaving. It hadn't come seriously onto the world scene.

Q: *In late November 1972, the government of Ecuador cancelled U.S. oil concessions. Is my information correct here?*

BURNS: Not correct.

Q: *And a finance minister, a Mr. Vaegar Moreno, was fired because of something going on?*

BURNS: I don't recall that, but there were always one or another scandal amongst Ecuadorian officials. They were handled with considerable sophistication, I thought, by the Ecuadorians. No, there was never any oil nationalization.

Q: My information is not nationalization; maybe it's just that they cancelled some concessions.

BURNS: They may have cancelled some concessions. I don't recall that at all. Nearly everything that Gulf and Texaco wanted, they got. They had first class people in charge of their operations in Ecuador. Texaco and Gulf did go to considerable expense to build their pipeline from the oil fields in the Amazonian basin over the two ranges of the Andes to the Ecuadorian part of Esmeraldas on the Pacific.

Q: A pipeline of that sort, I suppose, required pumping stations.

BURNS: Pumping stations for not only one range of the Andes, but two. That was because Texaco/Gulf and principally the Government of Ecuador could never come to an agreement with the Brazilians or the Peruvians about pumping the oil to a part of the Amazon. This would have been much cheaper, but Ecuadorian national honor was at stake.

The main problem was with the Peruvians. The Ecuadorians hate the Peruvians, and their fear was that if they built a pipeline to Iquitos, the Peruvians would take advantage of this and clamp the pipeline shut the next time there was a Peruvian/Ecuadorian dispute.

Q: Ecuadorians still remember the early 1940s.

BURNS: They certainly do. They remember with a great deal of sadness because of the land they lost to Peru. And the Ecuadorians never got over the fact that we were party to the final settlement, which the Ecuadorians considered to be a *.

Q: Shortly after you arrived, the USIS Center was bombed. Who was behind that?

BURNS: Probably the small Communist party in Ecuador -- probably. There was a small Communist group, very small. When I arrived, they were fomenting student demonstrations and so forth. It was quite easily brought under control. In Ecuador, the Communists hold little appeal for the mass of the people.

Q: Just for the sake of someone who is not familiar with the Quito scene, and maybe not familiar with the operations of an embassy, you were informed that the USIS had been bombed, by the police or the Minister of the Interior?

BURNS: By the Director of USIS.

Q: Then what do you do?

BURNS: We try to find out the facts, first of all, exactly what happened. Who did it? Is the Ecuadorian government doing everything they can to protect our property? That's the main thing

you want to know. The answer to that was, yes, they were. They brought in troops to guard USIS. You don't protest the demonstrations to the government, because the government isn't any happier with the situation than you are. What you really want to make sure of is that in the future adequate protection will be afforded to USIS and other U.S. government property.

Q: In this particular case, though, who precisely, at least by position, did you contact in the government of Ecuador?

BURNS: The Minister of the Interior. The DCM took care of the matter with the USIS director, and I was delighted they did, because it was something they could handle at their level. They were both highly competent.

Q: This is the kind of thing that could be handled at that level?

BURNS: It could. Ecuador is the kind of place where a DCM can deal with a Minister, maybe not with the Minister of Foreign Affairs, but with other ministers and with the Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs. Ecuador was small, and you got to know people. The DCM knew the Minister of the Interior as well as I did. He got along well with him, too.

Q: Of course, on a given occasion, though, the Minister of the Interior, or anything else, could decline to receive the DCM.

BURNS: They could, but didn't. Although the Ecuadorians were very strict on protocol observance for certain things, they could also be very informal. For example, the incident I mentioned when the Ecuadorian warship fired on the American tuna boat, the DCM dealt with that matter -- and in the middle of the night -- with the Minister of Defense. The Minister of Defense was perfectly willing to deal with him on this. In fact, the Minister of Defense didn't know the incident had happened, and he right away understood the gravity and the portent of what had happened.

Q: You must have had a great deal of confidence in this particular DCM.

BURNS: I did, and he knew I did. That's correct.

Q: Who was the DCM?

BURNS: His name is Max Chaplin. I was very pleased with his performance.

Q: You know very well, when you say, "I dealt with the government" what that means.

BURNS: If the DCM had run into a problem with the Minister of Defense, if the Minister of Defense had said, "I won't see you," then he would have called me. He'd had to. But in this event he could handle it himself, and he did.

Q: This is just one isolated instance, the bombing of the USIS Center in Quito. Did the station chief play a role?

BURNS: The DCM did ask him for an estimate on who was involved and the background behind the attack. CIA was not much help in this matter, nor did I expect that they could be. This was really more of a police matter than anything else, because not only were the disturbers disturbing USIS, they were also disturbing the University of Quito (where the USIS Center was located at the entrance to the university). So the Ecuadorians were already pretty concerned about the whole matter.

Q: *By 1972, according to my information, drugs and drug smuggling came to be a problem.*

BURNS: Yes, that's correct.

Q: *Was this the kind of thing that you became involved in on instructions from Washington at all?*

BURNS: I didn't get too many instructions, but we were concerned. The Ecuadorian government was concerned, too. They were about as much concerned as we were. Washington sent down a drug officer from DEA to be attached to the embassy. We had to help him a lot at the beginning because he had no contacts at all. Then we helped the Ecuadorians out with money to fight drugs. We'd help finance their helicopters to destroy poppy fields wherever they could find them.

Speaking of drugs, the coca leaf has been chewed by the Indians on the west coast of South America since time immemorial. The effect is to reduce the pangs of hunger and cold, and help them endure the hard life that they have led ever since the days of the Incas. Under the Spaniards, they probably needed coca even more. Today the Indian population still chews coca leaves. Ninety percent of the population of Ecuador has got Indian blood, and 50% to 60% of the population is pure Indian.

The drug problem that bothered me the most was in the Peace Corps.

Q: *Among volunteers?*

BURNS: Yes. That did disturb me, because I could just see that any element in Ecuador hostile to the United States could accuse us not only of using drugs but of introducing drugs to Ecuador. We cleaned up the Peace Corps, but it was not a pleasant job. Not only the Peace Corps, but I found that an officer of one American voluntary agency was also on drugs. That got cleaned up, too.

Q: *"Clean it up" is a euphemism for "get rid of people"?*

BURNS: We got on the telephone; we called the head of the agency in New York and told him what was happening. He got them out of there. We were worried the whole future of our voluntary agencies could be at stake.

Let me mention American missionaries. There was one group which sprang from North Carolina Fundamentalists who ran a large station down in the Amazonian jungles. They translated the

Bible into Amazonian Indian tongues, and worked to convert the Indians. Unfortunately, some of the missionaries got killed in the process by the Indians, but the missionaries persisted right on.

I went and visited them. It was an amazing experience. You were really right in the jungle. They had a plane that was specially equipped to get over the Andes, a DC-3. We had to take oxygen to get over the mountains. You landed on a corrugated metal strip similar to what was used in the Pacific in World War II. Their base was located on a major tributary of the Amazon.

Q: Was this a summer institute?

BURNS: The summer institute, yes. The Bible Institute. Hard working, very sincere people.

Q: What was the name of the spot that you went to, do you recall?

BURNS: No, I don't. There were also a large number of Mormon missionaries operating in Ecuador. Interestingly enough, most of the Roman Catholic missionaries in the Amazon region were foreign priests, not Ecuadorians. They were German, Spanish, French, and American.

Q: I found the same thing in Brazil.

BURNS: The Ecuadorian clergy were not much for going down there. They preferred the highlands.

Q: How long did you stay in Ecuador?

BURNS: A little more than three years.

Q: What did you find to be most gratifying about fulfilling this position for three and a half years?

BURNS: First of all, Quito is a lovely city, a gorgeous climate. It's 9,000 feet up, right on the Equator. It's like early October in Chapel Hill all year round. The flowers are perfectly beautiful. Then, secondly, I can say is that the people are simply great. I don't know when I have enjoyed knowing a local population the way I did in Ecuador.

Q: In 35 years, that's the place that you enjoyed most?

BURNS: I think when all is said and done, I probably enjoyed London the most, but certainly Ecuador ranked second.

PETER M. CODY
Director, USAID
Quito (1971-1975)

Peter Cody was born in France of American parents in 1925. He received a B.A. and an MA from Yale University and served in the United States Navy during World War II. He worked with the Federal Reserve for several years and joined the State Department in 1954 to work with USAID. Mr. Cody served in Mexico, El Salvador, Cambodia, Laos, Paraguay, Ecuador, the Philippines, and Lebanon. He was interviewed by Melbourne Spector in 1991.

CODY: I went then from there to Ecuador. If Paraguay was a government with stability, in Ecuador they changed the president about as often as most people change their socks. It had a whole series of governments over the period of years and several military interventions. Politicians were much less committed to running the government because they had such a short time to do it. They had had President Velasco Ibarra, who had been president six times and only finished his tour once. He was the sort of person who would say, with some degree of correctness, "Give me a balcony and I'll win the election." And he did. He was there when I first arrived. He looked like death warmed over. He was thrown out by the military in a short period of time.

Q: *One of those men were alcoholic. Was he the one?*

CODY: No, that's Arosemena. They had to prop him up for official functions so he wouldn't fall down. There were two Arosemenas. I've forgotten -- Carlos and somebody else. But they were before my time. When I was there, it was first Velasco Ibarra, followed by General Rodriguez, who was referred to as Bombita, "little pump." He was built like a short fire hydrant. He was pleasant enough, but not very effective.

Q: *What kind of a program did you have in Ecuador?*

CODY: It was in many ways similar to Paraguay, a little more socially oriented, less infrastructure oriented.

Q: *More in education and health?*

CODY: More in education and health, less in building airports. We did have a road-building program jointly with the World Bank, but a little bit more in the soft technical assistance rather than hard construction, but in many ways similar and roughly the same size in money and same size in staff. There the government was harder to deal with. It changed. You never had the feeling that the people cared. In that sense, when the military took over, they had a military government.

Stroessner was a general, but he did not have a military government. I think people miss this distinction. A military government meant that almost every minister was a military man. If for some reason he was not, like the Minister of Finance, then they put in a colonel as his deputy, vice minister to carefully watch over the civilian. Throughout the government, they lined the government with military people. The military ran the government. Stroessner had a couple of old buddies, military types. The Minister of Finance had been a paymaster with Stroessner in the Chaco war, but that's not why he was Minister of Finance. He was there because he was

Stroessner's buddy and he was paymaster and to Stroessner being finance minister was the same thing. The Minister of Public Works happened to be a general, but he was also an engineer. But all the rest of the government were people chosen because Stroessner wanted those individuals there, not because they came out of the military. It was not a military government. Stroessner had a Minister of Defense who was obviously a general. Stroessner was commander-in-chief. Every Thursday he put on his little soldier suit and went to the Ministry of Defense and held court as the commander-in-chief. The rest of the week, he wore a civilian suit and he was the president.

Bombita, the president of Ecuador, was a general. He was General Rodriguez seven days a week, and the minister of this and that and so forth was General this or Colonel that, generals colonels, seven days a week. They may have had other skills. The Minister of Health, Raul Maldonado, who was one of the ones I came to know best, was a colonel in the Air Force, but he was a physician. He was chosen because he was a doctor, but he was chosen out of the military. If they hadn't had any doctors who were also military, they would have made him a civilian Minister of Health and put in a colonel as his number-two. For example, the agriculture minister and the finance minister were civilians, but they had military men as deputies who just kept an eye on them. So it was a military government in that sense. I don't think people make that distinction. Just because a colonel or general takes over doesn't necessarily make it a military government.

Q: I really hadn't thought of that distinction. That's pretty interesting.

CODY: We had a number of projects, some of which went well. We did an education survey which I thought was really first-rate. We had a non-formal education project using the University of Massachusetts, which was exceptional. We developed a game based on Monopoly. We'd get the villagers to play this, and role-playing as well. It was called *Hacienda*, sometimes called the Game of Life. You'd try to get the property of the *hacendero*, and if you really won the game, you went to the city. If you didn't land on the family planning square you had to go to jail. We introduced a whole series of concepts into the game and people would play this in these little villages with their kerosene lamps for hours. It was a very innovative program.

Q: What was the point of the game?

CODY: To teach reading and writing. They became fascinated with the game and were induced to learn to read and count, not only to play the game, but because the game illustrated why these skills are important. Then they had other classes more literally directed at reading and writing, but were influenced to take them by having played this game or continuing to play this game. It would go on forever.

We had a quite active family planning program, and one of the places where it worked the best, surprisingly enough, was in the military. We convinced the head of the military medical program to provide these services for all the families of the soldiers, sailors, and airmen. There were a lot of problems with the family planning, but the military was on our side. We had some interesting projects. Again, it would be fascinating to go back and see if any of these made any impact.

Q: This family planning program, you were in one in Paraguay and one in Ecuador. Did you feel any reaction from the Catholic Church?

CODY: There tended to be opposition, but where I really came across it, both positive and negative, was in the Philippines, where family planning was a major part of our development effort. In Ecuador it was just part of the health program. What was interesting, it was an era when family planning was new and we were sort of on the cutting edge. (Is that an appropriate term for family planning?) [Laughter]

Ecuador is a fascinating country in different ways than Paraguay. There, there are much greater social and wealth distinctions. I saw an ad in the paper one time in Quito, in which they were selling a hacienda with all the people. [con todo el personal adentro]. For sale including everybody inside. The society was very traditional, particularly in the mountains. Ecuador is a small country, but it's really divided into quite distinct geographic regions. You have the mountain region, called the Sierra, and the coastal area, and then you have the Oriente, which is part of the Amazonic basin which belongs to Ecuador, and then you have the Galápagos, which is really unique and special. So you had these four areas. It's one of the few countries in Latin America where the capital city is not the biggest city. Guayaquil, which is on the coast, is considerably bigger and considerably less attractive than Quito in the mountains. There's a lot of rivalry between the coast and the mountains. They call the mountain people *serranos*, which really comes from Sierra mountain people. They call the coastal people *monos*, "monkeys." So they have a bridge, as you cross the river leaving Guayaquil, and they call that the missing link because it connects the *monos* with the human race. But what happens, the mountain people are much more reserved as is the case in many of places in the world, personality-wise, and the coastal people are much more open and less disciplined, but more innovative.

Q: They're the ones where people come from other countries because they're on the coast.

CODY: I imagine so. The mountain people have more of the original Indian (Inca) in their background. Unfortunately Guayaquil is an unattractive city with lots of slums and too many people. For example, the maternity hospital normally has three people per bed. Slums which are shacks on strips of little boardwalks over the sewer and everybody does what they have to do right there in the bay and hope that the tide takes it out. High crime rate and so forth, which was not the case in Quito, though I understand there's more of it now. Quito was the most colonial of the Latin American capitals, and the downtown colonial area was quite attractive. It was a pleasant place to live, as long as the altitude didn't bother you. Fortunately it didn't bother me.

So there I had good relations with the government, but it was not a government you could get close to, and if you did get close to somebody, he would soon leave. I was there during the tuna war, one of the U.S.'s stupider actions. The Ecuadorians said, "We have a 200-mile limit, and if you want to fish in those 200 miles, you must obtain a license, and it costs X amount of money." Well, we didn't buy that, so we said, "No, no. Not only do we not accept that, but we will pay the U.S. tuna fishermen for their license and any fines and everything when they are caught." So what the Ecuadorians were doing, they were not catching tuna; they were catching tuna boats -- ours. This was a constant source of irritation. So it made life with certain elements of the government a little more difficult. But anyway, personally I got along fine with the government.

We had another innovative school project. We developed a factory to make prefabricated

schools. When I was there, we probably built 250 schools. I'd go to these dedications all the time throughout the country. I had gone out with the governor of one of the provinces in the south and had the road blocked by people who said, "You have to come to our village and promise you're going to build us a school." And I had the satisfaction of coming back a few months later and dedicating that school.

Q: That would be great satisfaction.

CODY: I had a little canned speech I used to give every time at those dedications. So there were a number of interesting projects in the social area. There were some imaginative people there in the AID mission who developed some of these. Again, I'd be interested to go back and see what difference we made over the long pull, if any.

Q: I was in Quito as a consultant to you, and you had put a citizen of Ecuador into one of your divisions.

CODY: Head of the industry division.

Q: Had that been done in other places?

CODY: To my knowledge, this was the first. I found a lot of resistance in Washington, because he not only was head of the division, but he supervised at least one or two direct-hire Americans and one contract American.

Q: As of this date, do you know what he's doing?

CODY: Last I've heard, he was the program officer in Quito.

Q: So he's still with the mission and in a responsible position.

CODY: I think that's true in lots of missions now.

Q: But you were one of the first, if not the first.

CODY: Ecuador, like my previous posts was an interesting place to be. I worked with two ambassadors with whom I had good personal and working relations. I was personally picked by the first Ambassador, Findley Burns, though he did know me at the time. He and my predecessor had not gotten along at all well. However, since he picked me I was his boy and we had no problems despite the fact that he was reputed to be a difficult person. He was very supportive.

Q: But he was an effective ambassador, wasn't he?

CODY: Yes. He's not an outgoing person, hail-fellow-well-met with all the Ecuadorians, though the Ecuadorians are not that type either, really, particularly the ones in the mountain area. But he was certainly considered to be competent and responsible, and he didn't rock many boats. It's not his style. I think some people had found him a little finicky and limited, but that didn't come

across to me. As I said he and I had good relations. There were a couple of areas in the AID program in which he took an interest and I wasn't going to rock those particular boats. One of these was the labor program.

In that era were several programs which if the mission had, the mission director had no choice about continuing them. One was the labor program, another was the public safety program, and a third was a rural development program under contract to an organization run by Ann Brownell Sloan, the daughter of the former Nixon attorney general, who had a certain amount of clout.

Q: Herbert Brownell was the attorney general.

CODY: Yes. We had all three projects when I arrived in Ecuador. My predecessor had said, "If I don't have any choice in these projects, I'm not going to pay them any attention and I'm not going to help them," which is one approach to take.

Q: But if you've got them, you might as well make them work.

CODY: My attitude was, "If I'm stuck with them, I'm going to try and maximize the use out of them." To the ambassador, all three of them were political. He liked the police program because when the students left the university to march someplace, the embassy was generally in the way. So the embassy could call the police and say, "Hey, all those kids are coming by here. Please give us some protection". In the case of the labor program, obviously he didn't want to be at odds with the AFL-CIO. Thirdly, I don't think he wanted Herbert Brownell upset, though I don't know that Herbert Brownell ever intervened on behalf of his daughter.

In any event, he appreciated the fact that I was not going to give him problems about those programs. The only one he was a little nervous about was the family planning program. The Ecuadorians had a rule that all those condoms and pills we imported had to come in under his name.

Q: Under the ambassador's name?

CODY: Under the ambassador's name. For their importation to take place he personally had to sign for them. I couldn't sign for them. That used to make him a little nervous. He'd call me up and say, "Peter, you've got a consignment of condoms. Are you going to put me in trouble with this?" "No, no, Mr. Ambassador. Please sign." And he would. [Laughter] He and I got along quite well.

Then he was replaced by another professional, a very pleasant man, a competent ambassador named Robert Brewster. Burns had been ambassador before in Jordan, came up through the administrative side, which few ambassadors have done. This was Bob Brewster's first post as ambassador. Actually, I had met him once before because he had been the DCM in Paraguay just before I arrived there. I met him in Washington before I went to Paraguay. After Ecuador, he resigned. I could never quite figure out why, but that's a different issue. I thought he was first-rate.

Q: So did I. He had been the director of personnel at the State Department and did a very good job.

CODY: He was very reasonable. I could go and talk to him about anything and not be afraid that he was going to take it wrong or misconstrue my intent. He also had a wife who was a great asset to him.

Q: Mrs. Brewster had had a position on the Hill, I believe, with Congress.

CODY: A very independent woman. I really enjoyed her. The DCM was a fellow named Max Chaplin, who was also quite easy to work with. Max became DCM in Argentina and was Chargé d'Affaires for a long time. I never did figure out why they didn't make him ambassador. If you're going to leave a person chargé for that long, you either remove him or you make him ambassador. Max was a very reasonable sort of person. So on the embassy side, it was fine. At that point, Fowler had left the Latin American Bureau. I had good relations with Herman Kleine. I didn't put him in the same class with Fowler. I didn't think he had as much imagination.

Q: Much more conservative than Fowler.

CODY: We had no basic problems.

Q: So in Ecuador, of the three touchstones that you've mentioned, you got along well with the ambassador, well with Washington, but the government was something you didn't know quite --

CODY: There was nothing there to grab hold of. For individual projects you could get support, but the government were so transitory that, at least in those days, their major interests were not developmental issues. I would say that Stroessner had developmental issues, or he thought he did. The trouble was he confused development with the visual. Building a building was development for him. Building a road was development for him. Building an education system was not quite. The schools might be, the buildings, but he thought he had a development, he and his government. I had a very good Minister of Education to work with and a good Minister of Agriculture to work with. Some of the people in foreign affairs were very good.

So I stayed four years in Ecuador, was reasonably satisfied with the projects we put together. The funny thing about projects, four years is the longest I ever stayed, and you tended to work primarily with the projects you inherited from your predecessor and leave other projects to the next person. You aren't always able to know what happened to them. Normally you don't come to know, certainly not in any detail, what happened to them.

DWIGHT N. MASON
Political Officer
Quito (1972-1974)

Dwight Mason was born in New York in 1939. He received an undergraduate

degree from Brown University and a master's degree in history from the University of California at Berkeley. After joining the Foreign Service in 1962, he served overseas in Morocco, Colombia, Ecuador, and Canada and worked in numerous capacities in the government on such issues as arms control and acid rain. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1993.

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

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

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

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

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

Q: Any border problems with Peru?

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

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

MASON: It was an elected government, and they were doing more or less a good job. Ecuador was a poor country. We had a major AID presence and program there. But I doubt that we or the government of Ecuador had much influence in the country beyond Quito, Guayaquil and the other major towns. The reality in Ecuador was that the politics and the politically conscious

groups were basically in Guayaquil and Quito. The rest of the country might have been in the pre-Inca period. The topography of Ecuador is extraordinarily rugged, and it's very difficult to get around. This is illustrated by the fact that until 1968 when a law of decree was formulated in Quito it took effect in concentric circles based on how long it would take the messenger to walk or ride in a day from Quito. Weights and measures weren't unified until about the same time. Political consciousness was not very high outside the main cities. For example, while I was there it was announced that Prince Charles would visit Ecuador. So a newspaper did a survey and asked in the hinterland, "Who is the ruler of our country?" A majority of the respondents said the King of Spain, if they said anything at all. When asked the name of your country, many replied New Granada.

At the same time, it was clear that Ecuador faced a difficult economic and political future. This was true because land tenure and rights on common land had recently been abridged by an enclosure movement led by large landlords seeking to begin modern dairy farming. Enclosure of common land and limitation of peasant rights on such land (collection of firewood for example) was forcing people onto hillside land, diminishing their ability to practice subsistence farming and forcing increasing numbers into the towns and cities -- a typical pattern in developing countries. Ecuador was and is fortunate that this population shift has not focused on one city as in Peru.

Q: Who was the ambassador at the time?

MASON: Findley Burns.

Q: How did he operate?

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

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

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

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

MASON: Fundamentally it was a calm period.

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

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

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

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

Q: Was it having much of an effect?

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

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

MASON: I left in '74.

DOUGLAS WATSON
Administrative Officer
Quito (1973-1975)

Mr. Watson was born and raised in the Washington, D.C. area and was educated

at California State University at Los Angeles and Harvard University. Entering the Foreign Service in 1966, he served in a variety of posts throughout the world, including Cairo, Athens, Madrid, Saigon, Quito, Islamabad and Port au-Prince, Haiti, where he was Deputy Chief of Mission. He also served in the State Department in Washington, on Capitol Hill in the Pearson program and was a member of the US delegation to the United Nations General Assembly in 1991. Mr. Watson was interviewed by Thomas J. Dunnigan in 2000.

Q: How did this happen? Did you ask for it?

WATSON: Oh, yes. As a matter of fact, Sheldon Krys was the officer in central personnel who was staffing Latin America. And Karl Ackerman headed ARA/EX. I imagine what I had done in Vietnam must have indicated that I had some kind of breadth. I suppose my general services work in Spain had been acceptable. And my personal rank was only one grade level below the administrative officer position in Quito, Ecuador.

So, I came back to Arlington and had a couple of months leave in March and April, followed by a four week Spanish brush-up. Sheldon said, "Okay, fine. We can assign you to Quito as an Administrative Officer." When I went back in for the language brush-up, my three-plus, three-plus had declined to two-plus, three. The brush-up was very effective, getting me to the level where it needed to be so that when I stepped off the plane, except for making the mistake of using the Castillian pronunciations of the Zs and the Cs, as in "Gracias," which the Ecuadorians didn't use. I quickly learned Ecuadorian pronunciation and used the language extensively. Ecuador was a superb experience. What a beautiful, beautiful country.

Schooling there was very uneven for our daughters, junior high school and high school. First, they went to an "open school," the Cotopaxi Academy, for a year. We're not a religious family, but that second year they attended the Alliance Academy, a conservative evangelical private school. It sure beat the Cotopaxi open school, where today we somewhat laughingly say our younger daughter majored in tetherball.

In Quito I worked for a fine ambassador, whom I didn't appreciate as much as I should have. But I learned to appreciate him later in life. He was Robert C. Brewster, for whom I worked for two years. For our first year our DCM was Max Chaplin. Then Brewster "Brew" Hemingway for our second year. Ambassador Brewster was a good, hardworking man. His wife, Mary Brewster, was a delight, a tremendous woman, who I think never openly articulated what she believed, which I think was that Foreign Service spouses ought to have lives of their own and not be at the Foreign Service beck and call. Bob Brewster had come out of being the senior DAS (Deputy Assistant Secretary) in the office of the Director General. He knew management, he knew administration, and he knew politics. I could have learned a great deal more from him than I did. We never developed the personal relationship that I would like to have partly due to his being somewhat aloof, remote. I think essentially he was somewhat private, a tad shy. I should have sought him out more, but I was somewhat cowed by his "ambassadorial" status.

Our political counselor was John Negroponte, very competent, as borne out more fully later in his career. One of our other political officers was David Passage, who went on to have a very successful career and our assistant GSO was O. P. Garza, who also had a successful career.

There come to mind a couple of things of interest, I think, for an administrative person to have been involved with. That has to do with alcoholism, which in the Foreign Service exists as it does everywhere. I was able to intervene in Vietnam in one instance with a chap who we got “on the wagon,” and sent on to counseling, an AID employee. Then when he later fell off the wagon, in one of the more outrageous, sad, but funny events when I found him at his apartment, instead of at work, with a bevy of young Vietnamese lasses, almost all of whom were only partially clad, as was he. We had failed badly in that we should have demanded more effective stateside counseling. Later, at another post, I was asked by the DCM to intervene with another problem drinker. I thought the DCM should have taken this responsibility himself, but he delegated it to me. The State Officer had a drinking problem, knew it, and appreciated the intervention. Subsequently and quickly straightened out. After several more years in the Service, maybe ten, he retired, still on the wagon. Those alcoholism issues had to be addressed. Later on, I was able to be a little bit more proactive at other posts where I would of my own knowledge become aware of such behavior, take the person aside and have a serious chat, and more often than not make some difference then and there. I recall that following my last overseas assignment, after I had been back at State for about six months, an officer, now also at State, called me and thanked me for my intervention. That was good. Intervention is not an easy thing to do.

At another post an officer suffered from body odor, largely because he didn’t wash much and/or didn’t wash his clothes. He was a first tour Junior Officer. That was a difficult one to deal with, to tell a chap “Change your socks, you smell.” Somebody has to do it. That’s why they pay us the big bucks, right?

Q: Well, that’s why we have wives, but...

WATSON: That’s right.

Ecuador was a marvelous place. I got to do some fairly proactive things in terms of creating new positions, bringing a security position into the embassy, expanding the housing inventory. I developed a good relationship with the Marines, supported the Consulate General in Guayaquil better, traveled to Cuenca, the third city, and arranged for an ambassadorial visit, new things for me.

The best thing we did during our tour there? My wife said, “Stop. You are working too hard. We are taking two weeks this Christmas and New Year’s. We’re going to the Galapagos.” “But we can’t afford it,” I replied. “We’re going to the Galapagos,” she said. We went to the Galapagos. It was marvelous. Christmas, New Year’s crossing the Equator, seeing the fauna and flora. Our daughters. Oh, it was marvelous, absolutely marvelous. What a woman!

Q: And it was restful, I’m sure.

WATSON: Yes. Bob Brewster was always a taskmaster. He gave a lot of attention to detail, which was important. I used to consider it nitpicking, but it was important. I learned a lot from him. It was a good experience. Ecuador: the land of the eternal spring.

Q: Did you have other agencies at the post?

WATSON: Oh, sure. It was small, relatively speaking, aside from the agencies that we normally have. There was a substantial AID presence, and a substantial Peace Corps presence. You know of the need to maintain the independence of the Peace Corps and not to color it with the embassy's activities. Ambassador Brewster was able to reach an accommodation with Peace Corps Director Ed DeJarnette, who subsequently became an ambassador, a State officer who had been seconded to the Peace Corps. They were able to work out a process in which different embassy officers would visit Peace Corps projects in the countryside and report as to how the projects were doing, through our eyes. I made a couple of visits to the field, met the volunteers, saw their work. It was a fine experience, getting on the ground and appreciating the work, and the Peace Corps volunteers themselves. A few of the officers in my entering J.O. class had served as volunteers. To see a little bit more of Ecuador was a wonderful opportunity. An opportunity that Bob Brewster and Ed DeJarnette provided four or five of us to get out and to do that kind of evaluation and reporting.

Q: What was the attitude of the average Ecuadoran toward the U.S.? Were they friendly?

WATSON: Very positive. They wanted something from us. They wanted aid. They wanted development of their oil riches. Texaco was big there in the jungle. I developed a relationship with Dante Fascell, the congressman from Florida, chair of the Subcommittee on Latin America. I was not his control officer, but I was the principal control officer for his key staffer, Mike Finley, who ten years or so later, became the senior Deputy Assistant Secretary in the ARA Bureau. I later worked on the Hill as a Pearson Fellow for Congressman Fascell, 1980-1981. I still have amongst his former staff (he now is deceased) a number of friends with whom I'm in touch. Having the exposure to Dante Fascell and to Mike Finley opened the door for me to the Hill and the political process. Until my time on the Hill, I had the impression that foreign policy was made at State. I began to appreciate the role of the Congress.

Q: Tell me about your problems there. Did we have any drug problems in Ecuador at that time?

WATSON: Not at all. There might have been an occasional marijuana problems with a volunteer or two, but with private American citizens, not at all.

Q: How about terrorism? Any thought of that then?

WATSON: None. There were some demonstrations at the university not far from the embassy, tear gas wafting our way. No, as a matter of fact, it was a most peaceful country.

Q: Did we have many American businessmen there?

WATSON: Very few. Principally Texaco. There wasn't a very large American community. But the American community there was a happy lot. Life was good in Ecuador.

Q: The U.S. military was probably attachés. Did we have a military group?

WATSON: No, we had only attachés who worked closely with the Ecuadoran military. There was a lot of military liaison with Bolivia, where we had a substantially larger military group, if I recall correctly. I developed some pretty good relationships with our military in Ecuador. That was my first opportunity to be a broader administrative person. I developed some reasonably good relationships there with the foreign ministry folks, working on protocol issues, and where we were able to get a number of things accomplished. We were able to establish an APO just as I left. We were able to achieve a more reasonable policy on the part of the Ecuadorians in terms of what cars could we bring in, what cars could we sell, and what cars could we take out. I developed some good and important relationships with the police. And with folks at the local hospitals and hotels, all the things such relationships can facilitate. We had an international conference there, where William Rogers, the ARA assistant secretary, came down. Also, the Deputy Secretary came down, his name escapes me. There were a few CODELs and congressional staff visitors. But we never were really tasked beyond that. The visitor load was relatively simple.

We had another "tuna crisis," but these crises went on regularly. Roz Ridgway was the desk officer for Ecuador. John Negroponte had the lead on the political side. So, the "tuna crisis" was in good hands. We did well.

CECIL S. RICHARDSON
Chief of Consular Section
Quito (1975-1977)

Cecil Richardson was born in New York in 1926, and graduated from Queen's College. He served in the US Army from 1944 to 1947, and overseas from 1951 to 1952. Entering the Foreign Service in 1956, he was stationed in Dakar, Saigon, Lagos, Niamey, Paris, Accra, Brussels, Quito, Tehran, Lima, St. Paolo and Bahamas. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on August 5, 2003.

Q: You left there in '75. Where did you go?

RICHARDSON: Ecuador, which was very exciting because I had never been in the mountains before.

Q: So you were in Ecuador, you were up in the Quito from '72 to when?

RICHARDSON: '75.

Q: Excuse me, '75 to ...

RICHARDSON: '75 to '77.

Q: What was your job there?

RICHARDSON: Head of Consular Section.

Q: Who was the ambassador?

RICHARDSON: When I went there, the ambassador was a man named Robert Brewster and his DCM with the surname Brewster whose nickname was Bru.

Q: What was the political situation in Ecuador when you got there?

RICHARDSON: When I got there, there was a military regime. There had been a military coup some years before and the dictator was a little round man, what did they call him: "El Gordito." Is that the fat one, something like that. While I was, in fact while I was still in the hotel before I got permanent housing, because it took a while to get me housed permanently so I spent three months in the Colon Hotel. There was an attempted coup and there was a lot of gunfire actually, it was right outside the hotel, woke us up. But it was a dictatorship. After I left they had an election and elected a president.

Q: What sort of consular work did you have?

RICHARDSON: Well, some drugs, but most of it was Welfare and Protection. Americans managed to fall off Machu Picchu, drown in the surf off of Guayaquil, get lost in the jungle, get into difficulties like that. As I recall, the drug traffic had not yet developed into anything serious. That was later on when I was in Peru. So it was a time of the wandering, youth taking a year off from college, and so they'd go down the spine of the Andes, smoking pot. So we got a lot of them and they had a regular hangout ... hostels and small inexpensive hotels. So if I needed to locate them, or one, I could leave messages. There was a bookstore that was very popular with them named Leaves of Grass in Spanish and you could leave a note on the board up there if the family said they were heading that way and they would turn up. That was useful, that particular bookstore. An American had disappeared, one of the backpacking wanderers, in Central America, and the family produced a notice with his photograph and a description and nailed it to all of the consulates down Central America and down through South America. We posted it on the bulletin board of this bookstore and somebody turned up and said he thought he might know something about that. He had been asked, I forget in which Central American country, to see if he could identify the nude body of a possibly American male that they had found. They suspected it was a gringo that they had found, stripped of clothing, everything. And the young man said no, I've never seen him before, but when he saw the photograph on the bulletin board, he said, "That looks like him" and we put him in touch with the family and whoever was conducting the investigation for the family and I think it was a positive identification.

Q: Well, were there problems about these young people on their "wanderjahr," with the local populace? I mean there must be bandits and other things of that nature.

RICHARDSON: Yes. There were. As a matter of fact that's how I made national television, NBC did an expose of the government, but didn't I discuss this before?

Q: No, I don't think so, no.

RICHARDSON: No. During my tenure, we had 3 Americans disappear in our consular district. Two of them, a young couple, engaged, traveling together went off into the headlands leading down to the Amazon looking for herbs that could be useful medically. Neither of them had any medical background, but that's what they were supposedly doing. And they disappeared. Now, they had been the guests on the farm of this one man who operated a restaurant down in the south that catered to the young wanderers, passing through, I say wanderers because there were Germans and French going through also. He cultivated them so of course he came under suspicion but nothing came of it. No, nobody knew anything. They just disappeared. Okay.

Then there was a young woman of South Asian origin, a very adventurous type, she climbed. Obviously a very capable person, she disappeared one Sunday morning from the town of Baños. Sunday morning, people were out on the street, on their way to and from church. We had the embassy in Stockholm interview a Swede who had been staying in the same hostel as she and with whom she had had breakfast that day. Her room, in her room were her climbing boots so it isn't as if she was going off to do anything, any difficult walking or climbing this Sunday morning. She simply disappeared and the police weren't able to find her. Friends she had made prepared circulars which they spread around. She had made many friends. She was very sociable. I prodded the police in Banos and Quito but nothing came of it. Well, with three such things happening in a relatively short space of time, this attracted press. And we had an NBC investigative reporter coming down to do a story, to find out what had gone on. That sort of thing. Well, there were all kinds of curious things with it. An investigator hired by the families of the couple from one of the agencies in Florida, but the name doesn't come to me, it's a well known agency ...

Q: Pinkerton or something ...

RICHARDSON: Something like that. One of those. So he came down. I briefed him on what we had and he went off, didn't come near me again. He went back to Florida and reported that he had been visiting an Indian village not far from where they'd disappeared and the people were very nervous about him and he thought he saw a couple of shrunken heads being hidden. [Laughter] He didn't come in and tell us and police about it. He doesn't tell the police about what he suspected, but goes back to Florida where it's now, three weeks have passed since the incident so if there had been anything there, it was long since gone. Why he didn't report it to us so we could tell the police about his suspicion was probably that it didn't amount to anything anyhow. Shrinking heads ... it's pretty far out, but it could have been followed up. Instead, that became another mark against the embassy and the police because they didn't know about the shrunken heads, alleged shrunken heads. An NBC reporter came down and got apprehensive because he wasn't getting anything. And NBC had spent all this money and brought the camera crew and I thought they're not going to leave without some story. So, I had an inkling of what it

was going to be. It was going to be an expose. This is how things work. And it turned out, that's what it was.

They opened with my interview, I guess I got about five, six minutes on screen out of a total of about 45 minutes, 50 minutes. It started off with one of these, "when have you stopped beating your wife" questions. So I knew where it was going. Oh, yes. Before I can tell you about that, I had not notified the parents immediately of the disappearance of their daughter. I tried to get a lead on it. I went down to Banos. I took our police liaison down with me. I prodded the police because nothing's worse than a disappeared child. You would rather have a body, you'd rather have something of definite news about "what happened to my child?" So I didn't notify them for a week, trying to get a lead on her. When I couldn't, I sent a cable through the Department, you know the relay system, to the family informing them. Well, when another week went by and I hadn't heard from them, I telephoned Washington and found out that that cable had never gone on to them. So somebody in the Department then telephoned them so it was on the order of almost three weeks after the disappearance that the family finally heard. Well, that looks bad. So the first question that he put to me was: "Mr. Richardson, don't you think it was terribly callous to not inform the family of the disappearance of their daughter?" And I explained, the reason was compassion and screw up. Yes, the first week was compassion, the second week was because the cable never went through. Well, that's how he started off ... Wasn't it callous? So, he's already planted the seed. Okay but that's not the worst thing he did.

Another case, during the same period, was of a young man who was traveling with the same restaurant and farm owner who had cultivated the missing couple. But he was traveling in the outback with this young man. He was giving him a ride, the kid had also been to the farm. The kid had stopped taking his medication and died out there in the boonies at this little village where the people are scraping a subsistence living out of the land they cleared in the jungle. They were very poor. Well, what had they done? They put their pennies together in order to provide a decent burial for this kid. This had been organized by the local priest. Well, down there, they don't bury people in the ground, they have above ground structures to hold caskets.

Q: Ah, oh, yes. Volts.

RICHARDSON: In effect, they're really just slots, places that would accommodate a small casket. Well, that's how they bury there because the water level is so high they can't dig a hole. Well, this investigative reporter is interviewing the family of this boy on camera. Okay. So he's interviewing them. How did the boy do in school? And then he turns to them and there are the two parents sitting on the sofa and he says, Well, do you realize that your son isn't buried in the ground? Well, they went ballistic. "They never told us he wasn't buried. Why didn't the embassy tell us?" They were shocked. That was, I think, the foulest thing I've ever seen. It used to characterize that sort of thing as, what is it, 60 Minutes.

Q: Yes.

RICHARDSON: 60 Minutes journalism. It has since improved a bit. That's what he did to these people, and I thought that was the foulest thing that I had seen. The whole program was condemning the embassy and the State Department. I think the title of it was "Passport to

Nowhere.” Well, a fallout from that is for several years after that when I would find myself over in Rosslyn at the old FSI site there and I would be riding up in the elevator, I could tell who the most recent recruits were because this film was the first thing they showed them in the A-100 class. [Laughter]. I’d find them looking at me, thinking do I know him? Where do I know him from?

Q: Oh, God.

RICHARDSON: Okay, so that was really the high point, well the low point, I mean now there’s more to it than I can dwell on. Over the years, I’ve been useful to a great number of people. Many of them wrote to me in Quito when they saw this television program because it’s quite condemnatory. Saying, you know, I remember when you helped us, we don’t believe the image that this guy was portraying. Several people wrote to me. The other people who accepted what he said wrote to the Department of State or to the Secretary and said “Fire him.”

Q: Oh, boy.

RICHARDSON: So, I forwarded the letters I got from my fans to the State, but it’s not the same thing. It seemed self-serving.

Q: So, what happened? What was the Department’s reaction?

RICHARDSON: None, in terms of like supporting me or ...

Q: Supporting you or not supporting you?

RICHARDSON: No, they were neutral. They were neutral. They didn’t take a position. They left it to the post.

Q: Did you find that this dogged you through your career?

RICHARDSON: No, no. The only follow-up I did send to the Assistant Secretary was, that I think since they’re using this film in the training course, I should get residuals. She laughed. But, there was something else to do with this ... Within six months of this TV program, someone came and reported to me that an American girl had been raped in Baños. I set Debby, my vice consul to work locating the girl. So, we had her name, so there are all these hostels, these hotels known to us where young wanders stayed. Debbie got on the phone and located her. Why had the young woman not reported it? Because she had seen this film and knew that the embassy wasn’t the least bit interested in her problem.

Q: Oh, God.

RICHARDSON: Okay. Well, that didn’t end there. Debby ...

Q: Debby being ...

RICHARDSON: Vice consul.

Q: Debby, what was her?

RICHARDSON: Debby, Debby ... It'll come to me.

Q: Yes.

RICHARDSON: It was her first tour, but she was very capable. And she has since done very well. Got a car, a driver, and Debby went to Banos with our embassy police liaison, a retired Equatorial police captain. He had gone with me when I went to Banos. Three of them drive off, pick up the girl at the hotel where Debby had located her. And they go to Baños and light a little fire under the police there. They go out, accompanied by a couple of cops around the hills, because this girl has been hiking by herself in the hills around Baños. And so they followed the route that she had and low and behold they find and arrest the shepherd who had raped her. Well, it worked great and I gave the story to a visiting American reporter who was very interested. I had hoped to somewhat balance the bad press we had gotten about the disappearance of the Americans. He got very enthusiastic but it never saw the light of day. And that good story, that happy ending, never saw print.

Q: What was your reading on this place that was the focal point of this so-called investigative report? You know this Ecuadorian who was befriending these people.

RICHARDSON: Well, he was a relation to someone of influence because he never got the kind of interrogation that I know the police are capable of, which I could not suggest they do because you don't do that. They hadn't even taken him into custody. So finally we got enough pressure on them. They took him into custody, but still, they didn't interrogate him as they could have. So I feel very much he had some protection. Now, he wasn't responsible for anybody's death, but we just felt that he had to have known more. He could have been more helpful. My personal opinion is that he was not at the farm where these two people disappeared. He cultivated young Americans, or young travelers going through. He was not on the farm so he couldn't be held directly responsible. It may have been that the young woman in Banos attracted the attention of some of the workers out there, they got frisky and the young man objected and she may have gotten raped and the boy killed, and the bodies buried in the jungle. That's certainly a possibility. I can't think of anything else. The young woman might possibly have slipped, there's a fast running stream, running through Baños, fast running, really moving. She could well have been wandering around there and slipped into the water and been swept down to the Amazon. That's a possibility. But any violence against her ... somebody in town would have seen it, people would have, there are people in the streets. Now, if the person who assaulted her, if that was an assault, was someone very well connected then that's when nobody would see anything.

Q: Yes. Did, you left there in '77.

RICHARDSON: Right.

Q: At the embassy, how did people treat you after the, you know being the focal point of this 60 Minute thing?

RICHARDSON: Oh, it didn't affect anything. It didn't involve any celebrity because the condemnation was general and the ambassador was also interviewed. The State Department was condemned and the embassy, so we were all on the same footing.

RICHARD BLOOMFIELD
Ambassador
Ecuador (1976-1978)

Ambassador Richard Bloomfield was born in Connecticut in 1927. After serving in the U.S. military during World War II, Ambassador Bloomfield attended the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service and joined the Foreign Service in 1952. He subsequently served abroad in Bolivia, Mexico, Uruguay, Ecuador, and Portugal, specializing in Latin American economic affairs. He was interviewed by Richard Nethercut in 1988.

Q: Ambassador Bloomfield, could you describe then how your appointment as ambassador to Ecuador came about?

BLOOMFIELD: Well, you know, as usual when you know that you're coming to the end of an assignment you start thinking about what happens next, and I felt at that point in my career that I could aspire to an ambassadorial appointment. So, just in case anybody might have overlooked that fact, I reminded some people in the Department that that would be my hope. Actually, one or two possibilities came along but they didn't pan out, and then somewhat to everyone's surprise, the fellow who was the Ambassador to Ecuador decided to come back to the States. I don't think he was quite due to leave Ecuador but for one reason or another he wanted to come back to the U.S., I think for personal reasons. At any rate, the post opened up somewhat unexpectedly and I was the Department's candidate. As you know the Department puts up probably two or three choices from the career corps, and then somebody in the White House who is concerned with the political patronage puts up outsiders. And the White House, the President or someone underneath him, has to make a choice. Well, at any rate, in my case the career choice won out, so I went to Ecuador. That was in early '76 in what turned out to be the waning months of the Ford Administration.

So I arrived there, I think in March, and only stayed 22 months because the embassy in Lisbon became suddenly vacant early in the Carter Administration when Frank Carlucci, who was then in Lisbon was pulled back to become the Deputy CIA Director, and so I was pulled out of Ecuador a bit sooner than I had expected and was sent to Portugal which, of course, didn't displease me.

Q: During your period in Ecuador were there some major issues or crises in bilateral relations?

BLOOMFIELD: We had some long-standing issues and, in addition at that point one overriding policy objective. After I arrived we had a crisis that was unforeseen.

The policy objective of the Carter Administration in Ecuador was to encourage the Ecuadorian military to return the government to civilian control. That accorded with Carter's policies in Latin America, pushing human rights, democracy, and so on. By the time I arrived in Ecuador the military had been in power for five or six years. Things had not turned out well for them. The military president, Rodriguez Lara, had recently been forced by his colleagues to resign. The junta was formed with representatives of the three services, and the junta committed itself to returning the government to democratic processes.

So when I went there my general guidance was to do what I could to encourage that process. That was the general policy objective. The main issue, the main bone of contention between the U.S. and Ecuador, was the fishing dispute. And that grew out of the fact that Ecuador was a country that not only had proclaimed the 200 mile economic zone, but was one of the few countries in the world that actually proclaimed a 200 mile territorial zone. That meant, as far as Ecuador was concerned, any ship or vessel that ventured within 200 miles was in effect entering Ecuadorian territory and had to get permission and obey Ecuadorian law. The problem was that at that point the United States did not recognize the 200 mile economic zone, much less a territorial zone. Our tuna fishermen, who were mostly from San Diego, California, would venture into what Ecuador considered to be its waters and get arrested by the Ecuadorian Navy, and pulled into port; and their catch would be seized, and they would be fined. And, of course, this immediately aroused the Congressmen from California, as well as other organizations, to raise hell, to be quite blunt about it. So we were constantly having problems with Ecuador. At one point some years before I arrived there, the Congress had passed legislation which in effect ordered the executive to cut off military aid to any country that seized American flag vessels for fishing in their waters.

Fortunately, by the time I arrived in Ecuador that problem was much less acute than it had been. The reason it was much less acute was that the U.S. was beginning to change its own attitudes. We hadn't yet, as I recall, adopted the 200 mile economic zone -- we did shortly thereafter -- but we weren't taking such a firm position as we had been. In effect, the Department had decided to "encourage" our fishermen to buy fishing licenses from Ecuador. And so buying a license in effect was a recognition of Ecuador's jurisdiction.

The way that came about -- I don't remember all the details -- but there were some people in Washington who managed, I think quite skillfully, to convince the tuna fishing industry in California that instead of standing on their high horse or principle, they should realize that buying a fishing license was a hell of a lot less expensive than getting their catch seized and having their people arrested. So, by the time I got to Ecuador, we were able to resume our military assistance to the government and that provided us with a certain amount of leverage. That gave me the opportunity to politely and quietly point out that there was a connection between the speed that they returned to democratic rule and the U.S. Government looking sympathetically upon their request for military aid.

But, as fate would have it, another problem came along which could have been much worse than

the fishing disputes. The Gulf Oil Company got into a very bitter dispute with the Ecuadorian Government within a month or so after I got there. To try to summarize the nature of the problem: Texaco and Gulf had a consortium in Ecuador. They had gone in some years before and discovered oil. They had invested several hundred millions of dollars in developing the oil fields which lay on the other side of the Western chain of the Andes, and had built a pipe line from the interior across the Andes down to the coast to be able to export the oil.

During the military regime that took over in the early '70s, there was a continuing series of controversies and disputes between the government and the oil companies; mostly because the government had adopted a very nationalistic policy about oil, and the state oil company, which acted as a kind of government regulator of the oil business, pursued a pretty arbitrary line with the two American companies. Even though, when the junta took over from General Rodriguez Lara it was much less chauvinistic than the previous government, the people who were running the oil policy in the government were the same kinds of people that had always been there, very kind of Nasserite military officers. So that the relations between the companies and the government were quite bad; and the Gulf Company in Ecuador seemed to be run by much more hard-nosed characters than the Texaco people who were in charge of Ecuador.

The Gulf Company simply decided one day that it would no longer surrender the foreign exchange that it was earning to the government until the government took care of some of its grievances. Texaco used its share of the oil produced in the field to supply its own refineries, but Gulf just sold the oil to third parties. So the Gulf people were selling oil on credit. I think they gave their customers 90 days credit. At the end of the 90 days, by which time they presumably were paid, they had to turn in the foreign exchange to the government at whatever share was stipulated by their contract. This meant that Gulf always owed the government something between \$40 and \$80 million in foreign exchange, sort of a floating debt. So one day Gulf announced that they weren't going to pay any of that until the government sat down with them and really seriously addressed their grievances. Well, the government reacted very, very sharply and pointed out to Gulf that they were a sovereign government and that they weren't going to be dictated to by a private company; and that under the Ecuadorian constitution any company that defied -- broke the law -- was subject to having its assets confiscated without compensation.

So here I could see one of these classical expropriation disputes breaking out, which meant that the U.S. would be -- the Executive, the State Department -- would be caught between the U.S. law, the Hickenlooper Amendment, which in effect mandated a cutoff of aid on the one hand, and its desire to have certain other things happen in Ecuador, like keeping the fishing controversy under control, and encouraging the government to return to democracy. In other words, if that kind of a dispute had broken out, if Gulf had actually been confiscated, my ability as Ambassador to have any influence on what went on in Ecuador would just have been blown sky high.

So I immediately set about trying to avoid this from happening. The government gave the companies -- I think it was 60 days -- to comply with the law, and at the end of the 60 days they would be confiscated. Well, my approach was to, on the one hand, push the government and try to get it to address some of the company's grievances, which were real grievances, there's no doubt about it. On the other hand, I tried to press the company into compromising with the

government. I had to work through the Department, I couldn't deal directly with the company's representatives in the U.S. because this involved a general policy issue. So I was dealing mainly through the Legal Adviser's Office (L), who in turn was dealing with Gulf headquarters.

I was trying to get the Department to tell Gulf that if Gulf broke the law, simply thumbed its nose at the law, the U.S. Government would consider itself not to be bound to try to defend Gulf's interests. I said that it was one thing to defend an American company's interests in which the company was being abused by a government. It was another thing to defend that company's interests if they were blatantly saying to the government, "We know there's a law that says so-and-so but we're not going to obey it."

Well, of course, the Department never quite wanted to go that far but I will say, the person in L who was handling the matter -- who now incidentally is the American Justice on the International Court of Justice in The Hague, Steve Schwebel -- handled the companies very, very well. I obviously didn't have tapes of his telephone conversations with the company people but my impression is that in a subtle, but unmistakable way, he pointed out to them that they were going to create serious difficulties for themselves if they insisted on this.

The company, for their part, squeezed all the leverage out of this that it could. They kept dragging their feet. What we wanted them to do was to agree that, if I could get the Ecuadorian government to offer them a framework for negotiating, for addressing specific grievances, then they in turn would say, "Okay, we're satisfied that the government is now going to seriously respond and we'll pay our debts." Anyway, they dragged this out until they were sure that they'd gotten the government to go as far as they could.

But even at that, at literally the eleventh hour, the very day before the deadline expired, they still hadn't agreed. So I finally called the fellow in Coral Gables who was -- I guess he was president of the Gulf subsidiary that covered Latin America -- and remonstrated with him for about a half an hour on the phone. So then they gave in. I think they'd already planned to. I could never be sure. At any rate, they paid what they owed which was, I think, maybe \$80 million, and then the government began seriously negotiating with them.

I was, of course, putting pressure on the government to make that kind of an offer. The man who was the Minister for Petroleum Affairs was part of the problem. He was very nationalistic, almost a xenophobic character. So I couldn't do much with him. But the man I was dealing with was the President of the country. He was the Admiral who was the first among equals among the three junta members. He had the title of President, and he and I had a very good relationship. We worked together very well, and as it turns out he was really responsible for keeping the military's commitments about returning the country to democratic rule.

So whenever this crisis would get to a sticking point and some minister would be gumming up the works, I had a channel by which I could see the President directly without going through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, or anybody else, and I would do that. And then he would take care of things. So, as I say, I was trying to cajole the Ecuadorians on the one side and the American company on the other to come to an agreement. At any rate, at the eleventh hour, almost midnight of the last day, Gulf gave orders to its bank in New York to make the payments.

After that there were more after-shocks as it were, crises that would occur in the negotiations themselves. But, still, we managed to get through those and eventually Gulf sold out. The Ecuadorian government bought them out and they paid, I think, \$125 million and bought out their interests in the consortium, which left Texaco as a junior partner with the government.

Anyway, that crisis consumed most of my energies for the first six months of my tour.

The other issue which was something I worked on the entire time I was there, which was as I said only 22 months, was this question of returning the country to civilian rule. The problem there was that while the Admiral and the Navy were firm in that decision, the Army was the largest service and had the most fire power. The Army had some generals who weren't too sure that they really wanted to go out of the governing business, particularly, the Chief of Staff of the army had ambitions to run the country himself. Fortunately, he was not a charismatic leader. He didn't have full support within the Army. He had to contend with people under him who didn't really want him to get that power. Anyway, there was a sort of complicated game being played among the military, the three services, and obviously I only saw the tip of that iceberg; but I was able to weigh in at key times, both with the president, the Admiral, who was sympathetic, of course, and at times even directly with some of the army people, including the General who, we thought, wanted to take over -- just to get the word to him, "Look, you know, if you do this, forget about getting any help from the United States. You're going to be a pariah." We had some chips to play with there, because the Navy was very anxious to get some ships from us, some obsolete destroyers that they wanted to refit. So we held that bait out for them in case there was anybody in the Navy who had second thoughts. Anyway, it all worked out. The elections didn't take place until after I left there. I guess it was probably the following summer that they occurred.

Well, I probably should identify some of these people -- did you want me to identify some of the people I've been talking about just to make it clear? I mentioned that there had been an army general who was president of Ecuador who had been deposed by his military colleagues before I got there. His name was Rodriguez Lara. And then the President with whom I was dealing was the Navy Chief of Staff, or CNO, whose name was Poveda, and he was the Navy representative on the junta but he was also given the post of president, so he was first among equals, you might say. The name of the Army Chief of Staff who we were pretty sure had aspirations to take over, was Duran. And then, in the elections after I left, the man who became president was a fellow by the name of Jaime Roldos; and he was killed in a plane crash within about a year of taking over. He was succeeded by the vice president and the country has been a democracy, up until now at any rate.

Q: During the period you were that you were there, under this military junta, were there any issues involving human rights, or involving drugs?

BLOOMFIELD: Yes, to both questions. Already, by that time -- and we're talking about more than ten years ago -- already the drug problem was a serious problem. The cocaine problem. As you probably know, although Colombia is the largest manufacturing area for cocaine, the raw material comes mainly from Bolivia and Peru, and Ecuador was a transshipment point. Ecuador,

being just on the border of Colombia, a lot of cocaine would come up from Peru through Ecuador into Colombia. So while there wasn't, in those days, any coca grown in Ecuador -- not very much -- it was a transit point and so there was a lot of interest in Washington in that. And this is sort of a typical situation. The people in Washington who were concerned about the drug problem were single-minded about it, of course. They were impatient if the host government didn't seem to be doing everything that they thought it should be doing, and didn't take into account the fact that we were dealing with a society, and a government, and political institutions, which were far different than our own, and which were less efficient, which were very often corrupt. And that, therefore, without invading the country and taking it over, it was not always possible to do everything the way the Drug Enforcement Agency thought should be done.

At any rate, I was under a great deal of pressure to keep pushing the government at the very highest levels to do more on drugs. Now, it was quite obvious to me that there was a loop here. I mean the DEA agent in the embassy was obviously feeding information back to his headquarters saying that, "Well, you know, the Ecuadorians aren't doing this, and they're not doing that, and gee, if we could only get the Ambassador to weigh in more heavily..." DEA would then insist on that through the inter-agency group. But, more importantly, I think, they would go to their people in Congress, their Congressmen. And we had one guy from New York who was chairman of whatever subcommittee it is that deals with narcotics -- I don't think he's around anymore. In fact I think he's one of the people who ended up with some problem of his own, if I'm not mistaken, eventually. Wasn't re-elected. But, while he was there he was a very obnoxious character. He came to Ecuador at one point, and, you know, called me on the carpet, and claimed that I wasn't being diligent enough about following up on these things, which was not true. I mean I actually had taken it up with the President. I took it up periodically with the Minister of Justice who was a military officer. We did everything that we could, but you can't order another government around. But that little detail is always lost on these kinds of people. So that was the drug problem.

On the human rights front, we had problems, although, fortunately, the government did not have a policy of abusing people. It wasn't a Pinochet type military regime, by any stretch of the imagination. But there were incidents where peoples' human rights were infringed upon. There were two that I remember particularly. I shouldn't laugh, I mean, one of them was pretty tragic. The other one was more farcical than anything else.

There was a bishop, an Ecuadorian bishop -- I think he was the bishop of Urubamba or some such and he was considered the Red Bishop because he was considered a leftist. Actually, I think, he was just somebody who was, you know, a reformer type. In that society, however, he was considered a radical. There was a meeting of bishops. I don't remember whether this was a meeting of the Ecuadorian Episcopate, or whether it was some special meeting. But, in any case, it took place in Urubamba, in this fellow's diocese and it was a meeting, as I recall, of all of the Ecuadorian bishops, and there were several American bishops who were invited, and who attended.

Now somebody in the intelligence services of the Ecuadorian Army had convinced this General Duran, the one I mentioned earlier that had presidential ambitions, that this was a conspiracy, that this was a bunch of clerical plotters. So they raided this meeting and arrested all these guys.

It was the most stupid thing you can imagine. I don't remember whether they just sort of kept them locked up wherever they were, or whether they took them into Quito or what.

But as soon as I heard about this, I went in and made very strong protests to the Foreign Ministry. And, you know, the poor Foreign Minister, whom I knew, he obviously thought this was a real disaster, but he had to sort of grit his teeth and be dignified about it, and say, well, he'd have to take it under advisement... I mean, his official stance had to be, look, this was an action taken by the Ecuadorian Government in its sovereign capacity, and he wasn't going to apologize to me at that point for it. But the result of that representation was that they let the Americans go right away. But they insisted that they get out -- they expelled them from the country. So in order to make a gesture, a public gesture about this whole thing, I went out to the airport to see these guys off, and made sure my photograph was taken shaking their hands as they left. So that the Ecuadorian public would understand that as far as the American Ambassador was concerned, these two guys were respectable American clerics who were not participating in any plot. That was one incident, not a very -- as it turned out -- not a very serious one.

The other one was much more serious, and the details I don't think have ever come to light because this took place in a sugar mill down in the interior. There was a strike and some violence, I guess, among the strikers, and the -- I think it must have been the police -- went in there and killed a lot of people. And since there was still control over information in the country, it was never let out exactly what happened, or how many people died. But the information that we got was that as many as 20 to 25 people in there had been killed by the police forces. In that case, you know, there were no grounds for the U.S. Ambassador to get involved directly. I did express to the government that if this were true, it would be a matter of serious concern. But they never admitted the whole story.

But human rights was not a kind of continuing problem there, because, as I said, by this time the government was committed to going back to democratic rule. So you had to give them the benefit of the doubt, to some extent. The newspapers were relatively free to report, and the ordinary citizen was not, you know, abused in his personal freedom, and so forth. He could be. I mean he didn't have much protection if they wanted to, but it was not that kind of a government, put it that way.

Q: Is there any other aspect of your assignment to Ecuador that you would like to touch on?

BLOOMFIELD: Yes. It just occurred to me that it might be of some interest to future historians if I said a few words about Mrs. Carter's visit. She was asked by her husband to make a visit to -- I think it was -- six Latin American countries shortly after he became President. I guess there was a certain amount of dismay at first because the feeling was that Latin American men wouldn't take kindly to a woman coming down to deal with them about matters of state, and also that they might feel slightly offended that the President, instead of coming himself, sent his wife. That was partly an apprehension based on an exaggerated view of Latin American machismo.

Mainly because of the way Mrs. Carter conducted herself, that turned out not to be a problem. First of all, she was very well briefed by the time she arrived and she was all business, and she made it very clear from the outset that this was not a social occasion: this was not just a tour of

symbolic value; that she was really there and really represented her husband, and really wanted to talk business. Her military interlocutors in Ecuador may have had some doubts about that -- I think they probably did. But within about five minutes they realized that she was there to address problems, and furthermore, that she knew what she was talking about. It was very helpful because she reinforced everything I had been telling them about the importance that we attached to the retorno -- as the return to democracy was called. And she also dealt with some of their other concerns. The tensions between Ecuador and Peru were running quite high at that time over their long-standing territorial dispute. And I think she was able to reassure the Ecuadorians that we would attempt to see that they were not, shall we say, mistreated by the Peruvians. So it was a very useful visit.

MICHAEL W. COTTER
Political Officer
Quito (1976-1979)

Ambassador Michael W. Cotter was born in Madison, Wisconsin on August 1, 1943. He attended Georgetown University, followed by the University of Barcelona in Spain. He entered the Foreign Service in 1968 and as a member of the Foreign Service, served in countries including Vietnam, Bolivia, Ecuador, Turkey, Zaire, Chile, and Turkmenistan. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on December 12, 1998.

COTTER: Bolivia was very hard to travel in. There were practically no paved roads. In many cases, we had to ford rivers at very high altitude, carrying our own gasoline, carrying our own provisions. But there are some fascinating places. The town of Potosi was the major silver production area in the days of the Spanish Empire. The river by Buenos Aires is called Rio de La Plata, the river of silver, because that is where most of the silver was exported. There is one mountain in which they are still mining. There is no silver left. I think they are mining other things. But, Potosi in the 16th century was the largest city in the Western Hemisphere. It happily avoided the fate of lots of other cities, because it simply is now a tenth of the size that it was then. As a result, things were never torn down to build a new building. The colonial city is still virtually intact. It was 20 years ago, and I think it probably still is today. Potosi is at 14,000 feet, which makes it not an easy place to go to. Bolivia, at least, had something approaching a social revolution. Ecuador, which I later served in, had not had one. Juan Jose Torres was clearly an Indian. He had Indian features. In Peru, to this day, or in Ecuador, or in Colombia, someone with clearly Indian features simply could not run for president of the country. But, in Bolivia, they could. The revolution came in 1952. The Bolivians had kicked out Patino, who owned the tin mines, and expropriated most of the tin mines. But, even though there had been a social revolution, it had never really gotten up to and affected most of the Indians. I remember there, and in Ecuador later on, they would say that an Indian who decided to join the dominant society put on shoes, and putting on shoes for an Indian was a right-of-passage; someone who had come out of the village and was ready to adopt Western ways and learn Spanish, and dress Western. The Bolivians, in those days and I think still, maintain really well, however, out in the villages and small towns, traditional folk patterns. I think the only other place I have been in the world

where that is the case is Bali, where villagers, to a large extent, have their religious and folk festivals for themselves, even though there are an increasing number of tourists who come to watch them. It is not done primarily for the benefit of the tourists. It is primarily done for the people themselves. The Bolivians have some absolutely fascinating folk dances and folk rituals, apart from miners and sticks of dynamite that used to happen. On one occasion, before I had arrived there, the labor attaché and another officer had gone down to visit a mine, and they found themselves seated on kegs of dynamite and held hostage for several days. Again, the miners' complaint had nothing to do with us, but it was the one way they could get the attention of the government. Because having an American diplomat blown up was not something the government wanted, and so, that way, they could get the minister of labor, or the minister of social welfare, to at least come down and listen to their complaint. I know, as we traveled to the mines, we hoped we wouldn't get set out on a keg of dynamite. Our embassy in Bolivia had some great people; it always has over the years. Again, it's typical of some of our really difficult posts, because the only people who end up there are people who want to be there, or people like me who, as a junior officer, didn't know any better. Because it is so high, there are any number of health reasons that can exempt you from service in Bolivia. As a result, you get people who want to be there and who enjoy being there. We had a very good group of people. Siracusa was the ambassador, at the time I was there. Dick Barnaby was the DCM, who was a very hard man with a red pencil on editing. He taught me good editing or writing lessons that I have never forgotten in the Foreign Service, such as, avoid using the passive voice. You learned the hard way, in those days, when you worked for somebody like Dick Barnaby. Perry Shankle was political counselor. Roger Gamble was the labor attaché, who later on was ambassador to Suriname. John Maisto was one of the officers who had left when I arrived, who is now ambassador to Venezuela.

Q: You were in Quito from 1976 to when?

COTTER: 1979. Dick Bloomfield was the ambassador when I was there, and Ed Corr, when I arrived, was the political counselor, and then moved up to be deputy chief of mission. Gerry Sutton was the political counselor. There were three of us in the political section. We would switch portfolios, but I generally had political-military issues (by this time, I was identified as a political-military officer) and external political affairs. Ecuador was under military government. The military must have taken over earlier, in 1976. It was a military junta, composed of three officers. They had taken power to prevent the election of a fellow named Assad Bucaram. One of the interesting things about Latin America is the inordinate, percentage-wise, presence in political life in many of the countries of immigrants from the Levant. The Latin Americans tend to call them all "Turcos," "Turks." They are mostly Syrians and Palestinians, and interestingly enough mostly Christians, people who had left with the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, very often in the 1920s. Families like the Bucarams, obviously, were from this group. Carlos Menem, President of Argentina, is also from this group. It was a very active political group, and a very high profile political group, given its small percentage of the population. Anyhow, Bucaram was seen as a dangerous populist. Having tried a number of constitutional ways to keep him from being elected president, including questioning whether he was actually born in Ecuador, the military ended up overthrowing the system. So again, we have a very active political life. You

saw a lot, still at that time, of military governments being able to play the anti-Communist card with us in order to maintain a particular flow of assistance. That changed a little bit when Jimmy Carter came in. Of course, that was about the same time I arrived. The main issue I remember dealing with was an interesting one. We are not supposed to talk about classified things on this, but I guess this is now 20 years, so we will call this unclassified. But the Carter administration came up with an idea that I thought was an absolute disaster and one of the few pieces I have ever written was a piece for the Open Forum Magazine on it.

Q: *This was essentially our in-house dissent magazine.*

COTTER: If it still exists.

Q: *I'm not sure.*

COTTER: I haven't seen a copy of it in years. But, it was an in-house magazine in which one could write articles, including classified articles, dissenting or commenting on policy. The Carter Administration came in and established a policy of not selling sophisticated military equipment in areas where this kind of equipment hadn't been introduced. This caused a real problem coming when it did, the period 1977 to 1980, because so much of the military equipment that we had given Latin Americans was obsolete and simply not supportable. I think I mentioned that when I was in Bolivia, the Bolivians were still flying P51 Mustangs. The Bolivians got from Canada F80 Starfighters, one of the very early jets.

Q: *First generation, early Korean War.*

COTTER: Later on, they got some F86s, which is what the Ecuadorians had, which again, was Korean War. Well, by 1977 you couldn't get parts for the F86; you couldn't repair the engine; you couldn't do a whole bunch of things. The Ecuadorians, along with a lot of other countries, were in the market for more aircraft, particularly fighters. It applies to tanks, although to a lesser extent in that part of the world, because tanks are not of much use in those countries. The bridges won't take more modern tanks. So, a lot of this is focused on aircraft. Actually, Northrop had developed the F5.

Q: *So called "Freedom Fighter," which is really designed for non-American countries.*

COTTER: Not originally. The F5 was built by them in competition with the F16 and lost the competition with the U.S. Air Force, which decided to buy the F16. At that point, Northrop reconfigured the F5 and turned it into what was a somewhat less capable aircraft. Well, they would not say that it was somewhat less capable. They would say it was as capable, but the fact is, a cheaper and somewhat less capable aircraft was for sale to the Third World. Again, facing the same issue, the question was asked, "Well, what do we have in our inventory that we can sell or give to these countries?" Anyhow, this came up because the Ecuadorians were looking at a number of aircraft. We at first said we weren't going to sell them first-line aircraft. Then, the Israelis came to them and wanted to sell them the Kfir. Now, the Kfir is an Israeli-designed aircraft, quite high performance, that had GE (General Electric) U.S. engines. The fact that it had U.S. engines gave us the veto power over its export to third countries. Lo and behold, the Carter

Administration wouldn't allow the Israelis to sell the Kfir. So then the question came back again about the F5. At that point, the administration said, "Well, if we turned around and sold the F5, it would look like we had stopped the Israelis from selling the Kfir solely for cross commercial purposes." That wasn't our reason. Our reason was a high moral purpose of preventing the introduction of this kind of equipment in Latin America, so therefore we would not sell the F5, and we would not sell anything to the Ecuadorians. The upshot of this, of course, is that the Ecuadorians went out and bought French jets. I don't remember what French jets they bought, but they bought French jets. This had two effects. Number one, it opened a Latin American market which had been ours. If we had done this intelligently, we could have kept Ecuador on a stage of military modernization at minimal cost. It opened it up to any comer. The next impact of that was the Peruvians buying new MIGs, which drove us up a wall but was a predictable result of our unwillingness to sell military equipment. The other immediate impact on Ecuador, of course, was bribes because the French had been known in the past to sweeten their deals with commissions. It was fairly commonly believed, and I think correctly so, that in order to sell them Mirages, the French provided significant monetary benefits to people in the Ecuadorian Air Force. So, we have three events. We lost control ourselves of the arms market in Latin America, for better or for worse, but it could have been done better. We opened the door for introduction of much higher technology than we had any intention of selling. We opened the door for corruption of people who I don't believe would have engaged in it otherwise. It is a policy which I think has had impacts all down the line, although we are still screwing around on this. In the last few years, we have been discussing whether we would sell high-tech jets to the Argentines or the Chileans. The fact of the matter is, if those countries want to spend the money on those kinds of things, they certainly will find other countries willing to sell them.

Toward the end of the time in Ecuador, the military promised to return power to civilians within three years. Indeed, they stuck to that timetable. It didn't turn out quite as they had hoped. They managed to keep Assad Bucaram out. But what Bucaram did was put up for the elections his nephew, Jaime Roldos, or it may be a son-in-law. Anyhow, he ultimately won the elections. They made good on their commitment and turned the government over to Roldos. Long after I left, he turned out to be an excellent president who, unfortunately, was killed in a helicopter accident a number of years later. It was unfortunate for Ecuador. Ecuador was interesting at that time because oil had been discovered earlier, but the Ecuadorians who had expropriated lots of these kinds of energy things, years earlier, finally allowed Texaco to come in and begin to exploit some of their oil reserves. You see the impact of this still today. The oil was in the Amazon basin, and you read about a lot of the problems that Ecuador has with environmental degradation. It also caused some technological difficulties, pumping oil from the relatively low Amazon basin up across the Andes and down the other side to the sea coast. This had some interesting impacts. The one refinery was down on the seacoast. Quito is at 9,600 feet. I, by this time, had graduated downward from La Paz, at 12,000 feet. The ride down to the coast was fairly harrowing. It was a two-lane asphalted road that crossed the pass at probably 11,000, 12,000 feet, and then it dropped down to the coast. In doing this, you would pass through several microclimates. The wind would come from the west. So, you had a cloud layer that would form every day at a certain level. That would produce subtropical plants and things. When you were driving down to the coast, well, usually the bigger problem was driving back from the coast, because you would come up behind laden oil tankers, laden gas trucks. They would be lucky to do 10 miles an hour up to the top. It is a highway that runs around the mountains, and when you

get into the clouds, it is absolutely blind driving. There are not very many Latin Americans who are going to let that deter them from going around the trucks. I can't remember that we ever took a trip up that highway without coming upon horrific car accidents where people tried to pass trucks or simply got caught in the cloud cover. I don't think Ecuador has ever widened that road beyond that.

Ecuador is a very interesting place to travel. It has some of the best and worst of what you find in Latin America. I probably mentioned that when I was in Bolivia, Bolivia had had in 1952 at least a semi-social revolution, allowing the indigenous people a certain amount of votes, who wanted it. There were not that many, and there are still not that many who want to participate in the political system. At least one president of Bolivia has had very noticeable Indian features. Well, that revolution had not occurred, and I don't think it has occurred today, in Ecuador. The people who lived up by Quito in the high plains of Ecuador were extraordinarily conservative. Society in that country was composed of people who could trace their ancestry back to a village in Spain where they came from. Germans who came in the mid-18th century were still called Germans. Palestinians who came in the 1920s were still called "Turcos." You weren't a real person unless you could trace your ancestry back to Spain. They ran large farms and the Indians who lived on them were essentially serfs, who worked on the farm, who bought from the farm, who were in hoc to the company store, so to speak. It was a very difficult place. But there also you had this distinction between the highlands and the lowlands. In the lowlands, the same happens a lot in Peru, you have much more mixing of races. Some of these folks would emigrate to the highlands, but in Guayaquil, you find a much greater mix of people including blacks, as there had been some experiments the Spaniards had had with African slavery, which often hadn't worked. But, the descendants of the failed efforts still lived there. You had slave ships bound for other areas that at various places had either crashed along the coast or were taken over by the slaves. So, you had a mix of black population along the coast and then mixtures of Indians and Europeans. Ecuador is much like Bolivia in that you had true Indians living in the mountains. By putting on shoes and moving down, they could make the decision to join a modern society, which some did and some didn't. There are some very beautiful, old colonial towns in southern Ecuador, Cuenca being one that is a very nice town. It was difficult to get to. The Pan American Highway, at that point, was not paved. There was a paved road that came down from Colombia to Quito, and then went down to the coast. You could take a paved road down to Chile, but the Pan American Highway itself went down the high plains of the Andes and was not a paved road. It was subject to lots of landslides. The other interesting thing about Ecuador, that we got called upon to do several times, was deal with plane crashes. There was one just before we arrived and one while we were there. These were commercial jetliners, small ones, flying to cities further south that had crashed. They would crash on the eastern slope of the Andes, which was very heavily forested. They were never found. There were 60 people aboard. At one point, while we were there, the authorities came to us and asked us to send down a plane from Panama to search for one of these planes. Unfortunately, they had waited a week or two after the crash, by which time, there wasn't enough heat left for the thermal sensors on the C130 to do much good. But it was generally believed that what would happen with these crashes would be that it would be difficult to see from the air, so the only way you would know about it would be if someone came in and reported it. It was generally supposed that local people went in and looted whatever was there and then were obviously in no position to go and report the crash. As far as I know, those planes have never been found. There were several Ecuadorian commercial airlines that flew

down from Quito to Guayaquil, that had sort of cornered the market on old Caravelles. A Caravelle is a two-engine French early jet. I guess it was from the very early 1960s. The Ecuadorians flew these on their domestic routes and had bought from Alitalia a whole bunch of them to cannibalize. When you went down to Guayaquil, you would see parked beside the airport a whole row of these things which simply sat there. They cannibalized them to keep a couple flying. There were two airlines that flew that, and then there was one airline that flew Electras, which were a four-engine turboprop, similar to a C130, but a commercial one. I don't even remember who made it, Lockheed, I think.

Q: It was Lockheed.

COTTER: That was the plane of choice to fly out of Quito because the Caravelles couldn't fly on one engine at that altitude, particularly on take off or landing. So if one of the Caravelles lost an engine on either take off or landing, you were done, whereas the Electra, even though it was a slower turboprop with four engines, could fly on two. So, if you had a choice, you tended to fly the airline with the Electra.

Quito airport was great. Quito is a relatively small town, it probably still is. In those days, it was 300,000 to 400,000, now it is probably 500,000. It is a long city set in the plains up in the mountains. A lot of the suburbs are on the hills or on the side of it, and the airport was on the edge of the city. I think it still is. If we were expecting visitors, we could, literally from our living room, see the plane come by on its landing approach. Then we could leave the house and drive to the airport to meet the visitors. It was a very interesting place. We had a good mission. It was a very good place to be.

Q: You say the ambassador was Dick Bloomfield? What was his background and how did he operate?

COTTER: He was a career Foreign Service Officer. His next assignment was ambassador to Portugal. Dick was a Latin American hand. He ran a tight but fair ship. He was acceptable to people. He made an effort to improve the staff in most activities. Ed Corr was his DCM, who later on was ambassador to El Salvador and possibly somewhere else. He got himself caught up in the Reagan revolution and lost his job. That must have been later on in the Reagan revolution, because he must have been ambassador to El Salvador. Ed was in Quito from 1976 to 1978. Then he came back to Washington to work on the drug program, under Mathea Falco, I think is the name. Later on, he was Ambassador to El Salvador, under the Reagan Administration. Ed was good. Nevertheless, Ed had arrived as political counselor and then moved up to be DCM. That did not affect me as much as it affected my boss.

Q: How was it dealing with the Ecuadorian bureaucracy, the political class, and military?

COTTER: The political class kept a low profile because you had a military government when I was there. They weren't allowed to organize openly, although it was easy enough to keep contact with them. This was not a military government that threw most of these people in jail. It was not a military government that prevented most of them from planning for the return for civilian government. So, we maintained contact with the major political forces. There was a lot of change

that is still going on -- but I think this military government in Ecuador sort of pressed a lot of it -- between the old political organizations and, as the 1970s came to an end, ferment and change in these kinds of things in Latin America. You had the Christian Democrats and the Social Christians, the Social Christians being on the right. In theory, you had Socialists on the left; the Communists were banned. But, Jaime Roldos and Assad Bucaram's party was not banned. It was a Populist Party.

The bureaucracy was not very well organized. You had a civil service, but it did not have full protections. When you had, for instance, a military government come in, you had a lot of people leave. The depth and the expertise of the foreign ministry was quite limited. The military had largely been trained in one way or another by us and were quite accessible. Again, in those days, it was before the drug war and there was no particular threat at all in Ecuador. It was a fairly low level relationship. You had a military group in the embassy that was grossly overstaffed. I found, throughout my career, in some cases it is difficult for political sections to play a role in this. On one hand, the military tend to resent civilians sticking their nose in. Largely, that is a function of convincing them that you know what you are talking about. The other advantage we have always had in these situations is being able to play the mediator between the defense attaché and the military assistance group. The Pentagon has never figured out, largely because this is really peripheral to what the Pentagon does, how to manage these kinds of things. They resisted, for years and years, unifying their overseas activities because those activities are not unified back in the Pentagon. The Pentagon has an incredible variety of fiefdoms, all of which defend their turf with great effort. You would find one group commanded by a colonel and an attaché office headed by a colonel. A good part of the time both those gentlemen argued who is the senior military advisor to the ambassador, with some incredible internal warfare and with some complaining and bitching on their part. If the political officer is astute enough to take advantage of it, it gives him or her a great advantage in serving as a sounding board and advising both. This worked in places where the embassy managed to give political sections a role in these kinds of things, as opposed to having the military group commander report directly to the ambassador. There was a lot of this internal fighting in Ecuador. It is also a function, I think, in a lot of these countries, of neither colonel having enough to do. In most of these organizations, from a military perspective, you wouldn't have a colonel running that small an operation. You do it in embassies because you need the rank there. I will talk in some later posts about this. It turns out over a number of years to be a matter of some interest and some difficulty for us to deal with. In every post I have been at, at different levels, we have had to work out problems of our military colleagues.

Q: Also, too, I have heard other people talking, who have served in a Latin American country, saying that the staffing of these military groups, at the colonel level, often use people on the way to retirement, not people out of the up and coming wagon of the military.

COTTER: This is true. It is an interesting anomaly. Again, it goes to how peripheral all of this really is to the Pentagon. I remember in Vietnam being out in the district, under CORDS, which worked with MACV. MACV, the military assistance mission in Vietnam, was the advisory portion of our presence, as opposed to USARV, which was the U.S. Army Vietnam. I remember people coming out of Saigon, or for all I know out of Washington, and they would come and talk with our military officers in our advisory group in the province saying, "You guys are central to

what we are doing. You and MACV are as important to us as USARV is. Don't think you are second-class citizens. What you are doing is central to the military mission." Well, I heard the same thing over the next 30 years in every post I have been at. People would come up to the guys in the military group and say, "You are central to what we are doing. You are really important," as the system in every stage, not just now, was weeding them out. The fact of the matter is, in the Army, if something is not armor or infantry or military police, or anything else, it is a sideline. It is interesting, and the Pentagon wants to keep its oar in, but they have never succeeded in developing a career track, up to flag officer, for foreign area specialists. The Army does some things very well. They have a foreign area specialist program on which they lavish tons of money that trains young officers, something we should be looking into. For instance, it sends officers at the captain or navy lieutenant level off for a two year program of area specialization, one year of which is university, and the second year of which is simply traveling the region. Literally, the guy has a travel budget, and if he can hook himself up with a military institution in a country in a region, fine. In some cases, these officers go to a command and general staff school in another country, and they spend a year traveling. Would that be interesting if we had something like that in the Foreign Service for area specialization! We don't even do language study in the region. Nonetheless, in spite of having things like this for captains and majors, and having something of a career up to colonel, the military has never managed to get a flag officer or a serious number of flag officer positions for military assistance people. As a result, it doesn't attract officers with great ambition. Frankly, the attaché business suffers from very much the same thing. Only the Army has a true attaché corps of people with military intelligence background who are trained and who have multiple tours. The Air Force and the Navy have never done that. The Air Force, in particular, has a lot of disgruntled people. Very often, what you would find with Air Force attachés or colonels were guys who had been fighter pilots and were being told, in no uncertain terms, that they weren't fighter pilots anymore. They would spend two years in their posts, most of the time trying to figure out how they could return to a pilot's seat - spending more time worrying about that kind of thing and bemoaning what was being done to them than they did engaging in whatever it is attachés are supposed to do. You are right that it doesn't attract, necessarily, the best officers, although you would find good officers who, as an excursion tour, were serving as either an attaché or military assistance person. There are very good officers who should have had longer careers in the military but didn't, simply because the career track wasn't there for them.

Q: During this 1976 to 1979 period, how were things on the Peruvian border? Anybody who serves in Ecuador I'm sure knows that we are a guarantor from 1942 or something, along with Brazil and others of the Peruvian/Ecuadorian border. This keeps getting thrown in our face from time to time.

COTTER: Yeah. I'm glad you mentioned that because the border itself was quiet. Ecuador never did accept the peace agreement that had been done at the end of the Second World War. This stemmed from a war that occurred in the 1940s, in which Ecuador lost a third of its territory to Peru. A peace was forged by us and others, and the Ecuadorians have always resented this. The war was in 1942, and the Ecuadorians always felt that their interests were sacrificed to the greater world war effort, and the United States wasn't interested in having a war in South America that perhaps would be exploited by the Nazis.

Q: I had an interview with someone who was a desk officer. He got called by Sumner Welles, who said, "I don't know what the war is about, but stop it. You are screwing up things, so just stop the war."

COTTER: We did. The result was something that the Ecuadorians never accepted. While there was peace on the border, the Ecuadorians didn't accept it. Part of our concern and part of their interest in buying more modern arms was in being able to regain their lost territories. It's funny because you would see the same kind of thing at the airport in Bolivia when you arrive in La Paz. There is a sign that says, "Antofagasta was, is, and will be Bolivian." Antofagasta is a city in northern Chile. Of course, Chile won The War of the Pacific at the end of the 1800s against Peru and Bolivia and actually occupied Lima.

Well, the Bolivians, who lost their sea coast in that war, never accepted that fact despite a couple of treaties, and for a good part of the period since then they have not had relations with Chile. When I was in Chile from 1992 to 1995, there was no Bolivian embassy there. They didn't have diplomatic relations. The Ecuador/Peru thing was very much the same. There wasn't a town that the Ecuadorians could focus on. The idea was that the Amazon was, is and will be Ecuadorian. This is one of the reasons the Ecuadorians were interested in upgrading their arms. What is fascinating about this is there was a period there, in the very late 1970s early 1980s, where the arms race had progressed. Ecuador had gotten its French Mysteres, I think it was. Peru had acquired MIGs, and Argentina and Chile were almost at the point of war in 1979 and 1980 over the Beagle Channel. The Beagle Channel goes along the Straits of Magellan. One of the complaints that the Chilean military, Pinochet, and the Chilean Army have against us was that our embargo on arms to that military government began seriously at the end of the 1970s. From the Chilean perspective, in their time of national need, when they were faced with the prospect of war, the United States was not there for them. In any event, one could see the potential for a continental war occurring, as everybody took advantage of something else. In other words, you could see Chile and Argentina fighting over the Beagle Channel. It was predictable had that occurred, the Peruvians and Bolivians would have taken advantage of the Chileans being engaged in the south to try to regain their lost territories from the war. It is 90% certain that would have happened. A Peruvian would have had to be a traitor to his country not to take advantage of that. Indeed, one of the Chilean military's problems has always been fighting a two-front defensive war. How do you fight in the south, in those areas that were not defined with Argentina, and at the same time, in a country that is 3,000 miles long, fight in the north to protect the territories you won in The War of the Pacific? Well, if Peru had become engaged in a fight with Chile over that area, it is again 95% certain that the Ecuadorians would have taken advantage of this to regain their lost territories in the Amazon. So the threat of fighting between Chile and Argentina in 1979 and 1980 had implications that went far beyond Chile and Argentina itself. I really believe that it carried the seeds of a continent wide conflict. Happily the Argentine/Chilean conflict was settled. That was the reason they called the Pope in, and the Pope negotiated a satisfactory settlement. But, it was extraordinarily dicey there for some time. You had military forces, which had some upgraded equipment. The air forces, in particular, had new toys which they would have liked nothing better than to try out. As it turned out, going back to your initial question, the conflict between Peru and Ecuador was not an active one at that point. I don't think it became active really until 12 years later.

Q: Did human rights play any part, particularly in Ecuador? This was the Carter period. Was it a problem?

COTTER: Well, you had a military government, of course, which by definition violated human rights. Frankly, there was a lot of talk about human rights, but the policy was not articulated to the extent it is today. What has always surprised me in my career is that the Reagan Administration did more to institutionalize our human rights policy. I think the Democrats were very afraid that when Reagan came in, they would abandon that. The Reagan Administration didn't abandon it. It did institutionalize it. It was not institutionalized in Carter years. It was a matter of importance, but in fact it wasn't very clear what we were doing with this, except that we had an interest in it. We objected to the absence of political rights, of having military government and no democratic government. We pressed very hard on the Ecuadorian military to commit to a timetable to return to civilian government, which as I said, they did. I'm trying to remember whether we started doing human rights reports that early. I think we probably did.

Q: The Congress mandated it. I am pretty sure they were doing it about that time.

COTTER: The interesting thing with this has always been, of course, our definition of human rights as it applies to that report. Other countries have noted, for instance, that the U.S. doesn't consider the right to work or the right to salary or the right to medical benefits as a human right. We focus more on the political rights and not on economic rights. Anyhow, I transferred out of Ecuador in 1979. I was looking at that point career wise, professionally, at the prospect of becoming an Andean expert. I ought to say about dependency theory, one of the interesting things I did, having come out of Stanford, was that Dick Bloomfield was very interested in professional improvement. There was a big push in the Department at that point on continuing professional education and finding ways of doing this at post. They were pressing, among other things, posts to take the Great Issues series. Having come out of Stanford, I ended up being tabbed to run this for Quito. So, we generally would do brown bag lunches at the ambassador's residence once a month. I would prepare materials and get them out to people in advance. I decided to do a session on dependency theory, an idea that at least people in the embassy ought to have some idea of what it was. Of course, you can imagine the reaction because no one was very enthusiastic about this. It was difficult for me because I wasn't a particular proponent of it, although I found myself in the situation where I ended up having to defend the pieces I wasn't very comfortable with, simply because everyone else was against it. I had lots of materials. I would copy materials and circulate them to people ahead of time, and then we would have a luncheon discussion. It was a very useful thing. It is something we got away from very quickly, and something that only works if the ambassador really spends a lot of time on it. It is good because it helps people get out of their little molds and think broader thoughts. Something, also, however, that is a little bit less necessary now, when globally you have much more access to information than you did in those days. Some people aren't quite as isolated intellectually at some of these posts as we were in the late 1970s. In any event, I was looking at becoming an Andean expert. I could see my career progressing downward, altitudinally, from La Paz to Quito, and then you go into Bogota, at 8,400, and then you would get an excursion at 7,600. But I had gotten to the point in Latin America where at some point I was going to strangle someone. While as an intellectual thing dependency theory didn't go very far in the 1970s, the basic idea underlying it was very popular. That was that nothing they do affects themselves. Americans

control everything, and everything is our fault. After the umpteenth discussion with an Ecuadorian, supposedly an intellectual, telling me that everything that happened in this country was our fault and they had never done anything themselves to deserve this, I was going to stand someone up and throttle him. It is incredible how destructive that kind of a thing is because you simply don't have to have any responsibility for your actions.

Q: I found slightly earlier, in 1970-1974, when I was in Greece, that the Greeks made the United States responsible for whatever had happened. Not just the United States, but the CIA.

COTTER: I remember, it was later I guess, an Argentine, who had been one of our exchange students back in Wisconsin. We got into a discussion after the Argentine junta had left. A new government had come in, and there had been this banking crisis. This was the crash in the 1980s when the American banks lost an incredible amount of money because they had loaned too much to the Third World countries. This guy was an engineer, and his view was that this was our fault because we forced money on the military junta. It really wasn't the Argentines' fault because the junta wasn't an Argentine government. It was the junta. If we hadn't forced all this money on the junta, all these problems would not have occurred. I said, "Carlos, get a grip. It was your government. You may not like it, but it was your government, and they took the money. I can feel sorry for banks that may have gone bust, but I can't accept that it is my responsibility or my government's responsibility that you guys over-borrowed." We decided that for our mental health we didn't want to continue the trend descending posts by altitude, and we had to get out. For a long time I had been interested, as all of us are at one time or another, in serving in Europe. Well, of course, Europe is a very difficult bureau to get into if you are not in it already. It always has been and always will be, although it is less so as the definition of Europe expands to include places that some of the European bureau (EUR) people weren't so interested in going to. Nonetheless, I was interested in going to Europe. Coming from ARA (Bureau for American Republic Affairs), you can forget it. I had no contacts, and I had been overseas for most of the previous three years. I ended up talking to my career counselor and came up with two possibilities. The only way I could get into Europe was to take a hard language. If you had Spanish and wanted to go to Spain, you can forget it. If you wanted to study French or German, forget about it, but you could take a hard language. So, there were two possibilities open for me: one was taking Serbo-Croatian and serving in Zagreb, and the other was taking Turkish, and serving in Ankara. Very much about our careers is luck because you just don't have that much control over things. You are faced with decisions, but that, frankly, was for me a very lucky decision. I had wanted to go to Zagreb, but I got a call one day saying that they were paneling the Ankara job and wondered whether I wanted it. I said, "Well, where does the Zagreb job stand?" They said, "Well, we are not paneling that yet." "Well, when are you going to panel it?" "Well sometime." "Well, what are my chances on that?" "Well, we can't say." I decided to take the Ankara job and go to Turkey, and go on to Turkish training, which is a 10 month language program. I got back to Washington and discovered that Turkey was in the thralls of incredible terrorism and had no money for heating oil. Not only did you have terrorists around town shooting up restaurants, but people in the previous winter had had no heat, and in some cases literally had to break the ice in their commode to go to the bathroom, which answers the question why the system was willing to have someone from ARA go to Ankara. Anyhow, my wife and I both took the full Turkish language course, something the Department also moved away from when money was tight. We treat our spouses so badly in general and provide so little to them.

Obviously, we don't compensate them because they are not real people, even though they are expected to endure a significant amount of work. But, also, when we don't provide language training to such people, we don't provide them with the tools they need to function adequately in various countries. I think we are back to doing more language training. It is really important, and it really made a difference. We were also in the same class which was interesting. They tend not to like spouses in the same class. Joanne and I managed to do quite well. So, we had 10 months of language training.

JOHN HELM
General Services Officer
Quito (1978-1980)

Mr. Helm was born and raised in Tennessee and educated at Carson Newman College. Entering the Foreign Service in 1973, he served in posts throughout the world, primarily in the field of Administration, including General Services, Communications and Foreign Buildings. His overseas posts include: Banjul, Gambia; Panama City, Panama; Seville, Spain; Quito, Ecuador; Mogadishu, Somalia; Tbilisi, Georgia; Bonn, Germany and San Salvador, El Salvador. His Washington assignments were also in the field of Administration. Mr. Helm was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2004.

Q: After that, what happened?

HELM: I asked to extend and was refused. I went to Quito, Ecuador. That was a lovely place. Had a nice house way up on a ridge. That was just general GSO work.

Q: You were there from '78 to '80.

HELM: When you're a GSO, you are almost the "mommy figure" for an embassy. The ambassador is the "daddy figure" and is the giver of law. The GSO gives you things. The GSO is about the only person in the embassy that comes to your house to do things at your house. There were some pressures there. You tend to find your friends in the missionary or from other missions or the local resident American communities. We became good friends with a number of people with the missionary radio station HCJB, and I'm still in contact with several of them. It was a good tour.

Q: Who was the ambassador when you were there?

HELM: Raymond Gonzales. He had been DCM in Panama when I was there - a really good guy; I liked him a lot.

Q: How did you find the foreign service nationals?

HELM: They were bright. As GSO you work with more nationals than anyone else in the embassy. Throughout my career I've had very good luck and relations with the nationals.

We had a Department of Commerce trade mission. We went out to the airport to meet them on a flight from Guayaquil, and they weren't on the flight. We called Guayaquil and asked them where was the trade mission? Guayaquil started looking around and discovered that they had decided that morning to rent a mini-bus and drive up from Guayaquil instead of flying. They had left the hotel about eight that morning, they should have been in Quito by about noon or one o'clock. By the middle of the afternoon we were searching the hotels and tourist locations but no luck. At about 5 PM we got word that there had been a wreck at a village about two hours out of Quito. We started trying to find it. The rented mini-van had tried to pass a bus against oncoming and there'd been a huge wreck. Two of the Amcits were killed and several of them were severely injured. They were taken to a restaurant in a little village along the highway. The only medical attention they'd had was a Peace Corps volunteer who had the Peace Corps first aid kit. We managed to get ambulances down and get them back up to the Missionary Hospital. I visited them several times in the hospital and then helped charter a medevac jet that flew from Miami and took them home to Ohio. That was a bit rough.

Q: How did Guayaquil fit in? Did you get involved with folks there?

HELM: Not too much. We supported them out of our supply room, every week or so somebody would drive down with supplies. They were pretty much a freestanding post.

Mrs. Carter came, Roslyn Carter, the president's wife, and that was a big deal. It was like a full presidential visit. This was my first experience at trying to be the GSO for a big visit. It worked out well. The FSN electrician, Segundo Adriano, was called to the Ambassador's residence - there was some problem with the wiring (the Secret Service has overloaded a circuit). - and he went up to the ambassador's apartment. The ambassador lived in a very nice two-bedroom apartment within the huge residence. While in the apartment tracing wires, Segundo stepped out on the balcony to smoke a cigarette. But who was on the balcony but Mrs. Carter, topless, sunbathing! The poor guy threw his cigarette over the balcony, ran out of the residence and drove all the way back down to the embassy to plead for mercy that I didn't have him beheaded or something. He didn't know what was going to happen to him for this transgression.

The Ecuadorian Military made Mrs. Carter the guest of honor at the big military parade and left her standing in the hot sun with nothing to drink and no shade for almost four hours as every single member of the Ecuadorian military paraded by, some two or three times, I think. Mrs. Carter stood for the whole time but several members of the delegation got sick and had to be helped off of the reviewing stand.

Q: Today is the 15th of September, 2004.

HELM: Let's go back to Ecuador. I want to tell you that every person in the general services field has one or two stories about their own DCM's "wife from hell." I sort of want to tell you a little of mine. Shortly after I arrived in Quito, the new DCM arrived. The DCM's house was an older house, only about two or three blocks from the embassy, perfect location. But it was on a fairly noisy street. The DCM and his wife moved in, and the complaints started almost immediately. "There's too much noise on the main street in front of the house. We have to have soundproof windows." I'd never been hit with a requirement for soundproof windows. I went

back to Washington and asked about them. It went back and forth, and finally I was told to put storm windows into the house, that would help the sound. I put the storm windows into the house. They called me and said, "We can still hear the street noise." I went over there and stood there, and quite frankly, I could barely hear anything. "The street's way too noisy. But it's not noisy when you're here, it's noisy only at night." So I went by there and stood on the street one Friday night at about 11 o'clock, when, if there was ever going to be noise - there wasn't a car on the street; absolutely empty. A city bus came through about every 15 minutes, and that was it. Still too noisy.

Then I get a call, "The silver is missing. Someone has stolen two place settings of official silver." We went over the inventories of the silver, and sure enough, two place settings had disappeared. Then, there were bugs. "There's bugs in the house. We have to do something about the insects." We had a fumigator go and fumigate the house. "There's still bugs in the house; you're fumigator is no good." I sent him back. He fumigated the place again. The next day, "There's still bugs in the house. There's a cockroach in the kitchen." Well it's Quito, Ecuador, for God's sakes. I sent the fumigator back; this time he came and reported that no bugs could live in that house. Two days later I'm called up to the DCM's office and chewed out for half an hour, absolutely attacked. I'm told, "If you don't get those bugs out of my house, that's the end of your career. That's it."

Madame DCM wanted to redecorate the place and she wanted new carpeting. We went back to the Department and asked the interior design people at FBO to provide money. They not only did that, but recommended the carpeting we should buy. They furnished the house and had color samples of everything. So we got the money and I was ready to buy the carpet and Mrs. DCM stopped me.

"No, you can't buy that carpet. I'm going to buy it from this local fellow." "Oh, okay. buy it locally if you insist." "We're not buying that color." "What are you buying, what have you ordered?" "I've already ordered it, and the man's coming next week and he's just going to send you the bill." I went along with it, probably shouldn't have, but how many times can you have your career threatened by the DCM? The carpet came and it was a long shag, pure polar white, in Quito, Ecuador, not a particularly clean city. It was installed. Then the walls had to be painted. We got the paint, Sherwin Williams, US paint. The painter came and prepared the colors, got everything just right, and started putting it on. It was not the right color. This part of the wall did not match that part of the wall, even though the paint had come from the same bucket, and the bucket was well stirred and properly prepared. So we painted the wall with the bottom half of the bucket, to try to get it to match. I never could see a difference, the painter couldn't, nobody else could, but she could see the difference. We must have painted that wall ten times until she was satisfied or just gave up.

Everything I did was wrong. And then, more silver was stolen: two more place settings. It was the servants - well, fire the servants. "Can I talk to the servants?" "No, you cannot talk to the servants. I'll talk to the servants." There had been a problem and we did not have a regional security officer at the post. I was the acting post security officer. "This is twice you've had a theft of silver at your house. We're going to have to talk to people." "No, no. You can't talk to anybody. But I know it was Maria who stole the silver." I've made up Maria's name; it was the

head servant. I filed the report that more silver had been stolen, and sent it off. Somebody's going to have to help me with memory, but the American ambassador to Columbia was kidnapped or held hostage.

Q: Yes, Diego Asencio.

HELM: That was during the time Diego Asencio was being held hostage. The regional security officer in Bogota was supposed to be supporting me. But he was busy. In fact, nothing that I wrote during that period of time was reacted to. They were just too busy trying to deal with this hostage crisis. It was one thing after another. Nothing was ever right.

Now on a different track, at the ambassador's residence, IDF was also redecorating the ambassador's residence. They were ordering furniture, carpet, curtains, and it was all being manufactured in the States and sent down. We were going to be sent detailed instructions on exactly how to place this furniture in the residence. The furniture had started to come in. Time passed, and at the mid-point of the tour I went on R and R (rest and recuperation) for two weeks. When I get back, I find that the DCM has gone and leased himself a new house. I said, "How did you do that?" He says, "In your absence, I was the contracting officer, so I signed a lease." Fine. Except that he was paying considerably more for the house than the house next door, which we had leased. Furthermore, the owner of the house was a fellow he played cards with regularly. Not precisely and arms' length contract.

I was at some function and Mrs. DCM came up to me and said, "John, there's more silver missing. There's two more place settings missing. And serving pieces as well." So I left the function and went up to the DCM's house and found the servant lady who I'd referred to as Maria, and I started questioning her. She was denying having stolen the silver. They came home and found me there, and they were very upset that I was at their house questioning the servants about the silver. I kept persisting with this particular servant, and she became very emotional. She was crying out "[unintelligible] stolen the silver." I was basically telling her I was going to go to the police and have her arrested for stealing the silver. She wouldn't tell me anything about the silver, what was happening to it, except she hadn't stolen it. That poor lady had worked in that house for probably 20 plus years. There had never been a theft before. That same silver had been in that house for years, and she was crying out very loudly. It was just a horrible, abusive thing that I was doing. The DCM comes down and says, "I found the silver. All the silver that was missing, at least the last two place settings and serving pieces. I found them." "Well where were they?" "They were in the locked closet." "So the servant stole the silver and hid it in your locked closet?" The servant said, "I don't have a key to the locked closet. I can't get in there, I've never seen inside the closet. They have the only key." She got away with service for four, but she didn't get the serving pieces or service for six. I am convinced that Mrs. DCM was stealing the silver.

Q: The DCM's wife was.

HELM: The lease was crooked. Everything about this gentleman was crooked.

Q: How about inspectors. Did they come snooping around?

HELM: No, the inspectors never came.

Q: Who was ambassador?

HELM: Ray Gonzalez was the ambassador. I wasn't going to him with all this petty stuff, and he wasn't going to... Finally, my tour is ending and I just can't wait to get out of that place. This guy was driving me nuts, him and his wife. I've always felt that one of the reasons my career didn't go higher than it did was the horrible efficiency report that he wrote. I never really challenged it. I never grieved it. I probably should have, but I just wanted to leave it behind and get out of there.

There was one more incident with the DCM and Mrs. DCM just as I was leaving post.

New furniture has been ordered for the Ambassador's Residence and the last few items arrived my last week at post. It had been agreed that we would hold the Ambassador's new furniture at the warehouse until all of it arrived and it could be installed at one time. My replacement had arrived and I had a few days of overlap with him. I had moved out of the GSO office and was sitting at an extra desk in the FSN office.

My last day at post I walks Mrs. DCM to him and said, "Take me immediately to the warehouse. I want to see what's there." I couldn't say a thing. I just sat silent as this fellow was forced to go in the DCM's car and escort her to visit the warehouse.

She went in and discovered that I'd been holding out on her, that there was all sorts of beautiful furniture, that she claimed for herself and demanded it delivered that day to her residence. She had it all hauled out to her house and put in her living room.

About a month later a friend from the post was through Washington and I had lunch with him. He said, "You'll never guess what happened. All the furniture for the ambassador's redecoration was hauled to the DCM's house and set into the living room. A couple of weeks later after you'd left, Mrs. Ambassador called and said 'I'm ready to put in the furniture now' and the warehouse guys didn't really know what to say. So they put her off and said they would be looking for it but couldn't bring it right that minute. Mrs. Ambassador spoke native Spanish and called directly to the FSNs. They didn't want to say what they had done with the furniture. She was becoming somewhat upset that it didn't seem to be anywhere. She went to a reception at the DCM's house that evening, and Mrs. DCM said 'Look at this beautiful furniture that that SOB Helm wouldn't let me have, was holding out on me, and I went to the warehouse and I took it.'"

Of course, it was immediately moved to the Ambassador's residence.

Q: Did you follow the career of the DCM later on?

HELM: Yes I did. I don't want to be too biographic; I believe the gentleman is still alive. He never made ambassador, but he did get a prestigious job as the official representative to the world's fair or the Olympics, something of that nature. I ran into him once. I got on the metro at Pentagon and he got also got on. He looked back. The car wasn't crowded, it wasn't rush hour. I

looked at him, he looked at me, and he got off at the next stop. I assume he had business at the next stop, but I'd like to think he looked at me and was wondering if I was going to come up and stab him. (Laughter) So much for that story.

EDWARD H. WILKINSON
Consular Officer
Guayaquil (1979-1981)

Edward Wilkinson was born on June 5, 1936 in Indiana. He received his B.A. from Purdue University in 1961 and served in the U.S. Army from 1957 to 1959. Throughout his career Mr. Wilkinson has served in countries such as Argentina, Ecuador, the Philippines, and Mexico. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on April 5, 2002.

Q: In '78, you were there?

WILKINSON: In 1978, to my surprise, I got a communication from my former boss, my first consul general in Buenos Aires, Robert Bishton. Bob Bishton was looking for somebody to run the consular section in Guayaquil, Ecuador, where he was then consul general.

Q: I replaced Bob in Saigon.

WILKINSON: Well, he sent a message to me about the job, and I leaped at the opportunity to work for him again. My wife made a very clever observation, I thought, at the time. She said, "Well, we've always heard many uncomplimentary things about Guayaquil, but Jane Bishton would never be there if it were that bad. So, therefore, we know it is not bad."

Q: It was usually considered a fever post back in the old days, before they got good anti-malaria medicine. And Thomas Nast, the famous cartoonist, was consul general there.

WILKINSON: Exactly. In fact, he was buried there for a time. Later his remains were taken back to New York.

Regarding Guayaquil, well it is not Paris or Rome, of course, but it's a satisfactory town, and certainly fever was not an issue when we were there. In fact, I don't think there was any sort of an issue there. We had a good time. We had a lot of Ecuadorian friends.

In fact, it was a real sleeper post. When we got there, we were getting 20% hardship differential at a time that Havana was getting 15%! The reason, in my opinion, is that no one ever visited there, probably because of its reputation. During my two and a half years in Guayaquil, we had only one congressman visit, and that was only for an afternoon. Nobody else from the Congress and rarely anyone from the Department found it convenient to visit Guayaquil, at least during my tour. One exception: we were inspected around 1980. I was acting principal officer at the time while we were between consuls general.

Q: You were there from '78 until when?

WILKINSON: January of '79 to July of '81.

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

WILKINSON: Soon after I arrived in Ecuador, there was what I would call a fairly free and fair election. The man who became president, Jaime Roldós, was a young lawyer who was, I think, a man who wanted the very best for his country. Unfortunately, he and his wife were killed a couple years later in an airplane crash. Mrs. Roldós, by the way, was the sister of a more recent president who was not quite so successful, Abdullah Bucarram. The Bucarrams were, in general, a decent political family who happened to be of Lebanese origin.

In any case, the political situation was, in my opinion okay. When we arrived there another legacy of Latin America, the dictator, was going by the wayside. Although Attorney Roldós won the election, if his opponent had won I think the country would still have been okay.

Q: Was there a solid distinction between the people of Guayaquil and those in Quito?

WILKINSON: Funny that you would mention that. Yes, the answer is yes, absolutely.

The reason I suggest the observation is funny is that I certainly would not have thought to ask that, but it is absolutely true.

Q: Well, you have lowlanders, uplanders, flatlanders...

WILKINSON: Yes, and I think in Ecuador it is fair to say the people of the north are rather different from the people of the South. For example, when the northerners think of going abroad, they generally think of going to Spain. People in the south, however, where Guayaquil is located, tend to think of going to the U.S. when they think of going "abroad." Another thing: in the north the second person singular in Spanish is *tu*. In the south the word of choice is *vos*. Two different words for the same concept... pretty unusual, I would say, for a relatively small country.

Q: The Italians have that.

WILKINSON: Oh, do they really? Okay.

I can remember having been there only a week or maybe two weeks. I was walking down the hall upstairs, not in the consular section. I passed by our telephone operator who said, "Mr. Wilkinson, I wonder if you could talk to this man on the phone." Well, that's kind of odd for the telephone operator to get up from his work place and effectively waylay me out in the hall. The telephone operator said, "It is the Minister of Defense on the phone." I said, "My goodness, are you sure that this is the Minister of Defense, himself, calling to the consulate?" The operator stood a second thinking about it and he said, "Well, he speaks like a *Serrano*, a person from the mountainous north. He speaks like somebody from Quito." To him, that was good enough; this

was clearly somebody from the north who was on the phone.

Q: What was consular work like there?

WILKINSON: Quito is a relatively small town, even though it's the seat of the government. Our officers there dealt with a relatively small amount of consular work. The bulk of the consular work was, statistically, in Guayaquil.

To the extent that there were Americans living in Ecuador, the majority lived in or near Guayaquil, or down on the coast. So American Services was a much bigger operation in every way, than it was in Quito. And we had immigrant visas, non-immigrant visas as well as American Services in Guayaquil. I might add that Guayaquil is where business tends to be in Ecuador; the banking industry is in Guayaquil. Another big issue there is fishing; obviously it's along the coast.

I believe there were two consular officers assigned to Quito, at the time, and we were six or seven in Guayaquil.

Q: Were there any major consular problems there?

WILKINSON: No, not really. However, one weekend an American died up in the town of Cuenca, north and east of Guayaquil. The truck bringing his remains in the casket that Friday afternoon was delayed, so the body missed the plane on which it was scheduled to depart. So the casket spent the weekend on my desk because there were no other planes leaving until Monday and no one could figure out where to keep the body for the weekend. That wasn't really a difficult situation, of course, but it was the best example I could come up with as a "problem."

Q: What was the status of the tuna wars when you were there?

WILKINSON: There were indeed tuna wars, but those issues were handled out of the embassy.

Q: Where was immigration from in Guayaquil? To where were they headed? Do you know?

WILKINSON: No, I don't have a good answer to that. I'm not aware that there are a large number of people of Ecuadorian origin who live in, let us say Miami. Miami always was one of the important places for travel when people in Latin America went to the U.S., but in terms of numbers, again, I don't have an answer to that.

Q: How about the students?

WILKINSON: No, there were not a lot of student applicants.

Q: What was city life like in Guayaquil?

WILKINSON: There was not much was going on there, I have to say. There were a couple of Chinese restaurants that I remember and one or two Italian restaurants, but nothing to report that

was particularly interesting.

Perhaps the most noteworthy thing I found was an American citizen who was a barber in a local hotel. He had lost one of his arms in Korea. I have to say I think a one-armed barber is news. He was a very nice, very personable gentleman. He had immigrated to the States in 1950 and was promptly taken into the U.S. military and sent to Korea where he lost his arm.

Q: Was there any tourism going out to the Galapagos?

WILKINSON: Yes, that, of course, was a big deal. There was an American man resident in Guayaquil who had a good-sized schooner on which you could visit the Galapagos. From Guayaquil, you could spend about six days on this tour. This included, I think, three days or four days in the Galapagos, so you had nice accommodations and a good cook. Travelers were able to experience, to a degree, something like what Charles Darwin and others might have experienced in their travel to the islands. The Galapagos was an important tourist attraction for people, and Ecuador certainly took full advantage.

Q: Were there any earthquakes or disasters or anything like that while you were there?

WILKINSON: There were at least two earthquakes that I remember, although I don't think they caused much damage. One happened during a normal workday. I was having a meeting in my deputy's office when the building began to shake. I really don't remember what happened next, but in an instant all four of us were trying to stand in the doorway to his office. We all began to laugh even before the shaking stopped.

Q: Did the Peruvian-Ecuadorian border dispute pop up while you were there?

WILKINSON: Yes, it did, although I was out of the country at the time, so I personally missed it all. I came up to the States in 1980 to attend the advanced consular course. During this three-week period, the border war, if that's the right phrase, took place. There were some rumors during this period to the effect that the Peruvians were going to bomb Guayaquil. Nothing happened really, but there was a good scare, and of course I was very concerned because my wife and two children were there. It got everybody excited, not the least of whom was I, but in the end there was no real problem.

Q: Well then, in '81 you're off again?

WILKINSON: I finally got caught and had to go to the States.

WADE MATTHEWS
Consul General
Guayaquil (1980-1982)

Wade Matthews was born in North Carolina in 1933. He attended the University

of North Carolina and served in the US Army from 1955 to 1956. Upon entering the Foreign Service in 1957, he served in countries including Germany, Brazil, Mozambique, Trinidad, Tobago, Peru, Guyana, Ecuador, and Chile. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on September 19, 1991.

MATTHEWS: I got a telephone call from Ray Gonzales who was Ambassador to Ecuador, who had been my boss in Peru saying, "Wade, we have got consul general at Guayaquil coming open. Would you be interested in putting your name on the line for it. If so, I would certainly support you for it." I said, "That is interesting, Ray. I have never had my own post." It was the largest city in Ecuador. It operated to a certain extent independent from the embassy insofar as a major consulate general does. It was the center of the political life in Ecuador where the then president of Ecuador, Rodos, came from. It was the headquarters of the navy of Ecuador. For some purely personal having nothing to do with work reasons; I've always been a zoologist at heart. I think I mentioned I have a bachelors in it, and the Galapagos islands were in my consulate. I could get out there on official business if nothing else while I was there. After thinking about it for a day or so, I called Ray back and said, "Yes I'd be delighted to go to Guayaquil." I put in my application and the assignment went through and I got there I suppose it was July. It was right before the national day. They wanted me to host the national day reception. I don't remember. It was around the national day reception in 1980.

Q: You were there from '80 to?

MATTHEWS: '80-'82. Two years almost to the day. Maybe a few days more or less.

Q: Guayaquil and Ecuador in 1980, what was the situation there from your perspective?

MATTHEWS: A thoroughly democratic regime. The person who would have been elected president of Ecuador was essentially kept out by the military. The man was Assad Bucharan who was of Lebanese origin. The military claimed perhaps truly that he had not been born in Ecuador. He had been born in Lebanon. His parents had brought him there as a young child. Assad Bucharan produced various documents showing that he had been born in Ecuador, and his parents had immigrated before he was born. There were other documents indicating the reverse. It was unclear. Forged documents are easy to come by on either side. Obviously one side or the other forged the documents, probably both of them. Maybe there were no documents about whether he had been born in Ecuador or outside. This happened before I got there. Assad Bucharan said, "Well, if they won't let me be president of Ecuador, I will be effective president of Ecuador through one of my deputies." He picked the deputy that he thought was most reliable because he was married to Assad's daughter.

Assad Bucharan was the President, the CFT I think was the name of the party. I can't recall what the initials stand for now. Anyway he said if the military won't let me be president of Ecuador, I believe he had actually been elected president at one time and they kept him from taking office, but now it was unfashionable for the military to move in and depose a president who has been elected, so they said no he was born outside of Ecuador so he can't be. So, he put up a man named Rodos who had started out as his gopher, his deputy who had fallen in love with or arranged or what have you to marry Assad's daughter. So here his son in law Rodos was

nominated by the CFT party that Assad controlled pretty tightly as the nominee of the principal populist party of Ecuador. and Rodos was elected. In the election campaign in fact one of the mottoes this was even on some of the posters I think was Rodos to the presidency Bucharan in power. Everybody knew that Rodos would follow Assad's orders. After the election Assad said I want so and so to be Minister of Foreign Affairs and so an so to be Minister of Interior. Rodos said, "Wait a minute I'm President of Ecuador; you aren't. I will decide who will be Minister of Foreign Affairs and this that and the other." There was a firm and serious break between the two. Rodos I don't know whether he was expelled from the party or resigned from the party, but the party was still controlled by Assad Bucharan, but Rodos was the president. Rodos of course forged a coalition with others up in Quito. The Vice president had a different party. Assad Bucharan was in strong opposition to Rodos when I arrived. This was the scene, the setting.

Democracy, strong influence by the military, chronic problems with Peru which had been along ever since before W.W.II when Peru took land that Ecuador claimed. There was an unstable border. There had been incidents with Peru over the past years. The U.S. was one of the guaranteeing powers of the border, the U.S. and the other guarantor powers I think Brazil, Argentina and maybe Chile, all the ABC powers and the United States. If it was four power or just three power I don't remember. We guaranteed it and our interest was in keeping the border area quiet, demarcating the border to the extent we could. I was involved in that, demarcating the border, back in the OAS. That was one of the issues and I got involved in that. It still wasn't solved and there had been at least two minor border wars. There was one while I was there. Okay, that was another issue.

Tuna boat seizures were a big issue while I was there between us and the Ecuadorians. We and Ecuador interpreted the 200 mile limits, the limits for tuna very differently. The United States was moving to the position whereby a 200 mile economic zone may be glued to it by that time, I don't remember, I think we had, which was okay. That was Ecuador's position for a long time. Pacific Tuna were a highly migratory species. Pacific tuna did not fall under the 200 mile economic zone; they were an exception. Ecuador said a 200 mile zone is a 200 mile zone. Why don't you have the Atlantic tuna which have the same migratory patterns though in a different area as the Pacific tuna excluded from the 200 mile zone. You and the United States because Atlantic tuna would be fished by factory ships, if you treated them as you did the Pacific tuna, but your sport fisherman want Atlantic tuna to survive in the 200 mile economic zone, therefore you exclude them as not a highly migratory fish. But, in the Pacific area, you say they are a highly migratory fish. The Ecuadorian argument was completely correct on the personal situation. I got involved in the with the National Marine Fisheries Institute and others from the way they migrated and the way they acted, if one is highly migratory, the other is highly migratory. It was purely the self interest of the United States that was keeping it this way. That was not what I could tell the Ecuadorians, and I didn't. On this one I was a good boy. I didn't go and say, I said well there are differences and so on. Anyway this was a problem.

They seized some of our tuna vessels. This happened occasionally while I was there, and I got involved in one case that maybe I'll mention as an illustration out in the Galapagos of how things went. The U.S. tuna interests, some of the canning companies there were, one of them at least was American owned.

We had U.S. banana plantations. Ecuador is the worlds number one banana exporter. Not producer, Brazil produces far more. Some of those plantations were owned by U.S. corporate or individual owners. Ecuador was a relatively minor exporter of petroleum, but still an exporter. U.S. companies were involved in the exploration for and production of and pipeline of petroleum from Ecuador. That was another interest. And we had the military cooperation too. It was a democratic regime, and we had fairly close cooperation with the Ecuadorian military and the Bolivian military. Part of the reason was we wanted to maintain good relations with both so if another border war flared up, we would then have some influence on both sides.

Q: Let's talk about your relations with the embassy. How did this work out? Did the ambassador remain Gonzales? How did he operate and how did he use you?

MATTHEWS: Ray was the Ambassador the entire time I was there up until toward the end when he left and turned it over to John Ewell who was DCM at the time. Technically I was under the DCM. In fact, I operated pretty well under the ambassador. The DCM wrote my performance report, I don't remember. The ambassador had a strong influence on my performance report.

Q: Isn't it usually the DCM writes it and the ambassador reviews it. That way it is kept in country.

MATTHEWS: I had no problem. I had two Deputy Chiefs of Mission while I was there. I had no problem with either one. They basically let me run my show as I wanted to, under the guidance of the ambassador of course. The ambassador and I had no problems whatsoever. I would go up when I went to Quito, I would usually stay at the ambassador's residence unless he was out of town or doing something else in which case obviously, I was at the DCM's residence. I would go up about once a month for two reasons. One I needed to participate in an occasional staff meeting and confer about various issues which I couldn't confer on over the telephone. Two, to make sure I knew where things were going and how things were going there and so they could get my input on things in Quito. A secondary reason my oldest daughter when I went to Ecuador was going to college in the United States and in my second year in Ecuador she was doing her sophomore year abroad at the University of Salamanca in Spain. I guess she did come down for our Galapagos trip over the Christmas holidays, a private trip to Galapagos, the first time I went there. My other two kids were up at Quito. My middle daughter was doing her final two years in high school in Quito. It was an American language school actually at Guayaquil, actually bilingual but that's all right. They both spoke Spanish too, but we wanted them in an American system school

The best American system school in Ecuador was the Alliance Academy run by the missionary alliance up in Quito, so we enrolled both of them in that school. It was an interesting experience for them. Both of them were agnostics at the time they began. The son was still an agnostic at the time he left, but they lived in the Assembly of God house. I said, "Hey, this is going to be a great experience for you because you probably have had that element of your education neglected, and you are going to get a heavy dose of fundamentalist Protestant religion while you are there." Believe me they did. I think almost the entire day was taken up by church, Sunday school, prayer meetings, vespers, prayer before every meal, Bible discussions. They learned their Bible while they were up there. So anyway that's why I went to Quito.

Q: Picking up some of the issues. In the first place, what was your impression of the government you were dealing with in Guayaquil both the competence, how they felt about America and some of the issues you had to deal with?

MATTHEWS: The government was friendly and cooperative. Ecuador unlike Brazil was not a federal republic. Ecuador has a central government. The governors were appointed by the national government. In the local government the only independent power there was the mayor of Guayaquil. There was also an attendant who was appointed. Quito pretty much controlled him, but Guayaquil's importance was the majority, the largest party in the country was based in Guayaquil, and Guayaquil was a larger city than Quito.

Guayaquil was also the commercial center of the country. Most of the commerce, most of the industry was in the Guayaquil area not the Quito area. There were distinctive elements of the population. Even the language was differently accented. It was Spanish in both places. There were some Quechua speakers up in the mountains but unlike Peru where I would say a majority of the mountain Indians spoke Quechua as their principal language. Quechua was the principal language of a minority but a substantial minority of the Indians up in the mountains. I would say 40% something of that nature. The rest would speak Spanish. Mostly in the cities you heard far more Spanish than Quechua. On the coast you hardly ever heard Quechua. There was some rivalry in the old feeling. The populations were almost equal between my consulate district and the consulate district of Quito, about half the population of the country in each one. The coastal Ecuadorians called those from around Quito whether they were Indian or not derogatorily as Indus. The mountain Indians around Quito called the coastal Indians, the coastal population, "monos," monkeys. You had the monkeys and the Indians and both terms were about equally appropriate at the time. There was a rivalry.

The army tended to be dominated by the Quitanios, the mountain Ecuadorians; the navy tended to be dominated by the coastal Ecuadorians. There was rivalry there and there was rivalry commercially among the banks and every other way. Shortly after I arrived, I went around and made my calls and contacted everybody. In fact the arrival was illustrative about some of the meetings. I arrived one weekend day, and it turned out it was on the day of the annual navy day, and the naval attaché a very highly qualified completely bilingual fellow of Cuban origin was there and had come down for the navy day. He invited me to go with him to the big navy celebration. I got there after the formal ceremonies, but they had a big party that evening at the naval club down there. All the navy brass was there including the admiral who was the head of the navy. I went with him, and it turned out to be an all night affair. I think I had just got off the plane. It literally went on all night long. We were celebrating at the naval place, not getting too inebriated, more pressing the flesh and meeting all those people, and he knew all the people so he introduced me to everybody. We ended up having breakfast at the commander of the navy's house. I remember his wife insisted, "No, you are not going to the table to get the breakfast. We women always do that." Before she got her husband's plate or anybody else's, she filled a plate full of eggs and ham and whatever and brought it back to me. I thought it was a nice gesture by the head of the Ecuadorian navy. Anyway, that is how I got started.

The first week or so I made my calls. Assad Bucharan who I called on said he really needed to

get together with me and talk with me privately about Rodos. I invited him and the then president of the chamber of deputies who is basically one of his deputies. He may have took Rodos' place as principal assistant. We spent the whole lunch at my house just the three of us. I had my servants serve the lunch. My wife hadn't arrived yet. She was getting my oldest daughter established in college and arranging some things back in Washington, so I was there by myself. Assad spent the whole time trying to convince me with support when possible from the president of the chamber that Rodos was a crypto communist. He was really a communist, that he had pulled the wool over Assad's eyes all these years, and the United States should strongly oppose Rodos and get him out of the Presidency of Ecuador as soon as possible. Of course it was all nonsense, all hogwash. Rodos was I would say sort of a middle of the roader. He supported us on some things and opposed us on other things. Clearly opposed us on the tuna policy which is quite understandable. He was a little more nationalistic than we would have desired, but not much so. We certainly got good relations with Rodos, and Rodos with former political counselor of Ecuador whose name is escaping me now, a Foreign Service officer. When Rodos came to Washington during the campaign, he stayed at this guy's house. Good relations, nothing sub rosa, nothing illicit at all, but they were just good personal friends. This fellow I had talked with as part of my briefings in Washington, and he gave me a lot of very favorable information about Rodos and he was an excellent choice for President of Ecuador and so on. I told Assad, "He is the president of Ecuador. We want to work with the president of Ecuador. I hear what you are saying, but you have still got to convince me that he is a crypto communist before I start agreeing." The relations were good. The governor of Guyas province, his wife worked at the Embassy as a secretary.

Guayaquil was in some respects a dangerous place to be in some respects for crime, not for any real well yes later for terrorism but not because of terrorism per se most of the time. A lot of people carried guns. I set the weapons policy so later on I tended to carry one around myself because I didn't want my bodyguards to be with me all the time. They had a home life and I didn't feel there was any great danger. The governor, Guido, had standing instructions. People were supposed to be relieved of their weapons at the desk before they called on him, but I said, "Guido is always not to be relieved of his weapon when he comes by to talk with me." Guido would come up to talk with me. He carried a little shaving kit, a little tiny case. He would take the shaving kit out and put it down on the coffee table in front of us whenever we talked. We had good relations.

Q: What about the tuna war went on between really the west coast shipping interests who had tremendous political clout in the United States and Ecuador. It has finally been resolved. I'm not sure how, but at the time I take it this was at the height of the tuna war or was it? It was going on. Can you talk about cases during your '80-'82 period what we did and your feeling about the pressures that came from political clout the group had in California and Seattle?

MATTHEWS: Tuna, while it didn't take a great deal of my time, it did sometimes develop into a crisis where for a period of some days would take a lot of my time. We had developed a sort of accommodation with the Ecuadorian navy which was essential for keeping any sort of tuna thing down. We tried to develop an accommodation with I can't remember the name of the organization now. The U.S. tuna fleet was based in San Diego, and the U.S. tuna fleet was predominately a long range tuna fleet. They did their fishing in the Southeast Pacific. They didn't

do usually a great deal of fishing in Ecuadorian waters except transient fishing. They would go to the south Pacific where they would catch tuna and set on dolphin. They would spot the dolphin from a helicopter that was based on the tuna boat. The tuna boat would then go and surround the whole school of tuna and dolphin where they would just kill the dolphin. The dolphin would be suffocated. By the time I got there, dolphin preservation measures had been put into place and they had to have boards on the nets and they had to put some people in the water and they would travel with little motor boats inside the nets and hurry the dolphin which tended to stay higher than tuna out of the nets and then bring the boards off and haul in the nets and get this huge amount of tuna. It was an expensive sort of operation but they caught one hell of a lot of tuna. Most of the Ecuadorian fleet on the other hand was shore based. The boats tended to be smaller. They generally set on dolphin but not entirely. Sometimes they would just set on tuna and try to pick them up in their fish finders. Sometimes they would set on dolphin. Much of their catch was bought by an American owned cannery in Ecuador and exported to the United States and other places. There were several Ecuadorian canneries plus of course a certain frozen fresh tuna market as well. Some was flown to Japan. Tuna was a big thing in Ecuador from the national pride and economic reasons as well. We had sort of worked out an accommodation with the Ecuadorian navy. They would not vigorously look for U.S. tuna boats. The U.S. tuna fleet would also generally not deliberately go to Ecuadorian waters, but hey they are going through Ecuadorian waters anyway to get from the Panamanian area and other areas to the South Pacific. You are not going to prevent them from dipping their nets in the water and fishing for tuna sending the helicopter up and if they spot some. They didn't stay there for a lengthy period of time. It was sort of an accommodation, more accommodating on the Ecuadorian side than on the U.S. tuna association side. Occasionally there would be an incident. Occasionally a U.S. tuna boat would be caught.

One incident that is probably illustrative of what happened though it is a unique incident because of where it took place. A U.S. tuna boat was coming back from fishing southwest of Ecuadorian waters in the Galapagos. The Ecuadorian navy which normally couldn't patrol these seas around the Galapagos just happened to have its flagship and its second largest ship that were going to the Galapagos from the mainland in Ecuador. They just happened to be steaming along and they saw this tuna boat. They thought they saw the tuna boat with its nets in the water at first and then the nets came up or maybe they didn't. That was uncertain. It was well within Ecuadorian water. It really if it had been prudent should have gone another way. It was just traveling. Maybe it had been fishing; maybe it hadn't. It was traveling like this at one point and here come the two Ecuadorian boats.

Q: They already menace is on the radio, they can't see.

MATTHEWS: The tuna boat was going northeast. The Ecuadorian flagship and the other vessel were going northwest. The Ecuadorian navy people saw it and said there is nothing out there is there. In other words they were going to ignore it because it was clearly not fishing at least at this point. The tuna boat, idiots that they were, got on the radio, they were basically Portuguese fisherman. They spoke Spanish or not Spanish to communicate, and said, "Should we heave to?" What could the Ecuadorian navy people say? "Of course, yes, heave to." So they heave to. The Ecuadorian navy people went and inspected them. They found some very fresh tuna which almost certainly came from Ecuadorian waters. They said, "Follow us into the nearest port,"

which was San Cristobal in the Galapagos Islands. They followed them into the nearest port. They communicated with the navy headquarters. Navy headquarters got through to the Ministry of Natural Resources. Marcello Andramo who was the director of fisheries said, "I am hopping the next plane to the Galapagos Islands. We are going to have a trial and fine these bastards," because he was gung ho. He was not for any, I knew Marcello fairly well.

Marcello Andramo was Director of Fisheries. He had gotten his job as director of fisheries because he had been Rodos' chauffeur. He knew where all the bodies were buried, mistresses were hidden, this, that and the other. He was Director of Fisheries. He didn't know a damn thing about fisheries. He suddenly started buying shrimp lands and establishing shrimp farms that sort of thing. I got a call from the Embassy saying, "You have got a problem in your consular district. You had better get out and see what is going on." I made a reservation on a commercial flight. At first they said, "We are trying to fix this up. Your message to Marcello Andramo who hasn't called the office is that Paul Touralura who is the Director of natural resources and a sensible person and who was under orders from the President. Call Touralura before you do anything." I hopped the plane, flew out to the Galapagos. I think you get off on Balzar Island. I had to take a bus and then a ferry over. Oh the Ecuadorian navy was going to cooperate with me in getting me to San Cristobal where the trial was supposed to be scheduled for the next day or maybe two days later. So, I got to Balzar, took a bus, hopped a ferry, took another bus down to Santa Cruz which is the principal city on the main island if you will although not the most populous island. San Cristobal was still 150 miles away. I went by the navy installation expecting they would have a boat for me; they said they would. I found the lieutenant in charge of it taking a swim. I think they had two enlisted men and one officer there. He said, "I never heard anything about any navy boat that is supposed to give you any sort of assistance." Nobody in the navy knew anything about it out there. The flagship and the other boat were still there. So, we got on the radio and he and I were both talking with them there to the head of the Ecuadorian navy flagship. They were at a dinner with the governor. Andramo wasn't around either. They didn't know where he was. He was dead drunk somewhere on San Christabel. Nobody knew anything. Somewhere a voice cropped in and said look if the Ecuadorian navy will let us in this slightly accented Spanish, obviously a native Portuguese and English speaker, for me of course the speaker was the captain of the tuna boat. Because the trial was supposed to start the day after and there was no way I could get commercially to the island on time. "We'd be glad to send our helicopter out and pick up the Consul General if the Ecuadorian navy will let us. We will leave a hostage behind if they want to, to guarantee we are not going to flee." The helicopter couldn't reach the island; they would have to go halfway to let the helicopter get on. The flagship of the Ecuadorian navy steamed out with the tuna boat in custody, and steamed halfway over. Early the following morning a helicopter took off from the tuna boat to the island where I was. This is the fifth helicopter that had landed on the island in the previous seven years, so there was a big to do. I was a little uncertain where they were going to land, but the Ecuadorian navy man said there weren't too many wires around the football field so that was the best place for them to land. At the crack of dawn I was up there. The helicopter I heard coming in. The crowd was all on the field. The Ecuadorian navy man and I were doing our best to shoo them to the sidelines to give them enough room to land. The helicopter landed. I ran out and said hurry. The people started coming out and whom up into the blue went the helicopter. Then we went out to try to find the boat. It was a little difficult to find the boat. We were in a tiny little helicopter, bubble on the front. I'll tell you the boat was the smallest I have ever seen. We were trying to get altitude and it

was a little bit foggy, and we couldn't find them and I was wondering if we were ever going to make it. My Foreign Service career would end right there. We finally found it, this tiny little speck down below and landed on it, a platform less than the size of this room, about this big. The captain welcomed me aboard. He said, "I'm going to give you my quarters and bunk in with the crew." He had a spacious cabin at least the size of this room.

Q: We are in a room about 25' by 15'.

MATTHEWS: He had a big king sized bed, color television and videotapes, half pornographic movies, which I resisted watching because I had to study up on my briefs as we steamed back into port. We got there in time for the hearing. I did my best to get in touch with Andramo who was still not available. He was drunk or had a hangover. We got to Andramo before the hearing began. I said, "Look, we've got to talk." I said, "Touralour who was his boss wants you to call her before the hearing begins." I said, "There has been considerable government interest in this and I know they have instructions for you." His instructions were not to make an issue of this. If you do find them guilty, do a nominal fine or perhaps find them innocent, this, that and the other. Well, the hearing was held. He refused to call home. The tuna people can patch you through San Diego and you can talk on a telephone because they have that capacity. I'm positive the navy can do it for you too with one of their ship, and they could. So he found them guilty and he fined them two million dollars. So, my mission was a failure. I took a commercial transport back. I forget how I got to, anyway they flew an attaché plane down. On the appeal, this fine was reduced to something like \$750. Everything ended well, but in the meantime, the tuna boat was escorted back under custody to Ecuador. The cargo was taken off which was worth \$100,000 or so, a substantial amount of money. That was the real fine. The crisis was averted with this minor fine which the tuna association after they knew the circumstances, that they hove to voluntarily and asked if they should heave to, that this was pretty idiotic. It turned out the captain told me that this was an inadvertent query that went out from an unauthorized source.

Q: There was a modus vivendi on this. Did you get involved at all in the banana business or did that take care of itself?

MATTHEWS: It pretty well took care of itself. We were very involved in the drug business, that is the interdiction business. One illustration of how bad it was going from Peru to Ecuador, you see coca was not really grown in Ecuador. Ecuador was a transit country between Peru and Bolivia where it was grown, there was a little bit grown but it was negligible, and Colombia. The Colombian Mafia was deeply involved in this. Talking about bananas, there was one banana plantation that I visited that is illustrative of the problems. The American said, "Oh here is our airport." He joked and said "I could really make some money off of this if I wanted to." I said, "How's that?" He said, "We use it only sporadically when we have a flight. Normally nobody is there. It is just a strip. A person called on me and said look, are you going to be using your airstrip tomorrow night or whatever." "No, why?" He said, "We'd like to rent the airstrip from you for the night. There is a plane coming in about dusk. It will be gone by dawn. There is \$10,000 in it for you if you will let us rent it for the night." He said, "No, I'm sorry." He obviously knew what they wanted it for. "You might have to make sure that some other people aren't there and give them a little money. We'll give you \$10,000 plus \$10,000 more for expenses." He turned it down, but that is illustrative of the problem. We had three DEA agents

assigned to my consulate at Guayaquil. They operated very closely with the Ecuadorian counter narcotics service. As always when you have such a situation, some people are corruptible, and with the source of money we are talking about it was very difficult for them not to be. Our people were not. I'm absolutely convinced they were straight shooters. Some of the people they dealt with were straight shooters; some weren't. They would generally participate in busts. They were always instructed to stay on the outskirts. The bureau was not to get involved in the actual stopping and searching and interdiction of drugs. They were authorized to carry weapons essentially routinely. Everybody in Ecuador carried a weapon practically. We never had any real problems with that.

We also had another agency represented. We had a USIA officer assigned. We had a department of commerce officer assigned because it was the commercial center of the place. We had a large consular operation which was subject to all sorts of fraud pressures for visas. I don't remember how many officers we had. It seems we had about five officers in our consular section, and my deputy was the head of our consular section. While I was there the commercial officer and I set up an American chamber of, help set it up. We didn't set it up; there was a local businessman who was a fine person setting it up, and we cooperated in setting up an American Chamber of Commerce in Guayaquil which was very successful and got underway quite well.

The consular operations were a frequen; well, I got involved only peripherally. The first year I was there I had an excellent consular officer. All I had to say was right on, do more of it. The second year I had an excellent consular officer when he was sober. Unfortunately he would go on an occasional binge and get to be withdrawn. I forget his name, but when he was sober, he was excellent. We had an American citizenship officer who was a black woman who was very good at what she did. We had eight or so American prisoners there, most of them on drug charges, two of whom strongly preferred to serve out their term in Ecuador rather than go back to the United States. Understandable because they had bought the concession for the restaurant and snack bar at the prison. A woman and her current husband and her former husband, they were all in there on drug charges, middle aged people. They were doing very well because of the money they were making on the restaurant. The relatives of the prisoners, the prostitutes, the wives and so on, could come in and have little hours of intimacy in the prison. The woman and her current husband who had the contract for the prison had a room with a key that they could lock right there in the prison. They had a color television set and a color VCR, all the accouterments of home, living better than they ever lived in the United States. They didn't have their liberty. They had a staff that ran the restaurant. Any prisoner with money could go through and get served. They also had a bar if you wanted. If you had money coming in from the outside, you could eat fairly well and live fairly well. So, they didn't complain. The way they kept order in the place, two things were outlawed. Homosexual conduct in the prison (After all, they did allow women to come in and moments of intimacy) and violence were completely outlawed. If you engaged in either of those two activities, you were thrown in the hole with the other homosexuals and violent people, and people did not like to be thrown in the hole. It was sort of a dungeon. You were thrown in there with a pair of pants and you came out usually with sore body openings. That was not a pleasant experience, so people tried to stay out of the hole. As a result, there was very little violence in the prison.

Q: Was there any problem at this point with the cold war still going on, particularly Cuba and

all? Were you keeping your eye out for communist influence other than the president of the state?

MATTHEWS: Yes and no. The Embassy was looking at that more than I was. There wasn't much in Ecuador. There were some local communists that ran around, but it wasn't a big problem in Ecuador. The U.S. government wasn't very concerned about it.

Q: Did you find yourself still sort of holding on the advent of Ronald Reagan as President. It was a kind of shock to a lot of people who had seen him in the movies and all and his reputation of being an extreme right-winger and all. Did you have a problem explaining Ronald Reagan during the time you were in Guayaquil?

MATTHEWS: Not particularly. I did explain him if you will in meetings with a number of people. At the time I was dean of the consular corps also which meant I explained him to a lot of honorary consuls who were prominent businessmen, this, that and the other. I had no problem doing that. A lot of them were delighted that Ronald Reagan had been elected. The people in Guayaquil particularly those who were concerned with politics were basically on the right, and they felt that Carter was a nincompoop and he didn't know what was going on and so forth and they were 100% in favor of Ronald Reagan.

Amusing story. I was down in the jungles of Eastern Ecuador on election day when Ronald Reagan was elected. I flew back that afternoon first from the jungle to Quito and then from Quito down to Guayaquil. While I was in the jungle, I had been to a little Indian settlement. As a diplomat I decided I would do as they did, and they passed around their big brass bowl of Chicha. Chicha, incidentally, depending on where you are, is a different drink. It is a fermented grape drink in the Andes. Down in the jungle it is a fermented cassava drink. The cassava is taken by the Indians and beaten. Before it has the poison beaten out of it, the women sit around and chew it and then they spit it out into the pot. The liquid from this is fermented by the saliva and so on. I have a cast iron stomach. I'm never sick. They passed the bowl around and even my guide feigned drinking. Some other people did. A couple of people took a drink and of course the Indians were drinking. I never tasted it, so I took a nice drink. By the time we got back to Ecuador with the traditional election eve thing at the binational center with all the televisions and the people who were nominated and the president of the chamber of Deputies... Not the same one, a different President of the Chamber. It was over so early nobody came. All the big wigs knew how it was. We had a big election celebration and had very few people. The only people to come that the press people could find to interview of note were the president of the chamber who was from Guayaquil and myself. So anyway, I was put on first. The President of the Chamber and I were there. He was watching me. Pancho, the President and I were pretty good friends. He was also the CFP for the party. He was sort of sitting there making faces at me as I was being interviewed, answering questions like what does Ronald Reagan's election mean this, that and the other. I thought I was doing a fairly decent job of explaining it. He was shaking his head saying you're crazy just to throw me off stride, deliberately. I was looking forward to being able to do the same thing for him when he started being interviewed by the television station. Then suddenly my stomach started going round and round, and I had an uncontrollable urge to go to the bathroom. I stopped the television interview. Right as soon as I finished I got up and quickly ran and everything happened. I got back just as Pancho's interview was finishing. Pancho

approached me and I was saying god if only I could have been there to get him back like he got me, not loudly but gestures. "Wade, I never knew you were that much of a fan of Jimmy Carter. You looked like you lost your best friend when Ronald Reagan was elected. When you were up there being interviewed by the television, you really looked bad."

Q: Did you get involved in the Galapagos Islands other than visiting it? Is this a tourist area? I would imagine cruise ships would come in. Did this cause problems or anything?

MATTHEWS: The Ecuadorians would not allow cruise ships to come in. They had three ships that were passenger ships, relatively small, the Santa Cruz, the Bucanero and I forget the name of the third, that had a license to take tourists to the Galapagos. Otherwise it was just local folks that had a maximum capacity of 25 people. Each one had to be accompanied by a licensed naturalist, usually Ecuadorian, to go with them to make sure that they cleaned up their trash and that they didn't bother the animals too much. The naturalists were pretty good. They knew their stuff. I went out on the Bucanero, a private trip, which was one of the three ships, the middle sized one. Owned incidentally 50% of them by an American who lived in Ecuador and who later became a character actor in Hollywood for old sea captains. He played the part beautifully. We were concerned, particularly myself, concerned about wildlife and natural preservation of the environment and so on. I cooperated with a number of U.S. operations, gave them whatever facultative assistance and contacts I could. I actively supported the Charles Darwin Foundation based in the U.S. and on the Galapagos Islands. There is a research center there. I tried to lobby to the extent I could with the government of Ecuador for the protection of wildlife. The problem was local fishermen and population increase on the Galapagos. That was where the problem came from. It has been a mixed story since then. Basically the unique wildlife has been preserved, but there are pollution problems and population problems and other problems. The Galapagos didn't take up much of my time.

Q: Is there anything else we should cover before we end this particular...

MATTHEWS: Let me mention a couple of things. We had a binational center there. We had a limited amount of what you might call terrorism while we were there. That was a problem. I was dean of the consulate corps one year while I was there. Most of my second year. Deanship, that is an interesting and maybe unique institution. Not completely unique, but usually a consular corps is at large posts excludes the honorary consuls. In Guayaquil at one point it had there were seven or eight missions represented by career diplomats in Guayaquil. There were about 32 or 33 honorary consuls in Guayaquil. They decided several years before I got there that they would combine the two consular corps, and it was working pretty well. The problem with combining the consular corps is that you can no longer have seniority. They decided that each year it would alternate. One year it would be a career, the next an honorary. It would be done by election with everybody voting for the person whether the person was career or honorary. What it meant was the honorary consuls had the majority say in who the dean would be even when it was the career consul's turn. I wasn't sure that all the correct consuls agreed with this, but so what. So a delegation came to me after I had been there a few months and said would I be willing to take it even though I had only been there six months the next year. I, of course, said, "Let me think about it," and I went to my secretary, who was the best secretary I have ever had in the Foreign Service overseas. Patricia Gaskell was her name. She had been brought up in Ecuador, born an

American citizen. She was completely bilingual and could take dictation in either language and transcribe in either language and what have you. She was a humdinger of a secretary. She said quite like I expected her to, "Let me talk with the current consular corps secretary." They had a full time secretary hired by the honorary consul who was the owner of the principal department store who had inherited the consulship from her husband. Her husband had originally gotten it because one time he had helped a Haitian student who was from a good family but had gotten into trouble in Ecuador. So she was a lifetime honorary consul of Haiti. She talked with this other secretary and came back and said, "Yes, I think I can do consular corps work. It was about half an hour a day." It was not full time, and she said she'd be happy to do that. "Fine I'll accept." The year I got into that, talking about terrorism, because the Haitian consul, I believe after I was there, her residence had been attacked by a group of bandits really, who had shot her guard. She had an indoor guard and an outdoor guard. They had shot her guard and were storming her house. The indoor guard had locked the entrances, storming the house with submachine guns. She lived in a good area of town; there were neighbors all around. It was not an estate here and an estate there. It was a street with the houses fronting the street. She had an old mansion in the old style. The various neighbors threw open their windows and started firing at the guerrillas. The terrorists just jumped in their car and ran away. They were obviously trying to kidnap her or something and hold her for ransom. So that happened. I had three policemen who were assigned to me as full time plain clothes bodyguards. I had a partially armored car which later became a fully armored car toward the end of my tour there. I had a partially armored follow car. My driver was a hired chauffeur. I had one policeman sit in there. I think he was armed with an Uzi in the front seat of my car.

Q: Uzi is a small machine gun.

MATTHEWS: Then behind me the driver of my follow car was just armed with a pistol who was a police sergeant. All plain clothes. We supplied them with plain clothes once a year and gave them lunch money. That was basically all we had to do for them. They were happy to serve because they had their military or police salary as well. Beside him in the follow car was another policeman with a sawed off shotgun. That was my security and they did a very good job. I felt unlike my predecessor and I agree with my predecessor, I was always a risk taker. I felt that nothing much was going to happen so to set the arms policy I issued myself a .45, some sort of pistol that I would carry in a plastic bag with me. At the end of the day unless I was going to some preannounced function, I would dismiss them, and I would drive myself. Just like most other officers, they carry a pistol in some form. So, there was a little bit of terrorism. After I left, a man named Nahim Zahias was elected to the dean of the consular corps. He was a wealthy banker, one of the wealthiest people in Ecuador. He was the head of a bank and was on the board of another bank, of Lebanese origin. He contributed to all of the political parties. He was not a politician. He wanted to make sure that whoever was elected, he would have some influence. He lived in a building that he owned downtown. The top two floors were his suite. He was unmarried. He lived with his mother and sister up there. A month or so after I left the country, the same type of bandits attacked his building. They shot the guard downstairs; they were coming up the elevator. He ran down the stairs, and the elevator had of course a locked entrance, but he was not sure that would hold. He ran downstairs, raced to the airport, arranged for a charter, and took the next plane to Miami. After a month or so he came back. Then he was in judiciously driving to a reception with only one armed bodyguard in the car, and some

Colombian guerrillas intercepted his car. This was in Guayaquil. They shot his guard. They may have killed his guard; I'm not sure, with him in his car. They took him hostage. A mutual acquaintance who lived down the street from him named Leon Cordero was President of Ecuador at the time. Leon was a real tough nut. I enjoyed talking with Leon although we didn't always agree on things. I would frequently fly to Quito with him on some of our trips. We would run into each other frequently up there. Anyway he was President at this time. They located where the eleven kidnappers were holding Nahim. He said he was not going to give in to guerrillas. He liked the U.S. policy of not paying ransom and that sort of thing. He told the police to go in and if possible save Nahim but make sure that the guerrillas surrendered or that none of them got out of there alive. Nine of them were killed. Unfortunately Nahim was also killed. He was as I say my successor to dean of the consular corps so it was a little bit of a problem. Also about once a week, the students would come by on their way from the university to downtown to demonstrate at the mayor's office or the governor's office. They were always armed with rocks and about once a month they were armed with Molotov cocktails. No matter what they had, just for good times sake they would throw a few rocks at our consulate which was right on the street. If they had Molotov cocktails, they would throw a few of them. We would always have the visa line break off and tell them to go away. One time the visa line refused to break off; they didn't want to give up their place in the line. We would close the gates to the consulate and three or four people still standing out there and the Molotov cocktail burned a few. We had security screens on our windows on the first floor and the following floor. Heavy steel stuff line that. The bottles of the Molotov cocktails would boom just blow off and the rocks would stop. I asked for authority to screen the third floor. They said that was not needed because the rocks and so on would not reach as high as the third floor. We had inspectors there when they came by. Unfortunately this was not one of the times they were throwing Molotov cocktails; they were just throwing rocks. They broke three windows of the DEA office on the third floor. The inspectors went in and supported our request for screens on the windows. So we got that. So we did have some security problems. In fact when I first got there, backing up, When I was assigned there Ray said they were authorizing assigning Marine security guards because of the security problem. I said, "Please Ray, can you wait until I get there and can evaluate the security problem." I know from Guyana and other places that Marine security guards generally bring you more problems for a small post like that. I got there. I found we had a 14 guard contract force guarding the consulate general. They were not armed. We had Marine guards up at Quito of course. I said, "Look we've got to arm these people, and if we can't arm them, then I want to fire them because they aren't any good to us unarmed. I don't think we are going to need Marines if they are armed." There was some controversy, but Ray as usual was very supportive and he said, "Okay, if you want to do it, fine." So we got the chief local of the security people to come down. We had a DEA agent who had been a DEA weapons instructor before he came there, so he knew weapons backwards and forwards. I got permission from the head of the Army there in Guayaquil to volunteer that they could use his firing range anytime they weren't using it. I had them go out there, and they took training. They got their weapons, never any problem and morale went up about 200%. They didn't shoot each other in the foot or shoot visitors as people were afraid they would. We certainly did not need Marine security guards after that. They gave us good protection. They never tried to shoot the students. They were under instruction when the students came down, we will close, batten down the hatches and let them do their thing. I never felt there was any problem. Occasionally we were on the radio, and occasionally when I was going in from my residence the students would be blockading the street. One of my colleagues in the consular

corps had one of them thrust a pistol to his head and get out of the car and give us some money, otherwise we are going to shoot you. He did. They always avoided it and used back alleys and everything to get there. I never had any problem. I never felt threatened for a non previously announced formal thing I had to keep my guards. As I would say, I would drive myself. I would take along a little weapon and if I feel it was necessary, I would use it.

Q: You left Guayaquil in 1982. Where did you go?

MATTHEWS: Chile and that is an interesting story.

Q: You said there are a couple of more things you wanted to say about Ecuador before we move on.

MATTHEWS: Yes, these are illustrative of certainly the unusual aspects of a consul general at Guayaquil at the time I was there, and also illustrative of the odd things that occur on your tour of duty.

While I was there in Ecuador, President Rodos, the person I mentioned earlier was killed along with his wife in a plane crash. The state funeral they determined would be held at Guayaquil. It is traditional also in Ecuador if a person from Guayaquil dies while in office, I think that only happened once or twice, the state funeral was held there. I researched the records and found that two people made a funeral oration from the tomb when there was a state funeral in Guayaquil. The President of the Chamber of Deputies, this is when a President dies, and oddly enough the dean of the consular corps. I happened to be dean of the consular corps at the time. There were a variety, several heads of state came to the funeral. We did not send anyone from outside the country and our Ambassador, Ray Gonzales came down to represent the United States.

The Ecuadorian man in the street felt that was the case with a number of Latin American countries, some chief of state would come to the funeral. so as Ray and I drove down the street, he in a place of honor of course, and me in a subsidiary position in the back seat of I believe it was my limousine. The flag was flying from the stations of course; there were people lining the streets, hundreds and probably thousands of people saying as the sight of the car with the flag flying, "Reagan, Reagan." I suppose they would be disappointed if they could see in the car. Obviously neither one of us looked like Reagan. We attended the funeral and then Ray went on to my home along with a couple of other people and my wife while I retired to the cemetery. The cemetery in Guayaquil is one of the few tourist attractions. The city at the time was maybe about one and a quarter million people maybe pushing one and a half million, the largest city in Ecuador. The cemetery has skyscraper tombs. The ground is near the water level there. The tombs by and large were not in the ground, but in buildings of like about eight stories but not stories like we have because you are obviously talking about casket stories, the equivalent of about a four or five story building. On one of the upper stories was where Rodos was going to be buried along with his wife, the daughter of Assad Bucharan. The president of the Chamber, the same one that introduced me at the election eve party that I mentioned was there and he and I were both prepared to make our talks. I prepared an appropriate funeral oration, reasonably brief. I didn't want to exceed eight minutes or so in collaboration with my very well qualified secretary and had the deputy Dean of the consular corps, a very wealthy banker look it over. We all agreed

that it was a fine funeral oration. The cortege finally reached the cemetery and the man who later became President of Ecuador quite recently Abdelar Bucharan. He was the brother of Mrs. Rodos. He was weeping and shouting and throwing himself on the casket which continued up the narrow steps to the top floor of the tomb. There Abdelar Bucharan then mayor of Guayaquil and later President of Ecuador until just recently when he was voted out of office by the Chamber of Deputies and I think now is in exile for malfeasance. He made a real spectacle of himself allegedly attempting to throw himself off the fifth floor and commit suicide, shouting, other people started doing the same thing up there. I looked down toward the ground and the Director of Fisheries, the man I had the problem with out in the Galapagos Islands Marcello Dombrado a former chauffeur was perched up in one of the trees down below the building. He was making motions to Pancho the head of the Chamber of Deputies saying in effect, come down. His motions clearly, you couldn't hear anything over the din of the crowd.

I would guess there were half a million people around the cemetery and an audience of several million people on television. The television cameras had already been pre set some on top of the tomb, some away from the tomb filming everything. He was motioning to come down. When we gave him the high sign he was motioning that the tomb was clearly going to fall down and we'd all be killed in the rubble of this five or eight story tomb. Finally Abdelar was making such a huge ruckus that Pancho and I conferred with the head of the television team there, there was just no possible way we could have anything here and save what modicum of decorum that remained which was very little. Just simply end the coverage and say this is all. I have addressed a television audience on several things but never an audience of several million people. So, that was a frustrating experience. The second little anecdote that I thought it might be interesting to relate. Given an illustration of this the relatively free wheeling of Ecuador and particularly Guayaquil because they were almost two separate countries as far as the mores went.

An overwhelmingly Catholic country, the Archbishop of Guayaquil who is now a member of the College of Cardinals at his previous post at Quincha had a tradition of an ecumenical thanksgiving service. This did not correspond to our thanksgiving. It was a different day of the year. His tradition was to have the head of the mainline Protestant churches, in this case it was a Methodist. The head of the Evangelical churches, the Assembly of God or something like that, the head of the Jewish community, a Muslim, and of course another Catholic priest and himself and one non cleric address an assemblage which filled the cathedral and filled the square outside the cathedral as it traditionally did on this one day of the year. The non cleric happened to be the Dean of the Consular Corps and once again I happened to be in that position. Traditionally the non cleric did a prayer. I had known the Archbishop for some time. He came to my farewell reception; we were fairly good friends. He knew that I was not a particularly religious person. I'm not sure he knew any of the details of my religious beliefs, but I told him, "Look, I really don't think I am the proper person to do this despite my hemming and saying I really missed making the other talk." I said, "You know, or maybe you don't now, I am agnostic. I don't think it would be appropriate for me. On the other hand, the Deputy Dean is a good practicing Catholic and I am sure he would be happy to do it." He said, "We can work something in for you. What do you think you could do?" "A prayer would certainly be inappropriate. I would be more than happy to do a biblical reading provided you allowed me to check the text and I won't be saying anything that would be against my principles." He said, "I think I can develop something of that nature." He was a very astute man and the text was a text that I had no problem with. I stood up

before the assembled multitude and the flock outside. It was also on television but not as big an audience as for the funeral arrangements and went ahead with my little reading and the service went quite well.

CHARLES W. GROVER
Consul General
Guayaquil (1982-1984)

Charles Grover was raised in Gloversville, New York. He majored in American History at 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. Mr. Grover was interviewed by Henry Ryan in 1990.

Q: Well, now we're pretty well into the 1980 zone. Was the drug issue-- is that an issue with American relations with Ecuador?

GROVER: Not so much at that time. The neighboring countries, both Peru and Colombia, there was a major problem in both countries. We had a DEA office in Quito, and there was a branch office in the consulate in Guayaquil. But it was not as large a problem, it was really trying to handle transient issues, and also concerns about drug laundering to some extent. But the DEA guys had a good working relationship as far as I could determine with the police. It was not a major issue at that time in Ecuador. Maybe mostly by contrast, it was so bad in Peru, and so bad in Colombia that this was simply not a priority area. Nonetheless, the DEA guys were involved in cases all the time. And some of the provinces of Ecuador that were most distant from both Quito and Guayaquil, were involved. Those that were on the frontier of Colombia, Maldies__ (?) and another that was on the frontier with Peru.

Q: What were the issues that the mission would deal with in particular?

GROVER: Well, actually in Guayaquil the issues were--I suppose they replicated in all of these posts.

They were issues that people never think of, but they're fully consuming for the people who are there.

Nationalization of the last remaining foreign owned private utility, EMILIK, which was owned by a company with headquarters in Miami, Florida. That issue, the contract, was a matter of trying to make sure the American investor was not disadvantaged by virtue of the fact that he was an American investor. And the short version of the story was that he desperately wanted to be ___ [laughter]. But the Ecuadorian government wasn't going to bite on it even though the 60-year contract which the utility operated on, was coming to a close. The American investor wanted to sell out because he didn't see any future, and he realized that as the termination date arose all of his principal people were going to find employment elsewhere. He couldn't afford to renew the equipment investments because he didn't know what would happen at the end of the

60 year period. So it was a case of following that. Then when the Christian Democratic president was replaced by a conservative Social Christian, Leon Febres Cordero, he had worked for EMILIK one time, and he believed in private investment so there was no possibility. He said from the very beginning that he would nationalize it. I think the 60 years was reached during Leon Febres Cordero's administration and they have given since that time short extensions. But I'm clearly not up to date on the EMILIK situation.

Q: In other words the government was determined finally to nationalize it, or not to nationalize?

GROVER: The government wasn't quite sure in its own mind. Mind you, the government that I had was the Christian Democratic government that followed Oswaldo Hurtado was the president. He was a Christian Democrat. He had been the vice presidential candidate to Jaime Roldes who was sort of a populist from the coast. Hurtado had undertaken to send a commission to study the nationalization of EMILIK. And EMILIK offered itself to be studied, and wanted to be taken over. This simply never reached decision, in part because I think a lot of people on the coast thought that EMILIK did a pretty fair job. The other part was, where are you going to get the money? I don't think EMILIK wanted to accept Ecuadorian government bonds that could be redeemed at discount some point in the future. So the investor from Miami, who went home every weekend, but flew down in his private plane to run the company during the week, I guess he's still left with the firm. I don't know, but it's something that took a great deal of time but like most Foreign Service problems, things were adjusted but not solved. A Foreign Service issue is adjusted, not solved.

The other issues dealt with maritime shipping issues, for example, the oldest issues in the Foreign Service. In this case, reciprocity on using Ecuadorian and US bottoms. The issues are so arcane, and so inconsequential, except if you happen to be in Guayaquil at the moment, that they're not worth pursuing but there are a lot of people who are engaged in these, including the American shipping company, and the local Ecuadorian maritime authority. That took a great deal of working with them. Then the consular work was a major reason why Guayaquil remains open and always will.

Q: How do you mean, as a Consulate.

GROVER: The consular issues are immigration, visas. We handled a larger immigration visa case load at that time than all of Brazil, Chile and Argentina put together. But, of course, that's not saying very much because those three big countries are not big on immigration visas. Immigration visas characteristically come from countries where there is a great deal of illegal immigration, and people find some way of regularizing their status. And when that happens, you regularize the status of an Ecuadorian, you make it possible for maybe 12 to 40 people to come to the United States because of their friends and relatives under the preference system. We handled about 3600 cases a year at that point which is sizeable when you figure that each immigration case probably takes five or six hours of staff work. However, Colombia, with its much larger number, had about 7,000 cases, and probably Guyana had perhaps 12,000 at that time. But south of the north coast of South America we had the largest number in South America by far.

Q: When you said regularize their status. I don't know what you mean by that.

GROVER: Okay. Somebody goes into the United States illegally, they get a job, and they're illegal and they want to...in those days before the legislation which amnestied them, something had to happen that would cause them to regularize their...they might marry an American if you were young. For example, you could marry an American and immediately you're entitled to regularize your status. Or if you performed some kind of task which made it...I suspect there are more ways of regularizing your status than I know about because this is something done by the Department of Justice and the Immigration Service, not by the consular service.

Q: It doesn't bounce back to the consular.

GROVER: It doesn't bounce back except as immigration. An application for an immigration visa which is the fabled green card at the end of the rainbow.

Q: I see. After they are there you would still have to make arrangements...

GROVER: Oh, yes, but part of regularizing their status is leaving the country and applying for the immigrant visa; which you could do, if a Canadian post would permit up there, but most likely you'd have to go back to your home country and apply for the immigrant visa. But you had to leave the United States in order to do it, I guess because we wanted to have a clearer option of saying no at some point. There were a certain number of immigrant visas which were not acceptable. The legislation at that time had 30 some odd reasons why people can't go to the United States, and some of these reasons are applicable--sick people--all of this has changed and I haven't seen the legislation that was passed by the last Congress the same week as the budget proposal went in. But apparently it is a completely new piece of legislation that I'm sure consuls will have to study very carefully, and will set up a whole new body of common law based on this new legislation.

But anyway, illegals, by somehow or other doing something that caused them to be acceptable to United States, making them eligible now to apply for an immigrant visa or for permanent residence, brought all of the business, most of the businesses that resulted in issued visas anyway to the immigrant visa section of our consulate. That's quite a big business. On the other hand, the numbers of non-immigrants was much higher and, of course, refusal rate was much higher too because until they could prove that they were legitimate visitors, they were considered to be intending immigrants. And that was universally the case among poor, and relatively poor, Ecuadorians. So we had a refusal rate, I suppose, of 40 or 50 percent. That's something that can be manipulated fairly easily so it may not be too meaningful. Our problem was nothing compared with Bogota, with Guyana, with the Dominican Republic, with Jamaica. The closer you get to the United States the more immigrant visa problems you have. It's time consuming. So the consular function was a genuine aspect of our reason for being there. And then we mentioned DEA, a certain amount of development activity through USAID. Of course, there was a resident American community that saw the consulate as a kind of local mayor kind of authority. And then I guess that's the sum of it. But I think Guayaquil is sufficiently important, sufficiently different, from Quito that we may close a lot of other posts but we won't close that one.

OSCAR J. OLSON, JR.
Economic Counselor
Quito (1982-1984)

Mr. Olson was born and raised in Texas and was educated at the University of Texas, Yale University and the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy. Primary a Commercial and Economic Officer, Mr. Olson served in Venezuela, Spain, Germany, Mexico, Panama and Ecuador. In his Washington assignments he dealt with Management issues. Mr. Olson was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2004.

OLSON: Then I was assigned as economic counselor at the American Embassy in Quito.

Q: Economic counselor and not economic and commercial counselor?

OLSON: Economic counselor, period. We had a brand new foreign commercial service officer, straight out of the business world, never worked in the government, a bit of a loose cannon who didn't want much to do with the embassy. The concept of a country team was very foreign to him. He immediately managed to establish a presence not in the embassy chancery, but instead took offices elsewhere. He didn't get into trouble, but we would occasionally have to step in to help smooth over some of his problems.

Q: Were you nominally supervising him or was he reporting directly to...

OLSON: Certainly not. He was technically reporting to the ambassador but he didn't think much of that idea either. As far as he was concerned, he was reporting to the Department of Commerce, period.

Q: However you reported to the ambassador through the DCM, right?

OLSON: Right.

Q: Did you have others working with you? Or were you pretty much on your own?

OLSON: Yes, I had three others. A pretty small operation; we were decreasing in numbers at that point. Ambassador Gonzalez had been my DCM in Panama.

Q: Ray Gonzalez?

OLSON: Yes, Ray Gonzalez. He was involved in my assignment there, but then had departed before I arrived. It was a long time before we got a new ambassador, who had come into the foreign service about the same time...

Q: Is that Sam Hart?

OLSON: Sam Hart. Right.

Q: He went to the economic course with me.

OLSON: In '66. Yes. So there was this long interval when the DCM, John Youle, was Chargé d'Affaires. The political counselor and I alternated as Acting Deputy Chief of Mission for a while. This was the early '80's, the time of the economic melt down in Latin America, with problems of heavy foreign debt. This certainly affected Ecuador, and we were concerned about the economic viability of the country. This concern was shared by the appropriate government ministers, who turned to the U.S. for help. One group that was trying to get a handle on the problems was the Council of the Americas, which sent a team of economists and financiers on a tour of Latin America. The problem really began when Mexico had problems in taking care of its foreign debt. Then there was a realization that foreign banks had been pushing 'easy loans' on Latin American nations for too long, loans which they could no longer service.

Q: The Council of the Americas, that's a private sector group?

OLSON: Yes, private sector. David Rockefeller, who was head of the Council, came down with the team. Bob Hormats was also with the group. I think he was already with Goldman-Sachs.

Q: He had already left the State Department?

OLSON: I believe so. He was working on his PhD at Fletcher the year I was there. That was a very effective team that was trying to raise awareness of the seriousness of this debt problem, among Latin American governments, in Washington, and with financial institutions.

Q: Ecuador, besides its debt and financial problems, one always thinks of bananas. Was that a major issue for you?

OLSON: That was not an issue in the sense that it had been in Panama because the American involvement was nil. Ecuador is the exception among banana exporting countries. The plantations are owned by Ecuadorians, so we had no problems involving the embassy.

Q: How about tourism?

OLSON: Tourism was very important, and they were beginning to develop better facilities. The Galapagos Islands were very popular, and the country was beginning to exploit the eastern region, the jungle. The Flotel--they had a floating hotel out in the middle of the jungle that they were publicizing. And at that time they still had a very special adventure, the rail tour between Quito and Guayaquil on an old narrow gauge line. It was later damaged by an earthquake and landslides. We had a wonderful time exploring Ecuador. It developed historically as almost two countries. 'La Costa,' Guayaquil in the coastal areas, and then 'La Sierra,' the mountains, with Quito.

Q: And the eastern regions?

OLSON: A third part, 'El Oriente.' The eastern part is Amazonian.

Q: It is almost a third. Because the Amazon does come into Ecuador doesn't it, or starting in Ecuador?

OLSON: According to the Ecuadorians, yes—actually Ecuador now only has tributaries of the Amazon. The river was discovered from Ecuador, from the west apparently before anyone had found the mouth of it. Every sheet of government stationery in Ecuador at that time was imprinted with the phrase, "Equador Es un Pais Amazona" (Ecuador is an Amazonian Country). They lost their real claim to the Amazon to the Peruvians years ago, and that remains a very sore point with the Ecuadorians. It is the reason it has been so difficult to finally come up with a border settlement with Peru, a dispute that dates back to World War II. The eastern region is a particularly important part of the county, not so much for tourism as for the petroleum. Texaco was the major exploiter there. We were very involved in trying to protect the interests of an American company and making sure it was not being discriminated against. Also, by that time the oil pipeline carrying crude over the Andes was inadequate, with the definite need for either increasing its capacity or building a new pipeline. Texaco was beginning to negotiate as to who would do that and how.

Q: Where did the pipeline go? From where to where?

OLSON: From the jungle to a small port on the Pacific.

Q: In Ecuador?

OLSON: In Ecuador, yes. More or less a straight line, east-west, to the Pacific.

Q: So it would have been south of Guayaquil?

OLSON: No, it was north of Guayaquil.

Q: Were you involved in Civil Aviation?

OLSON: Yes.

Q: '82-'84, economic counselor, Quito, talking civil aviation.

OLSON: Yes, not that there were problems, but I happened to be there during the periodic renegotiation of the air rights agreement with Ecuador. That gave me some insight as to how the people from FAA (Federal Aviation Administration) and from State's Office of Aviation Affairs operated. I sat in on the discussions. As I recall, we were able to extend or complete a civil aviation agreement.

Q: How about aid development assistance. Were you involved in that?

OLSON: That was very important, as we had a good-sized AID Mission. We worked very closely with the AID folks.

Q: Peace Corps?

OLSON: The Peace Corps also had a good-sized contingent. I had a lot of contact with the supervisory staff and got to know a lot of the volunteers out in the field. I always looked forward to talking to them when they returned to Quito because they had good insights as to what was going on in the countryside, economically and otherwise.

Q: I know some other countries are active, or were active in Ecuador over the years. I think Japan, Switzerland. Did you do much reporting on what others were doing? I know AID does its own economic analysis and may get some advice from you, and you may look at some of their macro-economic work. But how about other countries. Did you do reporting on that much?

OLSON: No, I think Ecuador was still a little bit in the back water so that there was not that much attention paid by many countries. I'm sure there was some interest on the part of European countries, but not that much of a presence at the time. The Japanese were interested commercially. In addition to bananas, one thing that was developing very rapidly beginning at the time that we were there was shrimp farming.

Q: The what?

OLSON: Shrimp farming in ponds. It was not too long until imports of shrimp into the United States from Ecuador were second in value only to imports from Mexico.

Q: Was there American investment in shrimp?

OLSON: There was American investment and some Japanese interest as well, as I recall. Also, just beginning, Ecuador entered into the flower business, cut flower exports to the U.S. This was an enterprise in which the Columbians had a monopoly for some time.

Q: How about ocean fishing. Was that a problem in terms of U.S. fishing boats? .

OLSON: Yes, particularly on the restrictions that we were trying to negotiate on tuna fishing. Ecuador was threatened with having its tuna prohibited from entry into the United States until its tuna boats could get certified that they used dolphin free and sea turtle free fishing techniques.

Q: Even in those days?

OLSON: That was a beginning problem back then as I recall.

Q: This is not an economic section question, but to what extent was security, the threat of terrorism, a factor that you thought about much in those days? '82-'84.

OLSON: It was beginning to be a problem and something we focused on. One of my duties was

to chair the embassy narcotics group. We had DEA (Drug Enforcement Agency) people at work in the country. One question that I often asked of Ecuadorians that I met for the first time was why does Ecuador exist as this peaceful oasis, with few security problems, few drug problems, while located between Peru and Columbia, where these problems are rampant. The three countries have a common heritage, a common history, common geography. How is this possible? And I never got an adequate explanation. Each would be different from the one I heard before. Most would point out that there were in fact significant historical, tribal differences dating back to the Incas. Some would simply attribute to luck the lack of civil strife, the guerilla upheavals that both Peru and Columbia suffered. But Ecuador was developing into a very important transit corridor for drugs, with very little grown in the country and relatively very little use of drugs back in those days. I think it has become worse since. Then Ecuador really was more peaceful than its neighbors, and probably more peaceful than it is now. Although I think it is still better off now than its neighbors to the north or south.

Q: You mentioned transit did take place. What, mostly by air?

OLSON: Air, truck. I guess by sea, although boats would not necessarily have to stop in Ecuador unless they were very small. There was a lot of truck traffic on the Pan American Highway from south to north, and that was a problem.

Q: Did you travel a lot in the country? From my very brief experience in Ecuador, I didn't get to Quito, but I was in Guayaquil on the way to and from the Galapagos earlier this year. My sense is that Guayaquil is a very big bustling, mostly commercial city, probably a financial center.

OLSON: Exactly, it is...

Q: Did you go there often?

OLSON: I did, I went there more often than anyone else at the embassy, and enjoyed it. It was important to cultivate and keep contacts there in business and banking, also at an important economic think tank. Also we arrived in Guayaquil before we got to Quito. Once again we traveled from New Orleans on a Lykes Lines freighter, landing first in Manta, Ecuador, where they make the real Panama hats, and then departing ship in Guayaquil. And once again visiting a former post along the way, as we passed through the Panama Canal. Let's see, this was four years after the treaty came into effect, and we were already turning facilities in the old canal zone over to the Panamanians. I recall as we rode by taxi from the ship's dock in Balboa into Panama City, the driver, observing that we were American, berated us for having "given the canal to us Panamanians. Just look at how everything is going to rack and ruin." Admittedly some of the buildings were already looking a bit shabby. But Panama has done a good job subsequently of running the canal.

I earlier stated that Ecuador almost seemed like two different countries. This quaint little narrow gauge railroad through the mountains that I mentioned was just about the only link connecting the two regions, coast and mountains, Guayaquil and Quito, from its construction early in the 20th century until after World War II. There was almost no air service within the country until after the war, nor any roads you could call a passable highway. So interchange between the two

parts was difficult. Now transportation and communications are easy enough, but the differences remain. The commercial and financial center is still Guayaquil; the administrative, bureaucratic center is Quito. More importantly the mindset of the people living in the Sierra and on the coast is different. Politically they are often on opposite sides. Folks in Quito tend to look down on their cousins in Guayaquil. And a little bit of that washed over into the Embassy, so I didn't have much competition in visiting Guayaquil.

Q: Now we've had a consulate general there for a long time, and it is still there?

OLSON: Right, yes.

Q: Did they do some economic reporting through you? Did they encourage you to come and develop contacts?

OLSON: Yes, both. We had a good working relationship, and the consul general was particularly interested in the economy. He did not have anyone assigned to do other than consular work.

Q: Was Guayaquil an important port?

OLSON: It was important for Ecuador, the stop for freighters like the one that brought us there.

Q: Were there U.S. Navy visits?

OLSON: Perhaps so occasionally, but that was the consulates business.

Q: Okay, is there anything else we should talk about?

OLSON: Maybe a bit more on the pleasures of traveling in the country. We did visit the Galapagos, as you know, a unique experience. We enjoyed taking visitors to the well known indigenous market at Otavalo. We 'cruised' by dugout canoe for four hours down and five hours back on the Napo River, a tributary of the Amazon. Our destination was the Hotel Anaconda—completely rustic, no electricity, overnight in a thatched hut, run by teenagers. Unfortunately they had on prominent display a caged specimen of the place's namesake. Pat really hates snakes. She flew to Lima, Peru, for consultations at our embassy during the year she was Quito's Family Liaison Officer. I got to go along and can say I literally flew—we were in the Air Force Attaché's plane and I took over the wheel for a minute or so high above the beautiful Andes. Of course we took advantage of an opportunity to go on to Cuzco and Machu Picchu.

FREDERICK A. BECKER
Labor Officer
Quito (1982-1985)

Frederick A. Becker was born in St. Louis, Missouri in 1943. He attended Washington College in St. Louis followed by the University of California,

Berkeley where he pursued his graduate studies at Claremont Graduate School. He entered the Foreign Service in 1975 and as a member of the Foreign Service, served in countries including Romania, Brazil, Ecuador, Panama, and Nicaragua. He was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on November 16, 2004.

BECKER: In '82 I arrived in Ecuador.

Q: Did you feel as you went out that the hand of the AFL-CIO was resting on your shoulder? In other words, that it was going to be somebody to whom you had to pay due or basis or something like that?

BECKER: I had heard this in Washington, but it was never expressed in so many words. I quickly found out when you go out as a labor officer you are an oddball in the embassy. You don't belong to anybody, nobody really understands what you do, and nobody really appreciates where it fits into the overall scheme of embassy priorities. I was already pretty well settled in Quito when the new ambassador arrived. As part of our initial consultations, he asked me what I did. I briefly described my job. He said his impression of labor officers and of how the U.S. pursued labor relations abroad was like porcupines making love. You do it very carefully and very gingerly to avoid dire consequences. Then he gave me this advice. "Keep doing what you're doing, but I don't want the first hint of any trouble between you and your labor constituents that could bring disrepute on me or the embassy." It was not a sterling endorsement of the labor function. That said, Ecuador was an interesting environment in which the labor movement was deeply divided among unions federations, only some of which were, shall we say, AFL-CIO constituents.

Q: We've put quite a bit of money into it.

BECKER: We'd put a lot of money into establishing a U.S. labor footprint in Latin America. At that time nearly every country had an AFL-CIO institute, headed by a U. S. citizen country representative. The parent institute was AIFLD, American Institute for Free Labor Development. AID was always uncomfortable with its responsibility for the AIFLD program, whose budget was centrally administered by AID Washington. AIFLD was officially a contracted agency, but because it had so much independent clout in Washington, it didn't act like one of AID's usual dependencies or supplicants and didn't feel bound by AID rules or oversight. So there was constant friction between the AID mission director, who didn't have that much actual control over the local AIFLD operation. There were constant points of friction, tests of who controlled what, how programs should be structured, and whether they would be consistent with other AID programs in country. The AID program in Ecuador was very large, and AIFLD was viewed by many AID officers as money down the drain. AID directors and program officers were just as happy seeing someone else, in this case the labor officer, take an interest in AIFLD. AID often left practical oversight in my hands, even though I had no fiduciary responsibility. I was expected to be the broker, the referee or the policeman in any dispute that arose with AIFLD. To paraphrase the ambassador's views, I was supposed to make sure the porcupines made love according to the rules.

In addition to the trade unions sponsored or cultivated by AIFLD, there was a Christian socialist trade union confederation. These unions were another manifestation of liberation theology in Latin America. They were loosely sponsored by the Catholic Church. They were less likely to be industrial unions; but more often traditional artisan or agricultural cooperatives, small merchant or vendor associations, or indigenous groups. In a less developed country like Ecuador these can have a great deal of influence.

Then there were the Marxists, the communist led labor confederation. So, there was a three-way, interwoven competition for the loyalty of workers and influence on government policy. It was an exciting place to do labor work, which was only part of my portfolio. I also had a lot of internal political reporting, similar to what I did in Brazil.

Q: You were there from '82 to?

BECKER: '85.

Q: '85. I think this is probably a good place to stop before we get into this and we'll pick this up when you were in Ecuador '82 to '85. You're the labor officer. We haven't talked about what the situation the basic situation was in Ecuador at the time and then we will pick up sort of how you mentioned the three labor unions, how they were operating, were they delivering to the workers or were these sort of basic political organizations that really weren't representing the workers and how the embassy worked and all that. How's that?

BECKER: Sounds good.

Q: Today is the 3rd of December, 2004. We're off to Ecuador, '82 to '85. You heard the questions I was asking, what was the situation there Rick when you arrived?

BECKER: Let me take a slight detour. Yesterday the Washington Post reported on page 23 the assassination of a U.S. labor organizer in El Salvador.

Q: I saw that.

BECKER: Page 23. Recalling that in the same epoch that I was working in Ecuador, U.S. and local labor organizers were under great physical threat in many Latin American countries. In fact, three organizers were assassinated in El Salvador around 1981. That was front page news then. The incident was portrayed as part of the contest between the forces of light and darkness in Central America by the Reagan administration, which of course was indifferent if not hostile to worker rights at home. Now the topic would be relegated to page 23. Labor rights, irrespective of the great Cold War contest, is a real human rights issue in much of the Third World, particularly in Latin America where there is growing political awareness and activism and where all kinds of groups exist to either exploit workers or else feed their frustrations. Ecuador had emerged from a prolonged military dictatorship in '79. When I arrived, the first democratically elected government was in power. The 1984 presidential elections in Ecuador would be the first test of democratic succession. Our own national elections in 1984 were a referendum on Ronald Reagan's first term of office.

To reprise, there were three major trade union movements in Ecuador and a lot of independent splinter groups. There was a communist trade union movement generally conceded as sympathetic to and influenced by Havana and Moscow. There was also a Maoist splinter group oriented toward Beijing at odds with the dominant communist organization. There was a Christian Democratic or Christian Socialist labor organization, which claimed inspiration from the Catholic Church's liberation theology of the '60s. This organization sought to mobilize artisans, peasant cooperatives, the self-employed, even small merchants, as well as labor unions, anybody who would pay dues and boost membership. Then there was the social democratic labor movement which, if not founded and structured by the AFL-CIO, was certainly heavily subsidized and under the influence of U.S. trade union principles and practices. There was a great deal of territory to be sowed, regardless of the great contest for ideological superiority and supremacy. In fact, humanitarian concerns and human rights were much more valid than anti-communism as a foundation for pursuing U.S. objectives in the Ecuadorian labor movement. It really came down to trying to moderate the political ambitions of so-called democratic labor leaders, while empowering local unions to deliver essential services to their members, in lieu of fickle, manipulative populist governments or other political movements that did not have the worker's interests at heart. I spent a lot of time working arm-in-arm with the local AFL-CIO representative meeting with and cultivating trade union leaders on behalf of the U.S. government.

Q: You were saying the AFL-CIO representative was an American.

BECKER: They were American citizens. Most of them were of Latino origin. The AIFLD director in Ecuador at the time was Cuban born, a former sugar worker organizer in the pre-Castro period. He had taken his lumps as an organizer in other countries before he came to Ecuador. He was a very effective representative of North American trade unionism, to my mind. He was black and thus put a slightly different face on U.S. labor diplomacy. Interestingly enough, AIFLD trod a fine line between serving as a representative of U.S. labor and being an arm of U.S. foreign policy. They had a difficult time dealing with some aspects of Reagan administration policy, and they were not beyond biting the hand that fed them because they had their own power base in Washington.

Q: Well, did you ever find yourself at cross-purposes?

BECKER: On occasion I served as a kind of mediator between the AID bureaucrats and the AIFLD country director, trying to get both of them to look at what AIFLD was doing as a common developmental activity, even if it wasn't organized down to the last paper clip by AID. AIFLD would lose its effectiveness if perceived by local labor leaders as an arm of the U.S. government, but nonetheless we needed to guarantee that AIFLD would behave in a responsible manner. Even though AIFLD was not a force for revolution in Latin America, it was a force for change. It mobilized and supported workers to demand better wages and working conditions from employers, some of which happened to be major U.S. investors. In Ecuador this included the big oil companies and banana producers, among other industrial concerns. Besides supporting U.S. business expansion abroad, the Reagan administration was pursuing aggressive, very unpopular policies in Cuba and Central America. In addition to representing these policies

on behalf of the embassy, I was often caught in the middle of bureaucratic and policy tussles with these two elephants, AID and AIFLD, which were not inclined to listen closely to each other.

Q: What was your impression of unions you were dealing with? In some countries unions as you alluded to before are really just ways of getting a bunch of people together to give political power to the leaders who after basically political influence as opposed to delivering better conditions to the workers. Where did the ones in Ecuador stand?

BECKER: Well, despite its high sounding rhetoric about building democratic labor unions, AIFLD too often fell into the trap of developing clients that remained dependent on AIFLD's good graces. AIFLD thought nothing of interfering in union elections to favor one faction over another. That said, the AIFLD director in Ecuador was instrumental in creating a labor training institute and selling the idea to his superiors in Washington. There was a recognition that the top labor leadership was to some extent unresponsive to a more, let's say, rational or politically less self-serving approach to organizing, and the institute was an attempt to leapfrog that leadership through labor education. The institute was designed to get labor organizing skills and basic knowledge of economics and worker issues into the hands of local labor activists. I remember AIFLD put together a very good primer on worker education, and the AIFLD director, AID mission and the local labor organizations collaborated closely to develop this institute. I think it was, by and large, quite successful. It actually produced some publications that were used in other countries by other AIFLD missions. The initiative was seen as somewhat of a model for really getting nuts and bolts, bread and butter educational issues on labor, including occupational health, organizing techniques, or providing social services to members. The trade unions legitimized themselves by providing services and benefits which the government or other entities were unable to do. Most unions of any size had social programs that extended beyond the work place and assisted worker families. I found this to be very much in line with AID's philosophy of self-help, if not AID's practice, and I spent a good deal of time publicizing what AIFLD was doing, utilizing the success stories I found in the field to gain support within the embassy and AID for these programs. I felt I had my finger on the pulse of what was going on politically and socially in the country, maybe more than some of my political or economic section colleagues, and was able to report back on what was going on. Particularly as we moved into the electoral season in '84, I was able to contribute significantly to the embassy's understanding and appreciation of the contest between the Ecuadorian political parties and where organized labor was lining up.

Q: Well, in Ecuador at this time, how would you describe the power of, I'm not sure it's the right term, businessmen, manufacturers, in other words, the leaders, the people who employed workers?

BECKER: Ecuador was, and remains to a very large extent, an agricultural country. It was also a country that was divided both geographically and socially between two poles of power, Guayaquil on the coast and Quito up in the highlands. Most political groups identified more geographically than in any other way, and most candidates represented a geographic more than an ideological base. Some of the more conservative political forces came out of the highlands, whose economic power fed off the government's control of oil revenues. On the other side, there

were the traditional coastal commercial and agricultural interests, banking, bananas, sugar, shipping, export-import activities. Ecuador is probably the largest banana producer and exporter in the world, and a lot of labor organizing in the industry occurred in Guayaquil. Guayaquil at the time was run by the Bucaram family, descendants of Lebanese immigrants, very populist and corrupt even by Ecuadorian standards. The family was not above sending thugs out to break up opposition rallies and shaking down economic and political organizations. This was probably done on a much smaller scale in the highlands, where old family names, old money and old political loyalties tended to hold sway. Even though we were based in Quito and had a consulate in Guayaquil, the consulate was not well staffed for reporting, and I found myself going down to the coast quite often to test the political waters and report on developments.

Q: Did you ever find yourself bumping noses with the what's the name of the family?

BECKER: The Bucaram family.

Q: Bucaram family.

BECKER: Personally no, but an embassy colleague was accused in a major Guayaquil newspaper, controlled by this family, of carrying black bags of money from the U.S. government down to Guayaquil to pay off one of the members of the family, or at least try to. It was a standing joke that the embassy had its designated bagman. The fact is, we could not be any further politically or ideologically from this family dynasty in Guayaquil nor them from us. The electoral contest in 1984 tended to turn on two major candidates, one representing the center-left social democratic party of an established Quito family, a archetypical Latin American intellectual man of letters, versus a U.S.- educated, politically conservative cowboy type who was supported by the Guayaquil political machine. The embassy was quite torn about how to approach this political contest. In the end, Washington tilted very visibly in favor of the conservative cowboy, who claimed to emulate Ronald Reagan, whereas most of us in the embassy argued for maintaining neutrality between democratic alternatives and supporting an electoral process and election machinery in which AID was putting a lot of money. We felt U.S. credibility with the Ecuadorian populace was on the line, since this was the first test of democratic succession in the nation's recent history. In '79 the military had ceded power to an elected government and now this government was committed to consolidating the democratic process through fair and free elections. This is often a most difficult test.

Q: Yes.

BECKER: The embassy was quite torn, because there were elements that wanted to help the avowedly pro-Reagan candidate win. Very frankly the ambassador at the time lost it.

Q: Who was he?

BECKER: His name was Sam Hart. He arrived a few months after I did in '82 or in early '83. We were without an ambassador for some period of time and he was apparently under a great deal of pressure from the political leadership in Washington to support the more conservative candidate, to come out on the "right" side of history. Yet those of working in the political

trenches warned against any favoritism that would ultimately reflect poorly on the U.S. over the long run. The post had a political appointee AID mission director, who had been brought in late in the first Reagan administration. It was very rare for AID to assign a non-professional as mission director. This man was a retired general in the Puerto Rican Air National Guard retired general. We also had a chief of station who had transferred in from Jamaica, where he claimed to have been personally responsible for leftist Michael Manley's electoral downfall the year before. I have no way of verifying his claim, and I suspect there was a good deal of self-aggrandizement in them, but he certainly made it very clear that he favored employing dirty tricks to tilt the election in Ecuador the right way. All of his proposals were roundly rejected at the embassy, but it was apparent he was advocating electoral manipulations to his superiors in Washington. It eventually became evident to Washington when an embassy country team is divided and the ambassador cannot manage the dissent on his staff.

Q: When you say the ambassador lost it, what did Hart do?

BECKER: One of the worst things you can do as a chief of mission is not build consensus on your country team. If consensus is not possible, at least discipline must be enforced and dissent must be channeled in a constructive way. When you cannot manage dissent on your staff, it can quickly become insubordination and invite separate reporting channels to Washington. Agency headquarters usually do not like to hear the embassy speaking with more than one voice, nor do they want to get involved in embassy affairs to restore order. The ambassador's weakness was further evidenced by a State Department inspection a few months earlier, the only inspection I've ever witnessed that was not to some degree a whitewash and stamp of approval for the ambassador's policies and practices. It was abundantly clear, in retrospect, that someone associated with the inspection team – either in Washington or on the team itself -- wanted to see the ambassador to get a black eye, perhaps to make way for that person's own appointment in his place. There were plenty of irregularities to find if inspectors are looking for them, and this inspection team loaded its report with them, the most serious of which was weak executive office management.

Q: Who was the inspector?

BECKER: I can't remember. There were a couple of names floating around, but for the record, even if I could remember, I probably wouldn't say.

Q: All right. Well, something before we come to the results of this election, but why the hell, I mean Ecuador is not high, I wouldn't think it would be high on anybody's list and all of a sudden you find all these forces converging on this country.

BECKER: Because of what we were confronting in Central America and elsewhere in the Andean region, there was a high level of ideological sensitivity in Washington to how the political winds were blowing. Allen Garcia in Peru was taking that country off flirting with the Cubans and with the Eastern Bloc countries, and there were other governments in the hemisphere that did not see eye to eye with the U.S. on economic development strategies, and there were very few countries that saw eye to eye on what we were purporting to do in Central America, that is, defending the frontiers of freedom against some kind of monolithic communist threat.

Elections like this, even in minor countries, became critical tests of U.S. influence and resolve. Yes, Ecuador was not anybody's battle forefront or even in the headlines except when there was a major oil sector strike or disruption in banana shipments. During my tenure there, almost nobody in the embassy got promoted, I believe because working in Ecuador didn't represent a significant professional or foreign policy challenge to those in Washington who sat on promotion panels. Ecuador tended to confirm my theory about promotions. All other things being equal, where you are is makes more impact on the board than how well you're doing your job.

Q: Well, certainly, I sat on a promotion panel one time from OC to MC, whatever and the Middle East always got the attention. You couldn't help it. They were always responsible for being major players in the Middle East process which I remarked at one point during the thing, I said, hell the Middle East process isn't going anywhere. It never has gone anywhere, but still, I mean that's the place to be.

BECKER: Yes, I agree. The fastest promotion I ever got -- and I won't say it was undeserved -- was when I was sitting along with a lot of my colleagues in the office of East European affairs when the Berlin Wall fell.

Q: Yes.

BECKER: When truly historic transitions were taking place. Virtually all of the desk officers in that office were rewarded, within a two year period, suggesting of course that as desk officers were responsible for those events. All other things being equal, when there is no discernible difference in ability among a couple of hundred employee evaluations, where you are serving and whether that region or that country or that set of issues is on the front page of the newspaper. In many instances, this can and does tilt an otherwise undecided selection board member in favor of certain promotable officers. This person is doing significant work on significant issues and deserves a push upward.

Q: Well, we're back to Ecuador. How about labor? Where was labor weighing in on this American labor?

BECKER: American labor was very clearly aligned with the center left, the social democratic party candidate. Despite the fact that in our quieter moments, we advised that it would be prudent if labor prepared for the possibility that their favored candidate might lose and they would have to deal with the other one as president. That's not something that the AFL-CIO has learned from its own history in the United States. In any event, there was literally nothing we could do about that orientation except to emphasize the need to strengthen basic services through local unions over and above one's political flag waving. One should not lose sight of the long term, that you are building a labor organization, you're building loyalty, you're building a following because you are delivering things of value to the worker, either in the workplace or in terms of social benefits.

Q: Did you find yourself both personally and sort of the field that you were representing having a problem in the embassy?

BECKER: As indicated last time, as long as I operated prudently and did not gain a lot of headlines for the embassy through my labor work, I didn't feel anybody actively opposed what I was doing. I also adopted a practice of outreach towards members of the U.S. business community, particularly through the American Chamber of Commerce in Ecuador, to try and expand their understanding and awareness of international labor organization standards and local labor code requirements. Many of them had been in Ecuador for many years and were presumably aware of those standards, but because they represented U.S. interests felt more or less immune from government retaliation for any potential violation. What I preached to them was that it was more likely than not, the government or the unions would try to make examples of them, whereas a local industry guilty of the same kinds of practices would be able to use its political connections to escape. I developed what I thought were some educational mechanisms, for example roundtables, that actually tried to bring labor leaders together with business leaders to discuss industry concerns. I tried to use the embassy as a focal point to foster healthy or at least less confrontational, less disruptive labor-management relations. I had more luck after I moved on to Panama doing this kind of thing, but I learned a lot about what worked and what didn't work in that area. I built credibility and respect within the embassy and the local U.S. community because I may have been initially perceived as the AFL-CIO's attaché, just as the commercial attaché was seen as the business community's and the Commerce Department's mouthpiece. I was reaching out to the business community to try and bring their level of understanding up to a level where they would be less likely to be surprised by an adverse labor-related development, which could be both expensive and bad for public relations. When a company did show up on the embassy doorstep with a serious labor problem, it was usually after they had been established for some time in the country. My answer would be, "If you had come in a while ago, when you set up shop here, we could have laid out what the actual conditions were and what the government enforcement penchant was, and you might have avoided some of the problems you're facing now. It's too late for me to help. You need a good lawyer."

Q: What did you find though, let's take the two probably major ones, the banana people and the oil people. How were they treated and I'm speaking from the American side. How were they treating their workers?

BECKER: Conditions on the banana plantations, like much of agriculture in Ecuador, were pretty shabby, and indeed organizing the banana workers was a major task. Banana plantations were often feudal empires. No Ecuadorian authority, and certainly no foreign embassy or government, was likely to make major inroads in terms of ensuring that International Labor Organization (ILO) standards were met. Keep in mind that our major effort within the labor movement and within Ecuadorian society was education to improve labor-management relations, workplace conditions and worker rights, all in accordance with international standards to which Ecuador officially adhered. The right to organizing trade union as a way of enforcing worker rights was one of those standards. Our mantra to the government was: "We are ready to help you meet the ILO standards you have accepted." We worked with labor ministries to improve their inspection and enforcement mechanisms, and we tried to the extent possible to educate the business class to the advantages of healthy worker management relations. Strikes were counterproductive in a highly competitive market like bananas. Ecuador took advantage of Central America's political chaos and greatly boosted its market share. We always pointed out that there was always another country ready to seize the moment if Ecuador suffered a major

strike with loss of production. We urged the Ecuadorians to raise the level of the worker satisfaction to prevent this eventuality.

And here's where the ideological element comes in. I spent some time and effort trying to get AIFLD, which focused all of its attention on the one-third of the labor movement that was social democratic, to open up its doors -- particularly its educational institute doors -- to dialogue with and cultivate union leaders and organizations which may belong to non-affiliated or rival labor organizations. AFL-CIO was content to preach to the converted. They were not expanding their influence or the services that they could render, and they were not blunting some of the less constructive practices of these other labor organizations. I managed to open the door a crack by convincing the AFL-CIO in Washington, as well as the local AIFLD representative, to accept a certain number of Christian labor leaders into their education programs.

Q: Where did the Christian labor leaders fall in the political spectrum?

BECKER: Politically they were decidedly left of center. They tended to support the Christian Democratic parties, which were really strong in Ecuador, although not in some of the other Latin American countries. The Christian Democratic movement had a lot of influence within small peasant communities, where it received tacit or active support from church people as the correct avenue for effecting social reform.

Q: This was basically Catholic?

BECKER: Yes, it was Catholic, but it was not traditional Catholic, but was inspired by liberation theology and by hostility to U.S. power and policies. There was decidedly anti-U.S. bias to the overall political complexion of the Christian unions. Their hostility was directed toward what they viewed as a massive campaign to expand U.S. military and economic power worldwide, at the expense of social and political reforms that would put real power in the hands of the people. But these people represented a third of the labor movement, and it was clear that the positive side of U.S. foreign policy, especially labor policy, was not being received or heard. There were grand battles between the AFL-CIO and the Christian labor movement, the origins probably dating from the period between the two world wars. They had intensified in the post-World War II period when Europe was divided. Christian unions were getting a lot of support from Catholic countries in Europe, whereas the Protestant countries, especially the Scandinavians, tended to support the social democratic unions. West Germany, with strong Christian Democratic and Social Democratic movements, worked with both Christian and social democratic unions in Ecuador. Our embassy established linkages with the major German political education institutes -- the Christian Democratic Konrad Adenauer Foundation, the socialist Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, and the Free Democratic Friedrich Naumann Foundation.

Q: Well, how did the election come out?

BECKER: The cowboy from Guayaquil, Leon Febres Cordero, won. The social democrat lost. It was probably the character of the campaign where the winning candidate was able to reach out and touch the electorate while the loser maintained an intellectual aloofness. We've seen this sometimes before in U.S. politics. Febres Cordero was swept into office much to the pleasure

and the relief of certain Reagan administration officials, but the embassy was very much torn apart not by who we favored, but by how to approach the election. We felt that even though we embraced the new administration in Ecuador, we also needed to mend fences with the losing party, which represented a formidable and persistent force in Ecuadorian politics. Given the ideological divide, this was difficult to do. I guess the big payoff for my activities as labor attaché occurred as I was packing up and getting ready to leave the country in '85. Our security office got wind of what they said was a credible report that I was the target of an assassination plot by a far-left labor organization that apparently was highly resentful of my promotion of the U.S. the labor agenda in the country. The leftist group may have linked my labor work to the victory of the pro-Reagan presidential candidate, which of course was ridiculous.

Q: Dubious honor?

BECKER: Well, I thought it was a badge of honor. Otherwise, you sometimes leave a country, thinking, "I've been here three years, I've toiled in the trenches and on the battlefield, but what have I accomplished?" In this case, I got a couple of plaques on the wall and a death threat."

Q: Did you find that during the election process that you were bumping into sort of CIA types with money bags or what have you working at almost cross purposes to what you were doing in Ecuador?

BECKER: If they were running around with money bags, they were probably too sophisticated to come up on my scope. Since the ambassador was unable to maintain effective control over major agencies under his direction, it's not inconceivable that there may have been some nefarious election activities afoot. I do know that a couple of years later, there was a major financial scandal in the AID mission in Ecuador, focusing on the political appointee mission director, who had apparently channeled AID development funds inappropriately to support the political agenda of some conservative Ecuadorian organizations. A number of AID officers, who should have exercised due diligence, were caught up in the scandal as well. Their careers, if not destroyed, were severely tainted.

Q: How did you find sort of the major American business interest, one always thinks of the old term banana republics and how United Fruit and all sort of ran their own empire and became a target of all sorts of you might say liberal opposition both in the country and in the United States. What was your feeling about American business interests that had been in Ecuador for some time?

BECKER: Ecuador was not a large country, did not have a large U.S. business footprint. It did have some significant U.S. investment in selected sectors, and the banana sector was one of those. Chiquita was very active there. Occidental Petroleum, more recently, was a major developer of Ecuadorian oil fields. I found these were some of the toughest customers to deal with, based on little sense of benefit for them to dialogue with the labor attaché. There were other people in the embassy, the executive office or the commercial attaché, who were much more plugged in to what they were about. They certainly wouldn't come to the embassy to seek support on a labor issue.

Q: This is tape five, side one with Rick Becker. I mean some of the _____ oil fields and places like that.

BECKER: By and large, the U.S. business presence, with the exception of Chiquita, was of fairly recent origin, and many of them were affiliated with the American Chamber of Commerce. I developed some educational programs for business audiences, which included IBM, Bank of America, and other large service sector corporations as well as some of the smaller manufacturing firms. There were a lot of shipping interests in Guayaquil. Most of their activities were offshore, but they brought a lot of business in and they were certainly interested in embassy briefings on local practices and local politics. They found Ecuadorian politics as bewildering as I often did. I've talked about two political parties contending for the presidency. There were probably 15 or 20 political parties that fielded candidates. Elections had an atmosphere that combined elements of fiesta and tag-team wrestling along with elements of cut-throat, life-or-death politics.

Increasingly, the question of business security arose. Security was an area where the U.S. business community was interested, given their lack of understanding of the local scene. U.S. businesses looked to the embassy for leadership in dealing with unforeseen and uncertain political conditions. General strikes were fairly common, where the whole economy was shut down for a day or two by street protests, and this of course affected a lot of business activity. These acts tended to divert potential investors to other countries where conditions were calmer and more predictable. We tried to help U.S. business understand the dynamics of what was going on politically. Since I had a very good feel for what was going on in the labor scene, I often represented the embassy at these informational forums.

The period also saw the beginnings of an incipient terrorist movement in Ecuador. There had been episodic terrorism in other countries, most notably the Shining Path insurgents in Peru, and of course the emerging narco-political insurgents in Columbia. With Ecuador's two big neighbors heavily affected by civil conflict and insurgencies, it was surprising that Ecuador appeared to be an island of tranquility. Everybody wondered why, because the conditions that bred the insurgencies in the neighboring countries were certainly there in Ecuador. Ecuador was, if anything, poorer than either of their two neighbors. There was a large, impoverished indigenous population in Ecuador as in Peru. The descendants of the Incas, largely Quechua-speaking, had been historically passive but now seemed susceptible to radical appeals. Yet Ecuador during the time I was there was largely free of serious political unrest and violence. In the last few months before I transferred, there appeared a group that called itself "Alfaro Vive Carajo!" Eloy Alfaro was an Ecuadoran president -- almost everybody was at one time or another president of the country -- who had been assassinated by democratic insurgents on the presidential portico in 1911. "Alfaro Vive, Carajo!" translates as "Alfaro lives, damn it!" When a name like that scrawled on a wall, you think it's a bunch of thugs, kids, or whatever. And while they were quite inept at first, the police did find safe houses and bomb-making equipment. Certain assassinations of mid-level and indeed one high level political leader, as well as occasional kidnappings for ransom, were attributed to this group. The group's activities really took off about the time that I was leaving in '85. Concerns over terrorism, spillover from Colombia's drug trafficking and general criminality were on the increase. When I arrived in

Ecuador in '82, you could walk almost anywhere in the city and while you had concern over pick pockets here and there, the threat of violence against even foreigners was fairly remote.

There were drive-by robberies, kids on motorcycles. A friend was dragged nearly to her death when one of these motorcycles, a driver and a rider, grabbed her purse or a necklace as they swung by on the city streets. The strap or the chain didn't break off. Ecuadorians always blamed rising crime on the Colombians. Ecuadorians, they said, don't do that sort of a thing. These were new and fearful developments, and the U.S. business community looked to the embassy for guidance and some kind of understanding as to how they could function effectively and profitably in an environment which there were a lot of question marks.

Q: How did you find the communist or the Maoist unions?

BECKER: With very few exceptions, the embassy had virtually no direct dialogue with them. Mutual hostility was great. That said, there were occasions, in the course of dialogue among and between the labor groups, that I would bump into one of the leaders of this group. Indeed, I expressed interest from time to time to go to their national congresses as an observer. The request was never honored with an invitation. They didn't want my presence. There was hostility towards an official U.S. presence and it was pretty much a steel curtain that created a two-way barrier.

Q: Well, was it, how did you view them as what they were trying to do? Were they effective for the rights of the workers or did they have more of a political agenda?

BECKER: They certainly had a definite political agenda. It was hard to tell how much actual deliverables they were able to provide to their workers. For example, I think the public utility workers were in the hands of the communists, and these unions brought the government almost to its knees on a couple of occasions to win concessions for their workers. Whether these concessions were in the best overall interest of the Ecuadorian economy and population or the bottom line of the budget could be debated endlessly. Be that as it may, these unions were more willing to cross the line politically to force major stoppages in key economic sectors. So they did deliver to that extent. I have to give them credit for their organization and effectiveness. But they also had a political agenda which was to gain power and support candidates for office that would allow them more scope to pursue political influence.

Q: How about the students at the university and all? Were they a factor for you or not?

BECKER: The embassy was almost right across the street from the Catholic University, which was fairly tranquil. My wife took Spanish language courses there. By contrast, the public university, as in a number of Latin American countries, was a hotbed of radical political activity. There was a close association between a number of radical trade unions and student groups. When I talk about general strikes, it was never simply because of trade union activity, but it was because the labor groups were able to capitalize on their alliances with student and other social organizations to actually shut down major parts of the capital, the major cities and economic activity. Students didn't have much in the way of educational incentive — the universities offered obsolete courses of study taught by professors who were little more than activists

themselves or else bureaucratic drones. The public educational system was a training ground for political radicalism. We jokingly observed that the term “student activist” was a misnomer, since many were in their ‘30s and ‘40s. One didn’t graduate in four years, lose one’s athletic eligibility and have to go out and make a living.

Q: Was the system in Ecuador as it is in so many countries including in Europe, not your ability, but you family connections moving up?

BECKER: Very much so. The modern economy had not yet fully arrived in Ecuador. I think they opened the first supermarket while we were there, and I think we declared an embassy holiday when Oreos were introduced into the economy. It was not a great consumer heaven. Quito, with 800,000 inhabitants, was surprisingly parochial. The capital is upwards of 9,000 feet and nestled in the Andes. Historically, there were not a lot of cultural cross-currents, a lot of the foreign ethnic groups that had migrated to Ecuador —Arabs from the Middle East, migrant labor from Africa via the Caribbean, or Asians -- had settled on the coast, not in the Andes. Therefore the cultural character of coastal society was much more outgoing, much less rule-driven and to some extent there was more opportunity for newcomers to establish themselves there. The Bucaram family that dominated Guayaquil politics was of Lebanese origin, whereas the powerful in Quito, regardless of political party, could trace their names back 100 or 200 years, when their families had been part of highland aristocracy.

Q: One last question on this period, more out of pure curiosity. How stood the Panama hat business?

BECKER: It was wonderful. There’s a town on the coast called Montecristo and its claim to fame is that they grow a particularly supple kind of bamboo in the nearby swamps that produced wonderful Panama hats. Of course, the origin of the Panama hat was that *sombreros* produced in Ecuador found their way to Panama at the time of the building of the Panama Canal. They were quite prized and practical and popular there, and they became known as Panama hats even though the highest quality ones are still produced in Ecuador.

Q: I read a book called I think The Panama Hat Trail or something like that?

BECKER: Really!

Q: A very good account of this. Well, then Rick you left there in 1985? What happened?

BECKER: I was well established as a labor officer, had a good reputation for my labor work in Ecuador and Brazil. I was asked if I wanted to be the regional labor officer for Panama and Costa Rica. Panama was not my top choice of countries to go to. I had managed to spend a fair amount of time in Latin America without ever having served in the tropics. As a Californian, I don’t like hot, humid weather, but that’s where the assignment process led me. So my family and I took home leave and arrived in our embassy in Panama City in the fall of 1985.

SAMUEL F. HART
Ambassador
Ecuador (1982-1985)

Ambassador Samuel Hart was born in Mississippi in 1933. He graduated from the University of Mississippi in 1955 and then spent two years in the United States Army. After attending the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, he joined the Foreign Service in 1958. He subsequently served in Uruguay, Indonesia, Malaysia, Costa Rica, Chile, Israel, and was ambassador to Ecuador. Ambassador Hart was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 1992.

HART: I got to be ambassador to Ecuador through administrative error.

Al Haig was still secretary of state, and he had a friend who had been at West Point with him who had crashed an airplane somewhere while on active duty. It was pilot error, and he had been told he had no real future in the military, and had gotten out of the military at a fairly early age, had gone back to Texas, where he was from, and had made some money. He was a Toyota dealer and he was in real estate and what have you, and he was a big buddy of Al Haig's. And Al Haig decided to bring him in to be the new ambassador in Ecuador. The nomination started to grind its way through the mill.

What Al Haig didn't know and what nobody wanted to tell him was that this buddy of his had lawsuits against him by about half the population of Texas, for shady business dealings. The FBI held its nose for a long time and didn't tell him, either. So this thing dragged on.

I was in telephone conversations with the guy, saying, you know, "When are you going to come to Washington and get your briefing?" I didn't know about it for a while. But then I started to hear about it, and thought, whoa, baby, this thing's got some problems. This was in early 1982.

The way the ambassadorial nominations are handled is, at least at that time, the State Department submits to the White House a list of three officers from the career ranks whom they think are qualified. And they are rank ordered, in essence, about how they think the selection should go, if a career officer is chosen. Also, the personnel office in the White House submits names of political appointees. And then, at some point, somebody, and I don't think it's always the same group of people, sits down and says, "Well, we want this country to go to a political appointee, and this one to go to a..." I don't know whether it's a National Security Council advisor or somebody dealing with Latin America on the National Security Council staff. I think it probably, from time to time, varies as to who does it. At some point, a recommendation goes into the president that says, "Choose one: a political appointee or a career officer. Our recommendation is..." and you give him the name. And the president either takes it or says, "I don't want this," and goes back and asks for another name.

I was put on the list at the time when everybody knew that Al Haig's guy was the political appointee. I was put on the list by Steve Bosworth as the number-one person from the Latin American Bureau to go to Ecuador as a career officer. But it was not supposed to be a career-officer post; it was going to be a political appointee. Then Al Haig's guy got into all kinds of

trouble, and eventually that name just sank noiselessly into the mud, because he could not get an FBI clearance.

Next thing that was heard was, well, who are other political-appointee possibilities? And the name that arose was a fellow, who was a Republican, the adjutant general of the Puerto Rican Air National Guard, by the name of Orlando Llenza. And Llenza had some political connections with the Reagan White House.

I heard about this, of course; I heard that this was being talked about, and it got around Washington.

And the Ecuadorians, I must say, were really unhappy. Our career ambassador, who had been there for two and a half or three years, was advised that he was going to be replaced by this friend of Al Haig's. So he left the *chargé* and departed the post in January of '82 and went to be an advisor to the Naval War College out in Monterey, California, which is near where he was from, an assignment that he thought, if he waited, would be gone and he'd better take it while he could get it. So we had a *chargé* in Quito. The Ecuadorian government, as the months dragged on and we did not get a new ambassador, was unhappy about this.

So the Ecuadorian ambassador here, Lalo Crespo, was very interested in who the nominee was going to be and about what the delays were. And he asked me, one day, "Who's the frontrunner for this appointment?"

And I said, "I'm not at liberty to tell you."

He and I talked for a while, and I said, "Have you heard any rumors?"

Well, yes, he had heard rumors.

And I said, "Well, run these rumors past me and we'll see if I've heard any of the same rumors."

Without ever saying so, he knew that Orlando Llenza was the frontrunning candidate. I didn't tell him he was, but he figured it out. This is what he had heard anyway; he was merely trying to get me to confirm it. And he said, "That will be unacceptable to my government."

And I said, "I don't want to hear about it. If you've got a problem, I'm not the right person to talk to about it. You've got to go talk to Tom Enders."

So he marched in to see Enders and said, "My government would not find it acceptable to have someone who wears a uniform, or who has recently worn a uniform, a major general in the U.S. Air Force, albeit as adjutant general of the Puerto Rican Air National Guard, come to Ecuador, given our history with the military. We have only recently emerged from a military dictatorship, and we don't think that sends the right signal."

So Enders passed that on to the Seventh Floor, and it was passed on to the White House. And Orlando Llenza was dropped.

At about that time, this must have been about May or June of 1982, somebody said, "Oh, shit, why don't we just put a career officer down there." I wasn't present at the meeting between Enders and Lalo Crespo, but I think what Lalo probably told Tom was that they would rather have a career person.

Whatever the reason, the next thing I knew, I was told that indeed they were starting to look at the career list, and there was my name.

I was interviewed by the Republican guardians of ideological purity in the State Department, Otto Reich and Bill Middendorf, who had been put in the State Department as political appointees and ideological big brothers. They both knew me -- we'd been working together for more than a year by that time -- and they were convinced that I was acceptable. I got asked, you know, "How did you vote in the last election?"

And I said, "I voted for a good Republican."

And they said, "That's wonderful."

And I said, "John Anderson, that's who I voted for in the '80 election."

Q: He was sort of the Independent candidate. I voted for him, too.

HART: He was a liberal Republican congressman from Illinois, who was the only candidate in 1980 who I thought really talked sense to the American people.

Q: I voted for him. My wife voted for him. There weren't many of us.

HART: Well, that was not the answer that the people from the Reagan White House were looking for, but anyway, it was not disqualifying. And a certain amount of steam began to build for the White House to go ahead and offer me the appointment.

Not anybody thought this was going to happen, least of all Tom Enders. At about that time, Tom tried to get me taken off the list, and to get Bob Ryan substituted. I've forgotten where Bob was due to go, but it turned out that wherever in Latin American he was going to go, the White House indeed wanted to put a political person. When Bob got bumped from that nomination, Tom tried to get him put into Ecuador. The White House said to Enders, that ain't going to happen. And there were some hard feelings between Enders and the White House about it. But my name stayed on.

And then I was told, well, the decision's going to be made soon. This dragged on through the summer, and it was September when I finally got the call from President Reagan making the offer.

So that's how it happened. It was administrative error all the way.

I got the call on the 13th of September '82, got confirmed, and left for post on about the 18th of December. And that was absolute record time, record time to get everything done. I was more surprised than anybody.

Let me go back to the Andean Office. I will say that the Andean Office was the most challenging and rewarding part of my Foreign Service career. I'd always stayed out of Washington, as a matter of personal preference, as much as I could up until that time. And I felt that duty in Washington was a hardship post, et cetera, and that I was better suited for overseas work. But I found, maybe because of the special circumstances that prevailed in the Latin American Bureau for the office directors at that time, that that is what I probably did best. A combination of working with countries in which I was interested, for ends that I thought were worthy, with a pretty good group of people in the office, with a group of ambassadors who were extraordinarily capable and trustworthy, all of that combined led me to believe that that was the most productive and rewarding period of my life.

Q: Sam, we're now back to where you served from the very end of '82 until '85 as ambassador to Ecuador. What was the situation in Ecuador, as you saw it?

HART: I knew Ecuador pretty well after having been in the Andean Office for almost two and a half years before going there. I knew all the principal players. I probably was in a position to hit the ground running in a way that very few incoming ambassadors are.

What I thought the U.S. agenda should be in Ecuador, which was put in a cable shortly after I got to Quito, was the following:

Number one was support for democracy.

Number two was, as one way of supporting democracy, to try to get the Ecuadorians to modify their military objectives in a way that would lead them away from the old stance (which was confrontation or looking at Peru as an enemy, and investing a lot of resources in that) and reorient them toward promoting democracy in civic action internally.

Priority number three was to keep the tuna problem from getting in the way of everything else and overwhelming it by simply having us at loggerheads over something that we had diametrically opposed laws on.

Number four was to clean up the embassy act (I thought it was a rather poorly run embassy) and to try to really put some management controls on what was going on there.

I will say that over the two years and four months I was in Quito, on number one, support for democracy, we got an A. It certainly came first in my mind on everything.

On number two, reorienting the military, we were making terrific strides under Hurtado, and it totally fell apart when the León Febres Cordero government came in in August of '84. León was not interested in that.

Q: This was a democratic government.

HART: This was a democratic government, elected in like June of '84 and took office in August of '84. It had a totally different mindset to and Febres was a totally different kind of person than Hurtado. In '84, León Febres Cordero became the president of Ecuador, and the idea of reorienting the Ecuadorian military ended right there.

On the tuna problem, we solved it. And we solved it by appealing to the practicality of a group of people who you wouldn't usually think reacted to that. But the way the tuna problem was solved was, the foreign minister and I, when I was the ambassador there, worked out the following arrangement in conjunction with the American Tuna Fishing Association, Augie Falano, executive director, out of San Diego, California. Any time the Ecuadorian navy spotted an American fishing boat fishing inside the 200-mile limit, the first thing they were to do was to notify the Foreign Ministry. The Foreign Ministry would pick up the phone and call me. I would pick up the phone and call Augie Falano. And Augie Falano would get on the radio to the tuna boat captain and tell him he better get out of there in a hurry. Meanwhile, the Ecuadorian navy would put a *very* slow boat on the case. And we would get that boat out of there. It worked the whole time I was involved with it, and as far as I know, it's still working, although we now recognize the 200-mile limit. So I guess it's probably not a problem, because our legal position is now in...

Q: So we no longer would support them if they were...

HART: If they were captured. We ran out of money in that fund, anyway. The fund ran out of money, and Congress wouldn't appropriate any more. So the idea that we were going to compensate the tuna boat captains for fines and licenses and whatever else they got hit with if they got captured became a dead letter.

Q: It took away the incentive for them to do an in-your-face type thing.

HART: That's right. Periodically we'd get a report that there was a tuna boat fishing and that an Ecuadorian vessel was being dispatched to intercept it...in a matter of minutes, you're on the phone to Augie...in a matter of a few more minutes, that boat is headed in the other direction. And that's the way we dealt with it. My pitch to the foreign minister, which he accepted, was there's no way legally we're ever going to resolve this conundrum. The only way reasonable people are going to do it is to find practical ways to avoid a confrontation. You don't want one and we don't want one, so why don't we do it this way? And that's the way it was done.

On management of the embassy, I got an F, I think. I found (and I think this was probably one of the most frustrating things I ever went through) that an American ambassador in a country like Ecuador does not have at his disposal the tools necessary to manage an embassy.

Q: What was the problem with the embassy, as you saw it?

HART: Well, as one wise person said, no rational foreign ministry or state department or whatever would send its best people to a place like Quito, Ecuador. Now that was said in jest,

and we had a few good people. But we had, in Quito, an embassy that had something like ten or eleven U.S. government agencies represented. We had, in Quito, 85 American employees and another 15 in Guayaquil. So we had 100 American employees and about 150 or 200 Ecuadorian employees in Ecuador, representing practically a whole panoply of U.S. government agencies. We had State; we had a large AID mission. Shortly after I got there, I got a call from Mr. Peter McPherson, the head of AID, who said, "Would you do me a big personal favor?"

"What is that?"

"Would you accept Orlando Llenza as your AID director?"

Orlando Llenza is the Air National Guard commander out of Puerto Rico who at one time had been a candidate to be ambassador to Ecuador and was shot down by the Ecuadorian ambassador to the United States.

And I said, "Well, I really am not enthusiastic about this. You promised me that I was going to get a good AID director down here."

He said, "We'll get you a good deputy AID director."

So I got Orlando Llenza as the AID director. And Orlando Llenza never figured out, and I don't know that he ever really cared, what an AID director was supposed to do, but it wasn't what I wanted an AID director to do. I wanted an AID director to manage the program so that the U.S. taxpayer got some kind of return on the dollar. And that was not what the AID mission there was engaged in. They were engaged in feathering their own nest and currying favors and doing their friends favors. I tried to eliminate that, and I failed, because AID started to look at me as the enemy. When they had a program that had not gone anywhere, and was not going to go anywhere, and I said, "Look, eliminate this baby," I became the enemy, not only of the AID mission in Quito, but of the AID hierarchy in Washington.

We had State; we had AID; we had CIA.

We had four or five colonels, or that equivalent, in the military part of the embassy: we had a Navy captain who was the defense attaché; we had an Air Force colonel who was the air attaché; we had an Army colonel who was the Army attaché; we had an Army colonel who was assigned there as a medical person for CUNDIT; we had an Air Force lieutenant colonel who was the MILGROUP commander; and then we had some other people. So we had a lot of military people, a whole lot of military people.

We had a lot of DEA people.

Q: Drug Enforcement Agency.

HART: Yes.

The CIA station was larger than the embassy political and economic sections combined.

The U.S. Mapping Service down there had a fairly large presence.

Q: Defense Mapping Agency or something like that.

HART: No, it was not Defense Mapping, that wasn't it, but anyway, they were engaged in mapping.

We had a Department of Commerce political-appointee commercial attaché, who I recommended be thrown out of the service and to whom the Department of Commerce decided, on top of my recommendation, to give a performance award. I felt that he was behaving in a totally unethical way, and I recommended that he be thrown out, and, instead, they gave him a performance award for that year, which I didn't find very nice.

But I think it's symptomatic of the problem you have. An ambassador cannot hire, cannot fire, cannot really give management incentive to people to perform their jobs efficiently, and with the taxpayers' objectives in mind, and within the context of the country plan of what has been approved as U.S. policy toward that particular country, for the simple reason that you can't promote and you can't assign, you can't hire and you can't fire.

And so you say to the AID director, "Look, I want you to rank order your programs in a way so that we can maybe find out how to eliminate some waste here," and he refuses to do it. He may not say, "No, I won't do it," but it just doesn't get done. There's always a reason why it can't be done this week. This person doesn't answer to you, but answers to somebody in Washington, and your only alternative, if the person won't do what you want to do, is to have them thrown out. Then you find yourself essentially powerless.

I threw out one person while I was in Quito; I threw out the USIA PAO for directly defying me. And I got the reputation around Washington as a guy who was throwing all these people out down in Quito. I threw out one person, because I told him that I wanted something done, and he refused to do it. He didn't ever tell me, "No, I won't do it." He told his people, who told me that he'd said in a staff meeting, "The ambassador wants this, but I ain't gonna do it." I considered that insubordination, and so I had him thrown out. And I paid a tremendous price for it. Not too long after, he got selected into senior career status, senior Foreign Service, by USIA. Go figure. I was very frustrated about it.

I instituted management by objectives. I tried to make everything that we did in the embassy serve some identifiable purpose. If USIA said they wanted their next exchange visitor brought in to be an expert on the nose flute, I said, "And what foreign-policy interest does that serve?" Well, in most cases, it was because somebody knew the nose-flute player and they thought he deserved to get out of the cold of upstate New York in January. And that wasn't good enough. Very frustrating.

My advice to ambassadors is, don't try to be a manager. Nobody loves you; nobody appreciates you. Have a very short list of objectives -- very short list, like two -- concentrate on those. Let the embassy go to hell in a handbasket. Nobody thanks you if you try to do anything about it.

And if you do try to do anything about it, and try to make this an organization that indeed commits its resources where it says its interests are, you become a villain. Management, like economics, is one of those things the State Department occasionally pays lip service to, but the reward and punishment system is skewed against doing anything serious about it. I got very frustrated.

Q: How'd you find the U.S. military? I've heard that in places like Ecuador, they put colonels who are way past their prime, if they ever had it, out to pasture.

HART: Well, you know, the attaché system has always been very unequal among the services. By and large, the Army provides the best attachés worldwide, because there is almost a career track in the Army system for attachés and MILGROUP-type commanders. They make their people take area-study programs. They train them up at the... They really do a fairly competent job in training professionals who can deal in foreign cultures. The Navy probably does the second-best job. And the Air Force is the dead-level worst. Most of those people have arrived at the rank of full colonel by boring holes in the sky in some type of aircraft, and this is something they did to them as, "Oh, by the way, for the next two years or so, this is what you're going to be doing, colonel." These people have no interest and no incentive, and a lot of times are just too damn dumb to be able to handle what's involved. Just too damn dumb. But Army attachés, by and large, are the best.

My problem with the military was, I could never ever get them to give me any opinion other than the one they thought I wanted to hear. The way I tried to deal with all significant issues in the embassy was to convene the senior country team, essentially the agency heads, and say, "Okay, here's our problem. What do you think about it? What should we do? What are our options? I want your best opinion." I found these people stuck their thumbs neatly up their assholes, waited for clues about what I thought, and, if they thought they had some clues, would say, "Yes sir, yes sir, three bags full." I could never get any kind of independent judgment on anything. This is the pitfall that ambassadors frequently encounter with the military. There's a real attraction for ambassadors -- political-appointee ambassadors even more than career, but career to some extent, too -- to become very cozy with the military, because the military will do any goddamn thing you tell them to, even if it's illegal. And so, when you get that kind of personal loyalty, it's hard to resist. It's like being loved by somebody; it's hard not to respond in some way. These people are so anxious and so committed to pleasing you, because they think that's their main job, rather than to give you their best professional advice, which is what I always asked for -- "I want your best professional advice." I'd say the military was the worst, but I'll tell you the truth, out of an embassy of something like a hundred American employees, there were only maybe two or three who ever gave me what I considered to be well-thought-out counsel on a policy issue.

Foreign Service officers are not a hell of a lot better, most of the time. They want to find out what the boss wants to hear, then they'll jump in and say, "Yes, yes, not only did the sun rise in the west this morning, but wasn't it a beautiful sunrise?"

Q: Did you get any support from Washington?

HART: The first year and a half I was in Ecuador, U.S. relations with Ecuador could not have

been better, could not have been improved on. That was while Oswaldo Hurtado was the president of Ecuador. The support I got from Washington started to dry up the moment that Febres Cordero was elected president of Ecuador. Things changed from a pragmatic, nonideological viewpoint in dealing with Ecuador to a highly charged political method of dealing with Ecuador. As long as Tom Enders was the assistant secretary of state for Latin America, I could count on pretty good support out of the Department. The moment that Tony Motley became assistant secretary, all I would get was highly skewed political stuff out of there. As long as Les Scott was the acting country director for the Andean Office (Les had been my deputy when I left there), I could count on the Andean Office giving me excellent support. The moment that Fernando Rondon took over, that support started to dry up, because you had totally different agendas.

Q: You're talking about the Washington agenda.

HART: That's correct.

Q: What was the Washington agenda?

HART: The moment that León Febres Cordero became a presidential candidate and appeared to be headed toward the presidency, people in the State Department and in the White House started to think of this as an ideological thing, because Febres Cordero was a great public proclaimer of his affinity to the free-enterprise system, to the anti-Communist stance of the United States, and all this other stuff. He was very astute at jerking the chains of the Reagan administration on what they wanted to hear, and he presented himself to them not only as the future of Ecuador, but as the future of Latin America. He was going to prove forever and ever that the free enterprise system of the Reagan type was not only the model for the United States -- supply-side economics, et cetera -- but was the future model for Latin America, and maybe the whole world. And there were some people who bought this crap.

I was not one of them. And what I said on Febres Cordero was, "There are some good things about this guy, and there are some bad things about this guy. But the correct posture for the United States does not require us to make a final judgement about this. It's really not our judgement to make. It's the Ecuadorian people's judgement to make about whether or not he is president in a way that satisfies their aspirations and their needs. What we need to do is to conduct ourselves in such a way that, rather than become identified with an individual or a party, we become identified with the idea of support for democracy, whatever form that may take, as long as it is truly democratic, so that we can work with this man today and with someone from a totally different ideological cut of cloth a few years down the line. We don't become identified with people or with parties, we become identified with ideals."

I totally failed to sell that to anybody back in Washington after Febres Cordero was elected. And that eventually ended in my leaving Ecuador.

Q: Why? Did you feel that we were making too close an embrace of...

HART: There was a real impetus from within the White House and the State Department to cozy

up to Febres Cordero.

He decided that I had assisted his opponent, who was a Social Democrat, a socialist, in the election. There wasn't a word of truth to it. He would never say that to me personally, but people around him were spreading it all around Ecuador, and were coming to Washington and telling the White House that I had supported his opponent in the election, and that the U.S. Embassy had supported his opponent in the election. And when that kind of stuff was repeated time and time again here in Washington, nobody said to Febres Cordero or anybody around him, "That's the biggest bunch of crap I've ever heard, and I don't want to hear about it again, because it's a lie!" I said it to him, but we didn't get that kind of denial out of Washington. What we got out of Washington was, "Well, if that happened, it sure wasn't U.S. policy." Fred Rondon was peddling that sort of stuff. I got no support whatsoever from Tony Motley. I was left to hang out to dry, in essence, although I had a piece of paper that said this is U.S. policy (as I described to you), and that's what was carried out.

The prevailing wisdom here was, this man is ideologically simpatico, in the White House and on the Hill, to the Republicans, and you'd better be seen as being highly supportive of him no matter what. And what I was trying to do was report what was actually happening in Ecuador, some of which was good, and some of which was not good. Every time I'd send them something that was not good, I'd hear kind of reverberations about it, and Rondon would say something to me like, "I'm not sure that you should report this kind of thing."

And I'd say, "Are you suggesting that I edit the truth? Are you suggesting that this is untrue?"

"No, I'm not suggesting that."

"Then what you're saying is, I should edit the news for my readers. Is that professional?"

And Rondon would say something like, "Well, it's your choice. But I want you to know that some people don't want to hear this."

And I said, "Too bad."

And in the end, the Febres Cordero government made it known to Washington that I was not on their team and that they wanted me out of there. And in the end, I was forced out.

Q: What was the point of difference with this government?

HART: The problems were so hard to put your finger on because nobody would be honest.

Shortly after Febres Cordero won the election, Peter McPherson, uninvited, came down to Ecuador.

Q: He was head of AID.

HART: And we had a meeting with the incoming Febres Cordero economic team, and Febres

Cordero, et cetera, et cetera, in Guayaquil, and they laid out what their wish list was of U.S. assistance. McPherson sat there and led them to believe that everything they wanted was probably going to happen. And when I sat down with them, I said, "Let me tell you that a lot of what you're asking for is probably not going to happen. You can ask for it, and I'll send your request on to Washington, and I'll recommend, in fact, that favorable consideration be given to it. But I want you to know, it ain't gonna happen. And I would suggest that you concentrate your efforts in other places where we in fact can be helpful."

In the Hurtado administration, we had been very useful to the Ecuadorians.

You must remember, by this time the debt problem had come crashing down all over Latin America. Ecuador and practically every other country on the continent (not quite all of them, but most of them) were unable to meet all of their ongoing financial obligations, and were in default, in one sense or another (in de facto default even though not in de jure default), on all kinds of financial obligations to governments and to banks and to international lending institutions.

I had helped the Hurtado government get enormous amounts of U.S. economic assistance, primarily by getting them PL 480, Title One-type of food aid, which they had to import anyway, and by getting them a lot of CCC credits, which were three- to five-year credits that were more favorable for agricultural imports than they could get anywhere else. We were trying to get them through a crisis until the economic situation improved enough so that they could resume normal dealings.

The Febres Cordero government came in with the idea that, because their ideology was pure and close to the Reagan ideology, we were going to do a lot of special things for Ecuador. I tried to convince them that they shouldn't assume that, and that they ought to concentrate more on using the resources available than on spending an awful lot of political capital trying to get stuff like Economic Support Fund money, which was softer money and on more favorable terms (but much harder to get) than, say, CCC credits.

Well, what they heard from me, although this was not what I was saying, was that I'm not supporting you. Wrong. But when people in Washington from the Ecuadorian Embassy talked to the State Department, to people like Fernando Rondon, the message they got was, "Well, gee, we would like to help you up here, but, you know, the ambassador's not very excited about this program."

Q: What's Fernando Rondon's background? Was he a regular Foreign Service officer?

HART: Career Foreign Service officer. He went to the Andean job after being ambassador in Madagascar. Hispanic who got appointed to that job under the Carter administration. A man of, I would say, modest achievements. And, as far as I could tell, someone who decided on which side his bread was buttered early on, and if it was his own self-interest, never mind anything else that might be going on.

I noted early on that the kind of backing and support that I needed out of Washington to carry out U.S. policy there was not forthcoming from that moment on. We did business, but increasingly,

after the election, what I was hearing from Rondon was, "Either you get on the Febres Cordero bandwagon or you're in big trouble here."

And my answer to that was, "Not only am I not going to get on the Febres Cordero bandwagon, I think it shows a lack of professionalism for any career Foreign Service officer to even talk in such terms."

Well, he was right and I was wrong.

I went to Febres Cordero a number of times, when I was hearing these rumors, long after the election, that I had been helping his opponent during the campaign, and said, "I hear these rumors. Do you believe them?"

"Well," he said, "at one time maybe I did, but I don't now."

And I said, "Well, let me set the record straight for you. It's a damn lie, and I defy anybody to find one shred of evidence to back it up. It is not only a damn lie, it's a goddamn lie. I will always tell you the truth. And I'm telling you the truth now. But I want you to know something, if that's what you believe, then I'm of no further use here, and I'll be glad to get the hell out."

Well, things weren't good, and I felt like when people wrote letters to the President of the United States claiming that I was anti-Reagan, and the answer that they got from the White House, which was probably drafted by Rondon, did not deny this or say, "We don't even want to hear this kind of crap out of you," instead, what they really said was, "We don't have any indication that he's doing what you say." It really was the most minimal kind of response -- kind of thank you for your cards and letters.

There was a guy in the American community there, a retired Foreign Service officer and right-wing Republican who had tried to get the job as U.S. ambassador to Ecuador, who kept trying to organize me and other members of the embassy, in essence, into a Republican club down in Ecuador. Tried to get me to come address them and this kind of thing -- Republicans in Ecuador. And I said, "That is not my role. My role is to represent the president in his relations here. And it would be, really, if not illegal, certainly unwise for me to take part in partisan politics."

Those people were writing letters to the White House, and I was getting feedback from that. When Vice President George Bush came down to the inauguration of Febres Cordero, he had a letter in his hand when he arrived. And as soon as he got in the car, he said to me, "I've got this letter from this group of American businessmen," (really it was one guy) "asking me to meet with them privately. They want to discuss you. What's this all about?"

And I said, "This is a group of people, who have their own agenda, who are trying to make the U.S. ambassador a political figure. And I don't think that's the role I should be in. They're trying to make me a promoter of President Cordero and a promoter of the Republican Party here in Ecuador. And I've refused to have a part in it."

He said, "You're absolutely right," and he didn't meet with them.

But this kind of stuff, for an ambassador, is very, very corrosive.

Q: Oh, sure it is.

HART: Very corrosive, because people get wind of this, and never mind who's right and who's wrong. If you've got this kind of odor around you, everybody assumes that it's probably coming from you. Even though you may not be the one who fouled the atmosphere, it's around you, and that's enough.

When I was back here in Washington in late August of '84 (shortly after the inauguration, I took home leave), I went in to see Ron Spiers, who was under secretary for management at the time, and I said, "Ron, I have some problems downstairs. I feel like I'm getting no support from Tony Motley; I feel like the office director is working against me. They won't do it upfront on a policy issue; it's really a very personal kind of thing. And I'm concerned about my situation."

And he said, "Relax. Those who know about these things know you're doing a good job. We've got some problems down in the Latin American Bureau. Motley wants to get his people into key positions, et cetera, et cetera, and he hasn't gotten a single one of his people placed in an ambassadorial post since he's been there. But relax, I'll take care of you. You're going to be there probably till January, or thereabouts, of '86." (In other words, I was going to be there another 14, 15 months, something like that.)

I said, "Okay," and I went back to Ecuador.

And then something important happened. Ron Spiers went on a long trip to visit a lot of posts; he was gone for about a month. Tony Motley had decided that he was leaving the U.S. government and going into private business, and he had a list of about ten or so ambassadors in Latin America that he wanted to replace with people of his choosing. While Ron Spiers was out of town, Tony Motley got the ear of George Shultz and of the deputy secretary, and he got his list through. It was called a massacre, and it got a lot of newspaper notice around town. I was one of those people; I was not Motley's boy. And the guy nominated to succeed me was Fernando Rondon. I found out about this by a phone call in December of 1984, and they said, "We want you to hear this from us." I think it was Rondon who called. "You should hear it before you read it in the newspaper," (because it would have come in on the wireless file sometime during the day) "that you're probably going to be replaced."

And I said, "Who's going to replace me?"

And he said, "I am."

I had never had a conversation with Motley of any kind about this. I had had one conversation with Motley in which he had taken exception to some things I had said or done. I explained why I had done them or said them or whatever, and I said, "Do I have a problem with you?"

And he said, "No, you don't have a problem."

And I said, "I want to take this upstairs if I have a problem with you."

He denied the problem, but, boy, my throat was cut. I got hold of Ron Spiers and said, "What's going on?"

He said, "I'm trying to turn it around, but you're not the only one. Motley pulled off a coup. I'm trying to play catch up, and I don't think I'll be able to."

Only one person came to my defense, Jesse Helms, who thought I was being removed because I was too conservative for Motley's taste. Jesse Helms went on record in the *Congressional Record* defending me and a couple of other people. There were some political appointees who got axed at the same time who were friends of Jesse's.

I never went public on anything involved in this; I always stayed private. I never told the Ecuadorians what was going on. But, of course, they knew (it was in the papers) that a change was coming. I felt like my effectiveness had been greatly damaged by this, but I went to the president again and reviewed the bidding about the support for his opponent crap. And he told me that absolutely I had no problem, that he had had no hand in this, et cetera, et cetera. When I asked in Washington why this was happening, the answer I got was, "Essentially because you couldn't get along with the Febres Cordero government."

Things kind of rocked along from December to March. David Rockefeller came into town with a group of people and had a meeting with Febres Cordero, in which Febres Cordero said to David Rockefeller and the people there assembled that I had supported his opponent in the previous election. David came to my house for lunch and told me this, in March '85.

I went back to the embassy and convened the senior country team meeting and explained to them the situation and said, "What do you think I ought to do?" They weren't any help. So then I said, "Unless somebody can give me a good reason not to, what I plan to do is to send a cable to the secretary of state asking for immediate relief." Rondon's nomination was wandering around somewhere, but it was going to be a long time before it ever got through. He finally arrived there in August of '85. I asked to be relieved in March of '85, and actually left the first week in April of '85. I said to the secretary of state, "I consider that my usefulness here has ended. If the president of this country persists in telling me one thing, and telling David Rockefeller something absurd like this, I feel that it's an embarrassment to the United States of America and to me personally to be in this position. Therefore, I ask to be relieved." And I was relieved.

When I submitted my letter of resignation, the answer I got back, which was probably drafted by Rondon, was like, "Thank you for your resignation, goodbye." There was no attempt, there was no intent, to say anything that might indicate that I had contributed anything to the U.S.-Ecuadorian relationship.

Q: The Department of State, in all fairness, has always been terrible at this sort of thing, anyway. It is absolutely almost without soul or style as far as...

HART: Well, you can't talk about the Department of State, you can only talk about the individuals, because the Department is us.

Q: It's us.

HART: Here we had a guy who had stabbed me in the back repeatedly being in charge of drafting the response to my cable of resignation. And it was not nice.

I had always planned to retire in my early fifties. I had planned to retire at age fifty as the director of Andean affairs. When it didn't work that way, I really had always planned to retire shortly after Ecuador unless something really attractive came along.

I came back and I went to see the director general, who was George Vest, and Ron Spiers, and I asked both of them, "Am I damaged goods?" Both of them assured me that I was not, and if I would be patient, I would have another assignment that would be very good. But they had a lot of people, coming off ambassadorial jobs, stacked up here who were awaiting assignments, and I'd have to be patient. And I said, "I am not going to be patient. And the reason is, if you hang around these corridors long enough in this kind of situation, the institution will humiliate you. I don't want to be like a heavyweight boxer who's had too many bouts and doesn't know when to say, 'This is it; I'm out of here.' If I don't have a job, which I find attractive, within three months, you will have my retirement papers on your desk."

In three months, I didn't have that assignment, and they had my retirement papers.

And I walked out of that building with a terrible bitter taste in my mouth. Maybe I shouldn't; probably I wasn't treated any worse than anybody else.

I made some mistakes, no doubt about it. I underestimated both the lack of ethics and the conspiratorial skills of people like Rondon.

Q: What happened to him?

HART: He went as ambassador to Ecuador. He told the staff that he was there to get into as close contact and to be as supportive of León Febres Cordero as he could possibly be. And he spent the next three years doing exactly that. And anybody or anything that had been identified with me, he found some way to eliminate it. And he did.

I have not been back to Ecuador, although I've been to Latin America a couple of times since then. I have no interest in Ecuador.

The whole thing was, I felt, a really kind of sorry way to end a career. And if I had it to do over again, if I had the choice between being ambassador to Ecuador or retiring out of the Office of Andean Affairs, I would rather retire out of the Office of Andean Affairs.

Q: But you got some things done.

HART: Got things done. Got a lot of things done the first year or so I was in Ecuador, too. It was an exhilarating time, because when I needed something, when I really needed to talk to somebody about something, when I needed to cut a deal that was both in Ecuador's interest and mine, I had immediate access to the president, and I had good backing from Washington, as long as Les Scott was around. But that disappeared.

We got a lot done. We moved the relationship about as far along the road as it's ever been, and it hasn't been that far along the road since. It was a relationship based on mutual respect and truthfulness. I can't pretend anytime. I'm incapable of keeping up a pretense more than about fifteen minutes. Even if I don't say the words about what I think, my body language and my facial expression and everything else are such that nobody has to hear any words; they know how I feel about the subject.

And, in essence, it was going from Hurtado, a man who was pretty much the same way in dealing with people...going back to an old style of Ecuadorian political leader, a caudillo. And Febres Cordero was a caudillo who tried to jerk the ideological chains, and succeeded to some degree.

In my farewell message out of Ecuador, which I sent around the hemisphere, I said, "Let's not forget what we're really about here. Let's keep in mind what our interests really are. Let's don't get in bed with this guy, because he's headed, down the line, for some real troubles, and we don't need to be involved in that kind of thing."

He was, and we were.

And in the next four years, under his successor, Rodrigo Borja, who was the guy I was accused of having helped in the election, I don't think that our relationship ever recovered. I don't know for sure, because I wasn't there, but my impression is that that fellow never trusted us.

No big deal. The world goes on. I think that we get so parochial that we think someplace like Ecuador really is the navel of the earth, if you are there, and that's the main risk. That's ridiculous. There is no great harm to any major group of people if the American ambassador does a bad job in a place like Ecuador, because it's not the main center of the axis.

But if that's what you're responsible for, if you've been asked to give it your best shot, and you don't give it your best shot, you're instead looking at your next assignment or you're trying to curry favor -- that's unprofessional. If you're trying to shape the message to what people want to hear -- that's unprofessional. Even though it may not be center stage, it may not even be one of those three rings, it may be somewhere off in a side tent, if you're a professional, I think you have to give it your best. And your best is to give your best advice and to make your best suggestions for policy and actions as your professional skills let you do, regardless of what the consequences may be for you personally. That's where I come from.

Q: Well, I think it's highly commendable, and I'm all for it. There is a real problem here in foreign affairs (it's true in any organization) of careerism versus principle. Well, Sam, shall we call a halt?

Sam just had a little story he wanted to tell, and I want to get it.

HART: Well, the little story is about the rather strange relationship between the Russian ambassador and myself in Quito.

The Russian position in Quito was a little bit out of whack with what it was in most places in Latin America. First of all, the Ecuadorian Communist Party was insignificant. I mean, they really couldn't turn out any votes. They could call a strike or something like that, but nobody took them very seriously. Certainly the Russian Embassy didn't take them very seriously. The Communists in Ecuador, such as they were, were more ideologically aligned with the Cubans and to a certain extent even with the Maoists than they were with the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union put a few resources in there, into the Communist Party, but they weren't that concerned about the Communist Party.

After the military were replaced by a democratic government in Ecuador in 1980, the Soviets put a very, very skillful career ambassador there who had a fairly long history in Latin America, who worked hard in support of Ecuadorian democracy. And we found that we were operating on the same page, and in fact on the same paragraph, of the same book, in terms of what we saw our national self-interest being in Ecuador, which was: support for democracy.

Not everybody felt that way. The Cuban ambassador certainly didn't. The Cubans were giving aid and training to a crazy group of left-wing anarchists, really, who from time to time caused us a little trouble in the embassy and elsewhere, called the Alfaro Vive Carajo group. Crazy.

But, anyway, the Russian ambassador and I found that we were somewhat kindred spirits. He had been their chief negotiator for the Law of the Seas before coming to Ecuador. As such, he had a good deal of contact with Elliot Richardson, who was our Law of the Seas negotiator, and had formed a personal friendship.

The CIA station chief in Ecuador was a real idiot by the name of Walter Berwick. Walter had been the station chief in Jamaica and had had a big success in Jamaica in recruiting the prime minister, whose name I cannot exactly remember right now (Michael Manley). Born in Boston, I think. Anyway, Walter Berwick had had this big success story in Jamaica. Had no real Latin American experience and had come to Quito as a hotdog going to duplicate his efforts in Quito. And caused me enormous problems. I spent more time trying to keep Walter Berwick on the reins than I did doing something positive. Very bad case of cold warriorism. Walter was eventually relieved from his job over this, but it was long after the fact.

Anyway, I got to be very friendly with the Russian ambassador. And one day, Walter came to me and said, "Would you be willing to see whether or not we can recruit the Russian ambassador?"

And I said, "Walter, are you crazy? The Russian ambassador's not going to let us recruit him. Are you asking him to defect?"

And he said, "No, no, we wanted to recruit him in place. And we have reason to believe he may

be receptive."

And I said, "I think that's dumb."

He said, "Well, it won't cost us anything to try."

And I said, "Well, it could be awfully embarrassing."

"Well, we can do it in a way where it won't be that embarrassing."

So the short of the story is, over time, we worked out a scenario. And here's how it happened. I invited the Russian ambassador over to have a drink one afternoon at my house, and we sat and talked about Ecuador and what have you for a while. Finally, at some moment where it didn't seem too much off the subject of conversation, I started to talk about what he wanted to do with his future, where he might go after Ecuador. And what I said to him was, "If you ever decide you'd like to make a basic change in your life, I think I could arrange for it to happen in a way that would make it rather easy. For example, your old friend Elliot Richardson would be willing to come down here and talk to you about it."

This guy said, "What?"

I kind of repeated it and rephrased it, trying to find some way to get through this moment without appearing to be a total fool.

And this guy, when I finished a second time, looked at me and smiled and said, "No, I don't think so."

And that was the last that was ever said of it. It was surreal. That's the story.

Now there's another story I'll tell you, about the Nicaraguan ambassador. Cuban-Ecuadorian relationships had been left at the chargé level because of a problem they'd had some years before. But the Nicaraguan was not a Sandinista himself; his son was a Sandinista. He was a dentist, and he had been sent down there as a favor of the Sandinista government to his son. But the Nicaraguans were mucking around all over Ecuadorian politics, including with the Alfaro Vive Carajo group, and we caught them red-handed with the documents and what have you, financing and recruiting and training these people to come back and be terrorists in Ecuador. And the Ecuadorian government had this.

The number-two guy in the Foreign Ministry and I were very close friends, and I said to him, "I'm going to do something. And I want you to know about it beforehand, so if something happens, you'll realize what went on."

And the story was this: Alfaro Vive Carajo threw a couple of sticks of dynamite over the patio wall of the embassy one night, in the middle of the night, and it went off and shattered acres of plate-glass windows in the embassy lobby. And only because our one smart Marine was on that night did he not run out there and pick that up and be blown to bits. He got behind a pillar when

he saw that thing with a fuse come over the wall.

They left a note that Alfaro Vive Carajo had done it, and we found out that indeed it was they who had done it. And I knew the Nicaraguan Embassy was involved with this group.

At the Christmas Day cocktail that the president of Ecuador always had, I stood next, in the protocol receiving line, to the Nicaraguan ambassador. (He had presented his credentials right after I had, so we always stood next to each other on ceremonial occasions.) I had told the British ambassador and another guy in the Foreign Ministry what I was going to do, so that they could watch.

After we had had a glass of champagne, I pulled the Nicaraguan aside and I said to him, "Doctor, I just want you to know something. We know that the Alfaro Vive Carajo group exploded this bomb in our embassy recently. And we know they have a list of people in the embassy whom they would like to kidnap or in some other way do harm to. And we also are well aware of your government's connection to these people. And I just want to tell you, just so you'll know, because I think you ought to know, that if anything happens to any of my people, or we get another attack of the kind that we got the other night, that my government will go directly to the source on this, and our response will be swift and powerful. I just thought you ought to know that."

I think a large brown spot appeared on the back of his pants about that time. And he stuttered and denied it.

And I said, "Well, I'm glad to know that your embassy doesn't have anything to do with this. Because, if it did, you'd have a problem. But I'm glad to know you don't have this problem. I really appreciate these assurances. But keep in mind what I said."

Well, I broke off and went over to the British ambassador, and he was practically lying on the floor, laughing.

That guy beat a path out of there, went on leave back to Nicaragua, and hardly ever showed up again in Quito before he resigned his post.

If the Department had ever found out what I had done, they would have probably been upset about it.

Q: Yeah, yeah, but it helps. It helps.

HART: The Nicaraguan, before he left, went over to the Foreign Ministry and complained to the guy I had told I was going to do this, the deputy foreign minister, that I had threatened him. And, with his best straight face, the deputy foreign minister told him he didn't understand what he was talking about; there must have been some misunderstanding in the language.

So that was the story.

WILLIAM JEFRAS DIETRICH
Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Quito (1983-1986)

William Jefras Dietrich was born on December 11, 1936 in Boston, Massachusetts. He received his B.A. from Wesleyan College in 1958 and pursued his post-graduate work at the School of Advanced International Studies from which he received his M.A. in 1960. His career has taken him to countries including Bolivia, Argentina, Brazil, Israel, Italy, Ecuador, El Salvador, and Mexico. Mr. Dietrich was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on October 19, 1999.

Q: This is the 24th of January 2000. Jeff, Ecuador, 1983. How would you describe the situation when you arrived in Ecuador?

DIETERICH: Ecuador is an interesting country. It is very much an Indian country, which means it has the disturbing social aspect of the Andes. That is very much on our minds now because of the coup attempt they just went through in Ecuador. The country lives under social system that is almost a kind of unspoken apartheid. Although most people in Ecuador have Indian blood, those who either by choice or tradition live an Indian life style and identify with their own indigenous culture, are people out of the political system. They rarely, and usually cannot, aspire to positions of political influence. Most of them make their living in a subsistence agricultural economy.

That having been said, what is different about Ecuador in the region is that while it has a tradition of political instability, it does not have the tradition of violent nastiness that haunts the politics of Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia. Politics are played very hard, but there is not same fear of reprisal and thirst for vengeance that has cost so many lives in the rest of the Andes.

I think that fortunate difference stems from the fact that the political forces in Ecuador are sort of evenly balanced. You have two major cities - Quito up in the mountains and Guayaquil down on the coast. Neither city has ever been able to dominate the political life of the nation, as has been the case in Peru, where Lima dominates, or in Bolivia where La Paz dominates. Guayaquil is just about the same size as Quito. Although the people and the political culture are very different in the two places - there is a very definite highland-lowland dichotomy throughout the Andes - they have managed to alternate power from one region to the other. Since they know the other persons are going to get power eventually, they tend to treat each other badly verbally, but in terms of physical repression - it rarely happens.

Q: Do you have the situation that has prevailed in some other places where you have the ten or thirty big families who have won parts of the country where the peasants are so downtrodden, has that system developed?

DIETERICH: I don't know how many families it would be, but there is clearly an upper class that draws its power from two places. One is land itself, but the other source is influence and power over people. There is also a newer class of younger people who are the sons of people

who made a lot of money from land or even of European immigrants who worked for people who owned land. They have been fairly well educated - often in the U.S. - and tend to make their money out of commerce and industry. By providing services and imported goods to the landowners they became as rich or richer than their customers and a whole lot more capable of dealing with modern economic issues. It may be more important to have a Chevrolet next to your pharmaceutical company, than it is to own a big, not very efficient, hacienda someplace. A case in point would be the man who became president while I was there, Leon Fibrous Corridor, whose father was the overseer on one of the big estates. He was a man who made a good living and changed the nature of his family by being the top person, working for somebody who owned a lot of land.

By the way, Ecuador was the model for Joseph Conrad's *Nostromo*. Conrad was stranded in Guayaquil for awhile and took the country for his Latin American republic in that very good novel.

Q: What was your job when you went there?

DIETERICH: I went there as the PAO, my first experience as the head of a USIS post. I was delighted to have that job, because that is what you aim for.

Q: We were talking off-mike a bit, but having come from Israel, which is in continuous crisis, and go to Ecuador, didn't you find that to not be very challenging?

DIETERICH: No, I didn't feel that way at all. Remember, I had been in Bolivia and lived through two coups d'état in Bolivia, and served in Argentina in a very exciting time, with the return of Peron after all those years of exile. I had been in Brazil at a time when issues of nuclear power and the drug trade were becoming very serious, so I didn't have that feeling at all. I didn't know what was going to happen in Ecuador, but I had never been in a boring Latin American country.

Secondly, it is a lot more fun working in a country where you can speak the language. Truth be told, one of the interesting things about working in Latin America is that we really do. The foreign service may think it does that worldwide, but it is not really true. We think it is a good idea but we don't really do it much outside of Europe and Latin America. Most of our hard-language-speaking people are still not good enough to really do business in the local language and we still don't have nearly enough of them. Given that Spanish is an easy language, given that we have a base of native-Spanish speakers in the United States, you very soon get to the point where you do almost all your business in Spanish. It never would have occurred to me in those countries to speak English unless the interlocutor insisted upon it. Latin Americans don't insist on it very often. Their attitude is, "I struggled and learned your language up there in your cold and awful country, and you can damn well struggle down here in mine."

And the truth is I was happy to get my own post. That would have been hard to do in the Middle East area because I didn't have Arabic, and I wasn't really very excited about serving in another Middle East country. Remember, I had had three tours in Latin America and I liked it.

Q: Who was the ambassador when you were there?

DIETERICH: I had two ambassadors: Sam Hart was the ambassador when I arrived. He was later replaced by Fred Rondon.

Q: I've interviewed both of them, but I was wondering... Sam Hart had come away from Israel with a rather jaundiced view of our relations there. He was chief of the economics section and would draw Israeli requests, only to find that his professional opinion was never accepted because it really depended on the political powers in Congress. I was wondering how you found him to be as an ambassador.

DIETERICH: I think Sam probably also left Ecuador with great disagreements with U.S. policy. I think he probably left every post with great disagreements with U.S. policy. That's a hard question to answer.

The fact is, I think he got along well with Osvaldo Hurtado, the president who was moderate left and replaced Jaime Roldos who had been killed in an airplane crash. But, I don't think Sam had a lot of fun being ambassador. I don't think he enjoyed it near as much as he thought he would. It is a hard adjustment coming from a country like Israel, where people don't trust us but act like they do, to a country where people do trust us but act like they don't.

Maybe, trust is too strong a word. They have confidence in us to do certain things and protect certain interests. He came to Ecuador at a time when there were no particularly big problems, although elections were in the offing. He had fired my predecessor. Sam had asked him to do something and the person said he wouldn't do it, or at least he told the staff he wasn't going to do it. I don't remember what the issue was. But I came in at his request. Sam had been a friend in Israel and has remained one. But, he is an officer who believes excessively in the "kiss up, kick down" style of management, except he kicks in both directions - he is not very good at the kissing part.

He had a strong feeling that press was very important and that I was a good press officer. He also had a great fear that USIS, if you didn't watch them very carefully, would go out and hire a "nose flute player" as he always said, to come and put on some sort of meaningless cultural event. In all my years with USIA I had never run into a "nose flute player" nor anything resembling that. What we did have was a pretty good piano player or two under Charlie Wick's artistic ambassador program, which was a program to help young American struggling artists. It worked pretty well. We also had the Twyla Tharp ballet. Now that was a big deal.

I'm not sure Sam knew or appreciated how big a deal it was to get somebody as important as Twyla Tharp to get her company to come and do a performance in Ecuador. That took a lot of my time. I think the performance was during Sam's time, although it may have been later. Certainly, we began working on it during his time. I was scared to death that somehow I would screw-up and we would have to come up with some of the financing ourselves, and I wouldn't be able to figure out a way to do it. Eventually, we were able to get the big municipal theater downtown, which wasn't a bad venue, and talked American companies into providing a lot of support by the simple expedient of suggesting they buy tickets in blocks and either donate them

to their staff or for public relations purpose. We sold out the house.

On the day after I got there, we invaded Grenada and I found myself in front of the press trying to speak Spanish again, getting chuckles all over the place because it kept coming out sounding like Italian. The other big problem, of course, was we had elections coming up. Latin Americans always assumed that Americans have some strong opinion about how their elections are supposed to turn out. The truth is we didn't have very strong opinions about how those elections should turn out. But it is very hard to convince people of that. It is even more difficult if you say nothing, because everybody assumes you are sulking and are mad because the right wing might not win. If you try to reach out to the opposition, then it's "Oh my God, you've switched sides and you want the left to win (or whoever is the opposition), and this is a big change, and Lord knows what you are up to, but it can't be good for us." We approached that problem lots of ways, mainly by taking every opportunity to talk about our objectivity. It didn't always work.

Q: Could you describe the media in Ecuador at that time?

DIETERICH: It was a typical Latin American construct. You had a couple of big conservative, but not reactionary, dailies, one in Guayaquil and one in Quito, that were pretty good and members of the Inter-American Press Association. They were run by people who basically believed in the free press ideas we have here in the United States, although for publishers it is less of an idealistic stance than a free enterprise stance. In other words, "It's my newspaper and I'm entitled to have my opinions and they don't have to be the government's opinions. My opinion is that free enterprise is a neat thing." There is a lot of tension between publishers and journalists, as there is in the United States. Of course, the journalists tend to be more to the left of the political spectrum than the publishers. But, it works for Ecuador, and the country would be much poorer without those big conservative dailies.

Then you had tabloids in both cities, and you had a vociferous but not very well funded political press. Lots of radio stations. A.M. radio transmitters are cheap, and lots of people have radios, but there is very little variety - all play pretty much the same music and have the same ads. I remember only one television channel at that time, government-run but not ridiculously so. Fairly decent news broadcasting and inexpensive American reruns, plus Mexican, Brazilian, and Venezuelan soap operas and comedy shows.

Q: In '83 to '86, we were at the height of our involvement, under the Reagan administration, in Central America. How did that play in Ecuador from your perspective?

DIETERICH: You know, it's funny, I would like to say I spent a great deal of time worrying about that stuff, but I really didn't. Ecuadorians really didn't care very much about that. It was far away. They were interested in their own dispute with Peru, and interested in the fact that they had their own homegrown guerrilla group called Alfaro Vive Carajo. It translates something like "Alfaro still lives, by God!" Alfaro being a populist national hero of sorts. But that group did not represent a particularly dangerous threat to the government. I think what really happened with Central America is that it had only a symbolic value. What you thought about what the Americans were doing in Central America had to do with how you felt they ought to behave towards your own country. If you thought there was a danger that the United States would

intervene to crush the guerrilla group, then you would be against that. Or if you were scared of the guerilla group, then you were afraid the United States wouldn't intervene to crush the guerrilla group. I don't remember being asked many questions about Nicaragua or El Salvador, and I certainly did not think it was in our interest to stimulate those questions. Also, the questions were hard to deal with because we didn't get a lot of guidance from the department or USIA., and it is not the kind of issue where you want to wing it very much. The problems were very complex, and there is an unwritten rule in the foreign service, and really a pretty good one, that a press attach_ in one country does not generate stories about events in another country without coordinating with his counterpart in that country. Communications were not yet good enough among posts so that you really knew how you could be helpful to your counterpart in San Salvador or Managua.

Q: How about drugs?

DIETERICH: Drugs were an issue that took a lot of my time. There was a lot of press work on publicizing what the DEA wanted, and what U.S. drug programs were in Ecuador and why we did them. Also a lot of work on the cultural side on encouraging local anti-drug organizations in Ecuador.

The absolutely correct theory behind much of the information work we did is that if a country begins to participate in the drug trade, even as a transit point, it would end up being a consumer. You not only become consumers, you become consumers of the industrial detritus of the trade. That is why young Colombians were killing themselves smoking *basuco*, which was made from the leftovers of the cocaine trade, laced with all sorts of chemicals, might well kill you before you became an addict. We were beginning to see that sort of stuff in Ecuador.

Also, we had people important in the government whose kids picked up drug habits, often in the United States. I remember doing some work with a nonprofit outfit which was running drug clinics, mainly for children of the middle class who were in trouble. I thought it was a good thing to do because you were hammering home that message to people, "This is not something you are doing to the Americans, it is something you are doing to yourselves."

Q: Did the media pick this up?

DIETERICH: Yes, we had help. The media was very receptive to what we said. The old style of USIA, the USIA that existed when I joined, was an organization that as far as its press relations, and in a sense its cultural relations, dealt with the economics of media poverty. It was easy to place the wireless file in little newspapers that couldn't afford a wire service and had no sources of international news. That worked fine for us through the '50s and '60s. The trouble is, it began to not work for us as conditions improved around the world, particularly in Latin America, where there was already a tradition of fairly prosperous big family-owned newspapers. What I had figured out in Argentina and Brazil was that the only way you could get any attention from the big papers was to make sure that you were the source for what the U.S. government was saying. Not ersatz wire service stories, but the raw materials, the text, the official statements. What I tried to do in Ecuador is what I tried elsewhere - to be the source for what the U.S. government is up to and not spend so much time trying to convince them of the virtues of U.S. society. A lot of

Latin Americans believed in those virtues anyway.

I think also, there had been a big change after the Vietnam War. Before the Vietnam War, many of the people we most worried about trusted the U.S. government but did not trust U.S. society, it was too disorderly, too democratic, too vulgar, or whatever. After the Vietnam War you had a different dynamic, where people on the moderate left often tended to trust U.S. society. They didn't trust the U.S. government. Therefore, the problem became the government. So you had two levels. You speak for the government because that is where the problem is; and you provide the raw materials of journalism - the things the government is saying - because that's what the best journalists want from you. So finding out what the State Department spokesman had said was difficult to do but very important. Paying a lot of attention to speeches that came across on the wire, the secretary of State, the president, or whoever, getting them out to people quickly. Pointing out the sections where it was relevant to the local situation. You can't always count on a busy editor to read an entire speech, every now and then you have to highlight the relevant parts and get it to him. Get the ambassador to do his own versions of things the government is saying, to restate the proposition in his words. Getting journalists to see the ambassador.

Q: What about person-to-person relations with the United States? I'm thinking of Ecuadorian students going to the United States and studying, and others on a visitors program. Were the Ecuadorians pretty well plugged into the United States?

DIETERICH: Yes, they were. In the first place, they were not very far away. Second, as the New York Times had pointed out many years before I went to Ecuador, Miami had become the capital of Latin America. It was like Buenos Aires or Rio had been to an earlier generation - the places you had to visit every now and then if you had money and wanted to stay ahead of the game. There were a whole lot of old school connections in Ecuador, people who had gone to universities or graduate school in the United States. Hurtado had been partly educated in the United States. Febres Cordero, the new president, had been educated in a small college in the United States. Many people in both of their cabinets had studies in the U.S. I am a big believer in those educational exchange programs because they make a whale of a difference. Not only in politics but in commerce too. A person who has studied his discipline, whether its medicine, engineering, or computer science, in the United States, has a predisposition to buy American.

That brings me to the Fulbright Program. We had an active Fulbright Program in Ecuador. Ecuador is what is known in the educational exchange trade as a commission country. That means there is a bilateral agreement that governs the functioning of the Fulbright Program in that country, through a binational board of directors that meets and makes decisions on the awarding of scholarships. In most countries, the Fulbright commission also serves as an educational advising office, which is helpful because an Ecuadorian who does not come from a rich family that already has a tradition of studying in the United States, who may be the first person in his family to want to study in the United States, needs help; he needs a place where he can go and figure out how it works in the United States. He needs a place that has university catalogues; he may need help in filling out forms; he needs advice on financial aid. All sorts of things. The Fulbright commission in Ecuador did that. They maintained their own offices and had a lot of kids who got advice on how to get to the States to study. I don't think it is possible to overestimate how important that is.

Q: Was there a pretty good cadre when you arrived and did you continue to cultivate the people who had the American experience in the upper circles?

DIETERICH: Yes, but it had to be handled with care. That is a very subtle relationship. How do I describe it? A person who has studied in the United States, comes home and takes a governmental position, must constantly show that he has not sold out to the Americans. This means he has to be handled by the American Embassy with patience and a certain amount of subtlety, otherwise we are going to burn him. Some colleagues may be suspicious. It is an attitude that says "Well, yes, he studied in the United States; he goes and sees those Americans all the time and God knows what he is telling them. God only knows whether he is going to sell us out to those foreigners." That is an attitude that is encouraged by people that did not study in the United States or people who may owe their allegiance more to European political influences.

The United States political and cultural influence, as opposed to economic clout, in Latin America is fairly new. I think now most people would say that New York, Miami, and Washington are "where it's at." That was not true until the '60s. Most influential Latin Americans took their political sustenance, did their shopping, and looked for their cultural tastes more to Europe than they did to the United States. That follows traditional immigrant patterns and language, and all sorts of things. You have to remember what a big language island Spanish is. It stretches from Madrid to Manila. So traditionally, most Latin Americans have looked to the Spanish and European political spectrum for their political ideas - rather doctrinaire leftists parties and phalangist right wingers on the extremes whose only common ground had to do with so-called dependence on the U.S.

Now dependency theories have gone out of fashion in Latin America. After all, democracy really does rule in Latin America, and I do believe that has to do with the change in how Latin Americans view the United States. It probably does represent a triumph of American foreign policy. Like all triumphs, you have to share the blame and credit with a lot of other influences, but the fact is, for the last ten years or so it has been our goal in Latin America to encourage democracy when we could. It has happened.

Q: How was Ronald Reagan perceived? You were there early on.

DIETERICH: Of course, he was inaugurated while I was still in Israel. The fact is the Ecuadorian elections produced a president who considered himself very much a Reaganite. Febres Cordero believed what Ronald Reagan believed. I would guess he believed what Ronald Reagan believed before Ronald Reagan believed it. So that brings us to the elections.

Q: The elections were when?

DIETERICH: The elections were in '84, I think. It was the first time I had seen how an embassy handles elections on a more senior level. It seemed to me the embassy's first priority was to figure out who was going to win the elections and that seemed a little silly to me. It was going to be a hard-to-call election, and all this energy was going into being the first to report election results - a task force, people sitting around in rooms together, and rigging up radios together and

all sorts of things - seemed silly in the sense that it was focusing way too much embassy attention on the election, and this worked against our goal that we were neutral in the election. I kept asking myself what we would do? What is the action that flows from this intelligence? Suppose we figure out an hour before the rest of the world that so and so is going to win the election and we report it to Washington, then what happens? The answer is "nothing."

Q: Well, this is a self-generated test. Sort of showing they are smart.

DIETERICH: But to me it is self-indulgent and dangerous. When that political officer starts sitting across the desk from somebody and starts interrogating them on what the results of the election are going to be, he may be sending, inadvertently, terrible messages. If there is any advice I used to give political officers when I finally became a DCM (Deputy Chief of Mission) it was, "Remember, your questions are somebody else's answers every time. That's not a clever turn of phrase, that is a fact. He is sitting down with you because he wants to know what you are up to. If you sense you are sitting down with somebody who doesn't care what you ask him, find somebody else, because he can't be important - you are wasting your time with him."

I was especially disturbed by attempts to organize a pool in the embassy on who was going to win, because I was convinced it would be leaked to the press. If a story leaked about who won the embassy pool, it would take no time at all for a journalist, even a fairly honest journalist, to turn that into an embassy prediction as to who was going to win. The second round of that story would be disastrous for us. Now, I'd like to tell you I talked the embassy out of having a pool, but I didn't. All I could do was not participate in it myself. I think it is a dangerous thing and show-offy and self-indulgent. The days are long past when the United States would intervene somehow to keep an election from coming out the way it was going to come out.

Q: On this election, how did we see the issues as far as American interests were concerned?

DIETERICH: We had not done badly. The main interests were, "Will American investments be treated well? Will they follow our lead on drug issues? Will they behave reasonably on human rights?" We did have a modest AID program in Ecuador and wondered if we would be able to continue those programs. All these are issues that occupy the thought of foreign service posts throughout Latin America.

The fun of dealing with Latin America is that it really is important to the United States and in ways that are fairly immediate. When Ronald Reagan said all that silly stuff about the tanks rolling into Harlingen, Texas, he obviously didn't know much about Mexico nor much about tanks, and he certainly didn't know much about Nicaragua. But behind that, like a lot of things that Reagan said, was a real truth. What happens in Central America affects Mexico, because Mexico by nature is vulnerable, and what happens in Mexico affects the United States right away. Whether it is drugs going over the border or people going over the border, or sewage spilling into the bay in San Diego, or whatever, what Mexico does really is important to the United States and vice-a-versa. Our interest in Latin America, and especially in Central Mexico, are not some theory about dominoes, it is stuff that happens every day. Now how did I get off on that tirade?

Q: Well, I'll go back to my original question. Did we see any American issues in the elections?

DIETERICH: Yes, we wanted good government and stability, good behavior on human rights, progress toward democracy because if we didn't get those things we couldn't pursue the more down-to-earth programs we really needed to pursue. Otherwise, our commercial interests, fishing interests off the coast of Ecuador, even environmental interests in the Galapagos, and the drug issues could not be handled efficiently.

We wanted the cooperation of Ecuador to help us stem the transit of drugs out of Bolivia through Ecuador into Mexico and into the United States. It is in the nature of American politics that if you are going to cooperate with somebody financially, if you are going to help him pay to solve problems that we cause, you have to have a certain level of acceptance on the part of the American body politic, and to get that you have to have a pretty good human rights record and you have to have a reasonably democratic political system, and you've got to have a military that is efficient but under civilian control. Those are issues upon which we can't very well compromise. Oh yes, and you don't beat up on religious folks. Those were our interests.

We were not particularly worried that either new government would be opposed to those interests. So we could look at that election in a fairly relaxed way because neither side was going to do great damage to our interests. What we wanted to see was a clean process. We pretty much got it. This was a little bit before the great armies of election observers and things like that. Febres Cordero won it fair and square and this represented one of those periodic sea changes in Ecuadorian politics where the center of power moved to Guayaquil.

Q: Did you find a problem of the type you saw in Rome, where you sort of hop back and forth and make sure people weren't picking up the snobbery of Quito versus Guayaquil?

DIETERICH: Absolutely. I had a branch USIS post, at Quito, at the consulate in Guayaquil. It was never very well staffed, to tell you the truth. I had to go to Guayaquil often, but I liked it and didn't mind going there. My experience in Santa Cruz, Bolivia sort of helped. I don't mind what the Latin Americans refer to rather disdainfully as "*tropicalismo*" - I kind of like *tropicalismo* and feel very comfortable with it.

I suppose it was a problem, and I don't think it affected our relationship with Febres Cordero. No matter how much you do on it, the Guayaquil people will say that the embassy doesn't do enough in Guayaquil.

Besides I had to be careful with time and resources. We had an old tradition of working in the city of Cuenca. Cuenca is down to the south, very much in the mountains, a city of great charm but tremendous isolation. I don't think there was a road into Cuenca until the 1960s. I remember going to the cultural center, being shown an old piano and being told "We are proud of the piano because it came up on the back of a mule." It must have been one hell of a mule. Cuenca was this very old, very traditional city that always felt neglected. But they felt they had very strong cultural traditions and the cultural attach_, or head of USIS should pay much more attention to Cuenca than we ever did.

One of the tricks you use, and we used this in Mexico also, is when you have a Fulbright Commission meeting, quarterly meeting, you have it in another city. You would be amazed how important you can make the Fulbright Commission look when you are out of the capitals. In most of those towns and cities, the city fathers would turn out to greet us and put on entertainments and dinners, and everything else. So we did regional stuff. I even remember going down to see the oil fields in the jungles of Ecuador.

Anyway, Febres Cordero won. I guess he was convinced that Hart's embassy wasn't the embassy he wanted to work with. I guess he thought we had been too close to Hurtado, but you know, that's that old dilemma in the foreign service. Of course we had been close to Hurtado, he was the government and an interesting person, who was seen as a progressive you could work with. He was well-respected in the rest of Latin America, so there was every reason in the world why we should have had a close relationship with him. I thought we had done fairly well in reaching out to the opposition. (End of tape)

Q: You were saying it was a new government?

DIETERICH: Yes, Febres Cordero may have thought "Hey, it's a new government, I won, a new party, I'm from Guayaquil. The least the Americans can do is send a new ambassador." We may see that as undesirable, but I have a feeling a lot of Latin American politicians see it as sort of a logical thing.

Q: Fred Rondon came in?

DIETERICH: Yes, Fred Rondon came in. Sam Hart left, I think rather unhappy. I had known Fred for quite awhile, and it was fun to have an ambassador about my age. I had worked with him before as a colleague in Washington. Until I went to Ecuador ambassadors had been rather Godlike, distant figures, and all of a sudden ambassadors were persons I had grown up in the service with.

Q: How did Rondon operate?

DIETERICH: I think he was in a pretty ideal position, and his first job was to solidify his relationship with the Febres Cordero government. This he did pretty well. It was right after the elections, so reaching out to the opposition wasn't a really high priority at that point. You would still have time to do that, the opposition is licking its wounds anyway, and most likely will reorganize itself. The human rights situation wasn't bad. We weren't in a human rights violating country, so you didn't have the concern of, "Gee are we being nice enough to the dissidents?" When it came to reaching out to Indians, I just don't think we knew how to do it.

Ecuador is a small country, but it is really a big country. There is a whole lot of countryside area out to the east, going down into the jungles, that we don't know much about, and there aren't very many towns down there. That is where a lot of folks live, but we don't have much contact with them. Every now and then they get mad and come roaring into Quito and raise hell. Then they go home. That is what happened in this last coup. The problem is, they go home, and there is almost no way to get a handle on the political organization because there is no place to go. If

you send a political officer down - where does he go? Where does he paddle his canoe? Ambassador Rondon did a good job in getting in tight with Febres Cordero. I think Febres liked him. I don't remember big problems coming up, but I do remember doing a lot of work on drug stuff.

Q: What about relations with Peru? Was this an issue while you were there, or is it always an issue?

DIETERICH: It is always an issue, but I talked about the map and Ecuador being a big country. An Ecuadorian map would show it being a lot bigger than it would be on our map. There were a couple of dustups down on the frontier in the 1940s, and the United States is one of the guarantors...

Q: Right at the beginning of the war.

DIETERICH: We are one of the guarantors, along with Brazil and Venezuela, so we have a role to play. I can remember that there was a dustup and some shooting back and forth. Military attaches went down and looked at it and we made recommendations. But our recommendations were always the same. We think the parties should get together and solve the problem. Well, gee! There's a ringing policy to hang your hat on!

Q: I don't know what it is we are guaranteeing.

DIETERICH: We'll guarantee that we will have the same policy. I don't remember much coming from that. The trouble is, it is a source of instability, and when a dustup occurs you get people on the right in both countries, and people within the military in both countries who see that as an opportunity to attack the government. They then say, "Dammit, we didn't do what we were supposed to do. We should have been a whole lot tougher and we weren't tough because the president isn't tough." That stuff really works because they believe it. Just like there are people in this country who think we ought to be a lot tougher than we often are on certain issues because they aren't running things. That led to the Vargas affair and what was a coup attempt.

Q: Was this during your time?

DIETERICH: Yes.

Q: Can you talk about what the Vargas affair was?

DIETERICH: Frank Vargas was an Air Force General and an inveterate coup plotter. I first met him at a Marine Corps Ball, because my information officer was dating an officer in the MIL group who was known for his bad judgment. He took it upon himself, without clearing it with anybody, to invite Frank Vargas as his guest to the Marine Corps Ball. I ended up sitting at a table with them. I realized Vargas should not have been invited. Everybody knew who he was, and it looked like we were being nice to Frank Vargas. Frank, by the way, wasn't a nickname, he was named "Frank" and there were American connections in his family, but I'm not sure what they were. He did speak English very well. You know, a swaggering macho-type military officer.

The details are a little foggy now. He tried something of a coup nature but it didn't work, and Febres Cordero had him arrested and thrown in the clink. Then days later Febres Cordero flew down to the air force base outside Guayaquil, and was himself taken hostage by the air force. They said he had to release Frank Vargas. Then there was an attempt of a semi-takeover of the military portion of the airport in Quito also. We got pretty worried and there were the usual phone calls back and forth - U.S. military to their military, and others saying, "Bring this to a halt, it is no good." and "If you do this, you will never get one more cent of U.S. military aid and we won't sell you anything." Basically, it worked. Febres Cordero was released and Frank Vargas was put on a plane and escorted out of the country. Nobody got hurt, but it shook Febres Cordero. I think he felt we had done pretty much what we ought to have done but he was never as secure in his presidency after that.

Q: I'm thinking of events in January 2000 where there was an Indian revolt, then the military came in and within three days after phone calls of this nature, they turned the government over to the vice president. Was there a feeling of, "Gee, we can't go too far because the Americans are giving our military all this aid and if we mess around they will call it off?" In a way, this creates a dependency.

DIETERICH: We control their stuff. Well, that's good.

Q: At the same time, it means a mindset. From our point of view, and the people's point of view, it's probably not bad. It means you are not going to have military coups coming one after the other which are not for the benefit of the people.

DIETERICH: If I could make the trade where people in Latin America believe their military is dependent upon the United States but their economy is not, I would make that trade every time. That's good stuff. That's what happened this month. He proposed to dollarize the economy, which makes a lot of economic sense. I can understand how a person who has been educated at Harvard and has studied some economics might think this was a really great idea. Panama has done well with it.

The poorest of the poor in Ecuador said, "Wait a minute, this means prices for everything are going to go up and we are going to be screwed." They reacted accordingly. Pretty much unable to grasp the idea, to embrace the idea that, "Yes, it will be tough for a while but in the long run we'll all be better off." It's the old argument - in the long term we are all dead anyway, so this doesn't count. They were joined by junior officers in the military, who are also among the poorest of the poor. They don't get much money either, and if they start looking at a situation where the stuff they buy is going to be four times more expensive, they can't live with that. So they joined the revolt, the president went to ground someplace, and a junta was formed which included a military officer who was sort of the leader of the younger coup-types, and he joined with the Indians. Then I think the phone calls started. Then the head of the military replaced the younger man on the junta, then dissolved the junta which had ruled Ecuador for three hours. That seems ridiculous and that is always very funny, but I've seen that same thing in other countries.

Q: It happened almost in that same way in what was at that time the Soviet Union.

DIETERICH: We always think it's funny but that is actually fairly normal.

Q: Going back now, what about the issue that used to dominate our relations - tuna fishing?

DIETERICH: Tuna, oh big deal.

Q: We're talking about the '83 to '86 treaty.

DIETERICH: The issue there was one of territorial waters. They claimed a lot more territorial waters than we claimed, but we sort of recognized their right to claim those waters as an economic zone and advised our fishermen, mainly out of San Diego, not to fish in them. We were constantly worried about situations where a U.S. based tuna boat would stray into the Ecuadorian economic fishing zone, and would be apprehended, escorted into Guayaquil, and then it would take a lot of time to get the boat and the people released. Sam Hart worked out a pretty good deal, if I remember it correctly, with the San Diego tuna fishermen's association or somebody, whereby we would work our contacts with the Ecuadorian Navy and get word they were tracking somebody in the water. We would then get on the horn to the tuna fishing association (or whatever it was) in San Diego, and they would get on the radio and say, "You are busted, get out of there. They are on their way to get you." Everybody was happy with that.

Q: At one point, the American tuna fleet was saying "screw you" going into the zone and getting arrested, then getting compensated. We had gone beyond that point by this time.

DIETERICH: I guess so. Compensated by the U.S. Government? I guess so. You see, that doesn't really work, because the Ecuadorians (the person doing the capturing) can put that boat out of commission for longer and longer periods of time. That merely creates a motivation for them to lose the papers and keep them locked up in the port by saying it is all in the paper work. The longer they can tie up that tuna boat, the better for them - the worse for the tuna fishermen.

Q: By the time you had come there, it was really working at the edges?

DIETERICH: We were working pragmatically by saying to a government that was willing to hear it, "We don't want these problems, because they aren't helping anybody. So let's make them go away." That was distinct from some of the tuna problems we have now. That was not the tuna-dolphin problem, which is a later issue.

Q: But that was not during your time.

DIETERICH: I had to work with the tuna-dolphin problem later in Mexico.

Q: What about the Galapagos?

DIETERICH: Well, in the first place, I went to Galapagos, and it's a wonderful experience. It showed how nice it is to work in an embassy. Our accredited diplomats are treated as Ecuadorian citizens when it comes to paying for a trip to the Galapagos, which means it's a whole lot

cheaper - about one-third the cost. So my wife, daughter, and son (he was just a little tike at that point) all took a cruise to the Galapagos. We sailed out on a ship that took about 90 people, a small North Sea passenger vessel, and spent about six or seven days touring the Galapagos, then flew back. They have this great routine where you pull up to a nice site in the morning, have your breakfast, then load into a motorized whaleboat to go ashore. You look at whatever beast is on that island, wander around, load back up and go back to the ship for lunch and a siesta. In the meantime, they have cruised to someplace else and take you ashore once again to another location. It was absolutely charming, and we had a particularly good trip.

We had booked late and were assigned a cabin down below the waterline, an undesirable cabin. When we went aboard I noticed this man I had met someplace before, went up and said hello. It turned out he was the owner of the ship and I had met him at a reception some place in Guayaquil a few weeks before. I think he was an American, but a longtime resident of Ecuador, and he asked where we were staying and then said, "That's not good enough for somebody from the embassy, take my cabin." His cabin was a virtual motel room right behind the bridge.

The Ecuadorians do a really good job in the Galapagos. They are extremely serious about avoiding ecological damage to this very special place, and they control who goes there. It appears to be very successfully controlled access, and the behavior of people is also controlled. The guides were young Ecuadorians, and some foreigners, who knew what they were talking about and would jump all over you if you dropped a candy wrapper or something on one of the islands or did something you shouldn't do. There are a couple of small settlements where people are doing light agriculture on a couple of the islands, just enough to maintain an Ecuadorian presence there.

I also got involved with Bill Buckley. He called the embassy and said he was coming down. Remember, he did those sailing books for awhile. He chartered a yacht called the *Sealestial* out of the east coast of the United States. He was flying down to Guayaquil and the yacht was sailing down; he was going to join the yacht at Guayaquil and go out to the Galapagos. He asked us to make sure *Sealestial* had permission to visit the Galapagos. I got the action on it because he was a journalist, I guess.

Q: Bill Buckley was quite a famous conservative journalist and well known.

DIETERICH: We talked with the Ecuadorian Navy and made sure everything was all set, then I went to Guayaquil and met him at the plane. We had a nice evening together, mainly talking about sailing, then he went out and had a nice cruise around the Galapagos, came back, and we talked him into coming up to Quito, just because it was a nice place to stay and Sam Hart wanted to meet him. We spent an evening at the residence and the next day we toured churches in Quito. The worst thing he ever said to me was, "You know, we really had a good time out there in the Galapagos, you should have come with us." I thought, "WELL, WHY DIDN'T YOU ASK ME?" That was after I had been there anyway.

Q: Are there any other issues we should cover in this '83 to '86 period?

DIETERICH: I guess not. Personnel issues were hard. I don't know whether you want to get into

that.

Q: Why don't you go into it a little.

DIETERICH: Remember, I lost my information officer because she decided to get married and go off with the military attaché, the same dope that had invited Frank Vargas to the Marine Ball, and the agency told me they couldn't get me anybody. I was also told I couldn't get a secretary, we still had an American secretary to help us with classified stuff in those days, and they couldn't do that either. I stumbled across hiring spouses before it became very fashionable to do it, so I hired a spouse to act as a secretary, which worked out well. Then I hired a spouse to be my acting information officer. She was a lady who had some passing experience with the press, I trained her for the job and she got pretty well at it. We also worked out a deal whereby the Fulbright Commission would share some spaces with AID, which resulted in some money being saved.

AID had an academic scholarship program and we were able to combine the educational advising service into one operation. I was kind of proud of that, but one of my successors killed the whole thing because he said it was more trouble than it was worth. It seemed to me that for the customer to do one-stop shopping was a good idea, and what we didn't want was to have people who wanted a scholarship shopping around among USIS, AID and even the MIL group at times. I made an attempt to put it all together.

Q: Well, in '86, whither?

DIETERICH: In '86 I was asked by the then-USIA area director to come back as her deputy in the Latin America office in USIA Washington. I was happy to do that, so in the summer of '86 we came back here.

DAVID JICKLING
Development Administration
Quito (1983-1988)

David Jickling was born and raised in rural Michigan. He attended the University of Chicago and served in the U.S. Military in the Philippines. He then served in the U.S. Navy. His career has included assignments in countries such as Guatemala, Bolivia, Nicaragua, and Ecuador. Mr. Jickling was interviewed by W. Haven North on September 14, 1998.

JICKLING: We went to Ecuador, my first long-term assignment after leaving AID. During those five years I had many, let's say one or two a year, short term assignments because I had old friends in government and they asked me to go here and there. The people who were doing development studies were now all Mission Directors, and they remembered me and asked me to do this and that. I had done short term assignments all together in thirty some countries all over the world.

In 1983, the Dutch government, because I had worked with them in the 1960s in this decentralization program and had been in constant touch with them, asked us to head a program which would be a regional training center in Quito, Ecuador, for local government officials from Latin America. We went down and spent two years in Quito to organize the program, build its linkages with local government institutions like IBAM in Brazil to identify training needs, to develop training programs, and to carry out consultations related to national training programs. The Dutch were very interested in impact. How do you know that you are making a difference by training? We wrestled with that question. We ran through six or eight seminars a year on subjects like how to improve tax collection, how to improve solid waste (garbage) disposal, how to handle public relations of the local government, etc. They dealt with the mechanics of managing cities today in Latin America.

We had a seminar in Costa Rica on credit systems to fund local government public works. How do you organize a revolving loan fund that local government can borrow from in order to build public works? Revenues generated can then go back into a revolving fund. Both central governments and municipal governments were interested in that kind of a question.

Then in '85 we came back to Washington. Now for 14 years I have been working as a consultant. I have worked with AID from time to time in programming responsibilities in different missions but more in project design and evaluation. I also work as a volunteer at the Smithsonian.

LEON WEINTRAUB
Political officer
Quito (1984-1986)

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 then, '84 whither?

WEINTRAUB: Well, in 1984, I forget what the bidding process was and where we wanted to go, but we ended up being assigned to Ecuador, to Quito, Ecuador. I may have bid on, actually I believe at one point I wanted to extend for a year in Nigeria, but I think I put that request in a bit late and they already had assigned someone. But I would have stayed. I was in my element; I really enjoyed it. I don't know if I bid on some other African countries or not, but anyway I figured I would build on the Latin American expertise I had after serving two years in Colombia.

So we're on home leave in the summer of 1984. We took the family in a rented station wagon, made the American journey down the east coast down I-95, and spent a few days in Orlando at Disney World. Of course our youngest, who was not quite three, doesn't remember it, but the older kids, they enjoyed it. We flew out of Miami into Quito and began the next stage. I was, by this time, a full-fledged political officer; I was a political officer for my whole assignment in Nigeria and a political officer in Ecuador as well. Here my assignment was different. I was concentrating mostly on external relations, so my area was Ecuador and Latin America, and the foreign policy of Ecuador.

And I functioned as a political-military affairs officer as well. We had a military assistance program in Ecuador, so I did the pol-mil job, ensuring that our military assistance program meshed with our overall political agenda. As a result, I didn't get much into the internal politics of the country, as I did in Nigeria, covering the legislature, or writing on human rights. I did a little bit of it, I did write one State Department human rights report, and I also took the lead in starting in Ecuador the State Department's Anti-Terrorism Assistance Program at this point. We did some training of local security forces against hijacking, hostage-taking, and other forms of terrorism, so I got into a little bit of that part of domestic issues as well.

Q: You did this from '84 to when?

WEINTRAUB: To '86. It was another two-year assignment. We had a series of relatively short tours - in Colombia, Israel, Nigeria and Ecuador, all two-year assignments. We were moving around a lot in that time.

Q: Who was ambassador?

WEINTRAUB: The ambassador when we got there was Ambassador Sam Hart. And at some point, maybe about midway through my tour, he was replaced by Ambassador Fernando Rondon, or Fred Rondon at the time.

Q: What- how stood American-Ecuadorian relations during the period you were there?

WEINTRAUB: They were fairly good. Ecuadorian petroleum was starting to come on-line. Of course, there were serious problems with drugs, mainly spillover from Colombia. We had mainly the marijuana from Colombia and other drugs from Bolivia or Peru. We had a guerrilla movement in Colombia, which was also spilling over into Ecuador, so it was a country that welcomed some of our security assistance. There were starting to be some hostage incidents, some incidents of terrorism against the pipeline. There was a leftist movement in Ecuador, obviously much smaller than in Colombia, but there was a leftist underground movement. Some of it was allied with or used the rhetoric of saving the indigenous peoples from the destruction of their environment by the petroleum exploitation within the country.

You had mentioned a few tapes ago the Lebanese influence in South America. There was a large Lebanese influence in South America. There was a large Lebanese community, mainly in Guayaquil, in the port on the Pacific Ocean, so you didn't feel it much in Quito, or see it much in Quito, but it was very strong in the commercial life of the country. In fact, Guayaquil was

considered to be the commercial hub of the country. We had a consulate in Guayaquil, quite a large consulate, and there was a large Lebanese business community. One of the mayors of Guayaquil, Abdala Bucaram, at some point in the '90s became president of Ecuador, but that was at a strange period. At one brief period - I remember I was in Switzerland at the time reading about it in a newspaper - there were three presidents simultaneously. One was an elected president, who was apparently deposed by the legislature, but I think he refused to step down; one political faction then put in their own candidate for president. And another president was an interim office-holder of some kind. I'm not sure I have all the facts straight, but it was a confusing period. So yes, there was a pretty significant Lebanese or other Arab community in Ecuador and I think that was something we wanted to be aware about, concerning how the government might vote in the UN or what it might do on the Arab-Israeli issue.

Q: In your work, did you get involved in the Peruvian-Ecuadorian border problem?

WEINTRAUB: Oh, it's hard to avoid that. And it's always a debate. I mean, if you look at the maps of South America, there's always an issue of where the border is between Ecuador and Peru. And often the boundaries on the Ecuadorian maps, the boundaries will not quite be the same as on a Peruvian map. There are occasionally skirmishes on the border, but I think Ecuador is aware it would obviously suffer the worst in any major battle; as a military power they're not a match for the Peruvians. So on some of the maps, the Ecuadorian maps typically show a lot of that area as disputed area, with a definitive boundary yet to be maintained. That's not the view of the Peruvians.

Now, we were part, the U.S. was part of a body-

Q: The U.S. and somebody else.

WEINTRAUB: Argentina perhaps, I'm not sure.

Q: This goes back to the 1940s.

WEINTRAUB: Exactly, exactly. So we were part of an international commission that set that border. So, I mean, it was hard to stay out of it completely, but obviously until it was raised to the diplomatic level and we had to do something, we preferred to stay out of it. Of course, you know, if the American ambassador in Quito says the wrong thing, or it is interpreted the wrong way, the foreign ministry in Peru is going to hear about that the next day or the same day. And, we could be in some diplomatic hot water, and vice versa if the U.S. ambassador in Peru says something on that subject. So we had to be very careful about what we said about that. But that was always an issue.

Q: Well, how did you find dealing with the foreign ministry in Quito?

WEINTRAUB: Well, it was quite professional. I remember I had a lot of dealings with the equivalent of their deputy or assistant foreign minister for international organizations. I can't remember his name now, but we had very good relations. I'd probably see or speak to him at least once or twice a week; there were always issues in the UN or any other international

organization. I remember that he spoke a good Spanish; he probably spoke slower than customary so I could understand it. I suspect his English was probably pretty good, but most of our work was done in Spanish. He was my major contact in the foreign ministry, although frequently it would be the officer in charge of North American relations for the U.S. and Canada. The foreign ministry was relatively small, but it was run in a professional way. By this I mean you could be reasonably certain that if they said, "Oh, that's a good point, I'll instruct my ambassador in New York to take this stand," you could be fairly certain that in fact that would get done. So it was quite friendly and amicable.

Again, I had some responsibility for human rights, so I had contact with human rights again in the bar association, in civic society. We did a fair amount of entertaining within the allotted budget allowance; I always enjoyed doing that to meet people kind of out of their office in a home environment. By this time my Spanish was getting better so it was easier to live in that society. And I'd say we had a good time. We worked with people in the U.S. military, in the security assistance office, to make sure that the military program and our political agenda were working well together. At this time we had issues with the contras in Nicaragua, and you always had to be aware there's an innate suspicion of Uncle Sam in South America. No matter what the U.S. did, there was a lingering suspicion of the "Gringos" and what they wanted to do. This held for whatever we did in Panama, in Central America and of course, we had serious problems concerning the contras in Nicaragua. This had echoes and reverberations throughout Ecuador, and even for people who tended to be friendly with the United States, this was an ingrained attitude that everybody grew up with in school: watch out for Uncle Sam, you never know where he's going to show up and when. So that was kind of a backdrop to almost everything you did.

Q: Well, how about, we were, during this period we were quite aggressive about our dislike of the Sandinista regime in Nicaragua. Did you find yourself having to deal with that in your dealings with the foreign ministry both particularly in the UN and in the OAS?

WEINTRAUB: Well, I remember, it was obviously a difficult issue and one that demanded a lot of attention. I remember the legislators were a bit on the prickly side. I remember at one point I got into some kind of mischief or trouble; I was talking to - I wanted to meet the head or the chairman of their equivalent of the Senate foreign relations committee to talk about some issue and I said something, we discussed something which I had thought was fairly innocuous, I can't remember at the time what it was. But after our meeting he had an interview with the press and he alleged that I said something, he put a spin on whatever I said in some way to allege that I was interfering with the sovereignty of Ecuador. And that was really an eye opener. Everyone gets a zinger like that in his career; you kind of learn to be a bit more tentative or cautious about what you say. This was not a foreign ministry official where, for the most part, things will stay in channels. This was an elected official, an elected legislator who could say pretty much anything he damned well pleases. So it was not a big-time serious issue, I didn't get recalled or anything, but it was a little uncomfortable for a couple of days.

Maybe I'll just tell one more story before we close for the day. We went through a crisis exercise, a scenario at one point in Ecuador. The visiting "crisis exercise" team came down from Washington and we went through a scenario where virtually everyone at the embassy was shutdown in the embassy to do a role playing scenario. They do this thing in various ways, such

as you're in one room and other people running the exercise are in another room. And I was in the crisis room in the embassy; I was manning a phone and the scenario was that there were riots in the streets of some kind and I had the good fortune, or misfortune, to handle a phone call from a businessman who was in Panama. In the scenario, he was on the way to Ecuador and he was going to clinch a big business deal, and he wanted to talk to the embassy to find out what the hell was going on; there was all this stuff in the media about riots in the streets and he wanted to know was it safe to come or not. You know, this was the scenario, the guy on the phone with me was role playing, he was a businessman. And this was one of the role players from Washington. So he pushed me and he pushed me about what's going on in the streets, and eventually I said something to the effect that, yes, the streets aren't safe or something like that and obviously he pushed it in order to get what he wanted.

Well, in the scenario the next thing was that this American businessman in Panama happened to be interviewed by the BBC or whatever and he says, "Yeah, the American Embassy told me, you know, the streets aren't safe in Ecuador." Of course, the foreign ministry reacted in a furor and they sent a tough note to the embassy, asking why we were misleading people -- there were just three blocks of Quito that were having a small disturbance and here we were sending out rumors about the safety of their country. Obviously this was part of the job of the exercise to do this. So again, I think it worked well. I learned, you know, not to generalize, be precise about what you say. On the one hand you do have a mission and a mandate to alert American citizens about what's going on, but you have to be specific about what you're saying, make sure you know what you're talking about, make sure it's accurate and make sure that people don't read into your words anything that you don't want to be misunderstood. So I learned a few lessons there.

Q: Well, one last question on this. What about in the human rights field, what about the indigenous population? Basically the Indian population because I understand they're rather distinct from sort of the ruling class of Hispanic origin. How did we view that at the time?

WEINTRAUB: Well, I would have to look at the 1984 human rights report on Ecuador or 1983 report. I believe we -- I'm sure we covered it. We probably didn't, at that point, pay as much distinct attention to the rights of indigenous people versus the rights of everyone else to the degree that we would cover it nowadays. I mean, we wrote about law enforcement. I don't know if you know, but the human rights report, it seems that every year it's expanded into another area. In the very early years it didn't have a lot about labor, but in later years it did. In the early years I'm not sure it had a lot about indigenous people; in later years it did. So I don't think there was a special section about the rights of indigenous people at that time.

Q: Well this later became an issue, didn't it? I mean-

WEINTRAUB: Oh yes. It is right now in Bolivia and Peru and Ecuador.

Q: And also in Ecuador, if I recall, I just vaguely recall something about more demonstrations, you know, I mean-

WEINTRAUB: Yes, I think that was in the '90s, for the most part. Most of the political action was by the leftist, self-styled leftists, by the youth. Universities, as you know, Latin American

universities are just a hotbed for youthful rebellion. Some may have been fomented by the communists. Who knows? But typically with the tradition of the autonomous universities, typically with the police not entering the university grounds, there were endless, endless incidents of demonstrations, streets being blockaded, typically the burning of tires in the streets. This was a tradition that, you know, pretty much happened several times a year. That was the major type of demonstration. I think it was just the beginnings of the self-awareness movement on the part of the indigenous population.

Q: Was there anything else I should cover you think?

WEINTRAUB: No, I'd say I had kind of a routine kind of tour. I remember at the end of the tour the political officer who was the head of the section had to leave early for his reassignment. So, for maybe a month I became acting head of the political section. That was kind of nice for me. I could see the process of transition from one ambassador to another ambassador, all the preparation, all that has to be accomplished; the acceptance by the host government of a new ambassador, all the protocol and procedures that went into that. But I enjoyed it and again, I enjoyed the Andean society. Quito was like a smaller version of Bogotá. Not quite as wealthy, not quite as classy, if you will, but I definitely enjoyed the Andean society. We took a few trips around the country, actually, with my family. We drove down, all the way down to southern parts of Ecuador, made trips around the country. Went to the monument at the equator, went driving in the mountains with some other people. We also had a wonderful trip to the Galapagos Islands and another trip to Machu Picchu in Peru. So it was a nice tour.

At one point, we were planning to take a drive to Colombia, to visit some of the Colombian friends we had made during our assignment there in the late 1970's. Unfortunately, a couple of weeks before we were to travel, there was an incident concerning the so-called "drug lords" and the United States – it may have been the passage in Colombia of a revised extradition law. The drug lords made a threat that if any extradition process were to begin there would be American blood on the streets, or something to that effect. The U.S. Embassy in Bogota quickly sent out a "Travel Advisory" strongly urging American tourists and all non-official visitors to review and possibly reschedule or cancel their travel plans. We cancelled our travel plans and that was that.

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: Moving down, Ecuador, what were our issues with Ecuador?

McLEAN: Ecuador in this period was, as I say, one of our real heroes, because it had gone early on from military government. It had terrific debt problems. It's a very difficult-to-govern country, to get a political consensus on. In this early period that I'm talking about, we had a very hard-line president, Febres Cordero, but he was democratic up to the limit. He was a good friend of Vice President Bush, later President Bush. We wanted him very much to be a friend, and when Secretary Baker came up with his Baker Plan...

Q: Wait a minute. Baker would have been later on. We're talking about 1984 to 1987.

McLEAN: That's right, and Baker at that time was Secretary of the Treasury.

Q: Oh, okay, excuse me.

McLEAN: He was Secretary of the Treasury, and we lined Ecuador up to be the first candidate on that. In fact, let me just mention the Baker Plan. I'm sorry, things aren't linked together here.

Q: Oh, no, no, no.

McLEAN: The Baker Plan in part comes out of Baker's first trip to Latin America, which was in 1985. He had just become Secretary of the Treasury and went down with the delegation for the swearing-in of the President of Peru, Alan Garcia. Alan Garcia was famous because he had declared that he was going to have a moratorium on debt because it was a totally unjust debt that had been accumulated by military people and the country shouldn't pay it and couldn't pay it; and in the end what he did do was say that what we're going to do is only pay ten percent of our export earnings as a payment of debt. But I went on that trip with Baker, David Mulford from Treasury, and Elliott Abrams, who was the Assistant Secretary. On trips like that you have time on the airplane for discussions on the way down and time on the way back, and when we were there, we had meetings with the various presidents of the region. As a consequence, I think that it focused minds a good deal. Among other things, Elliott Abrams, who was a very articulate person, did the notes on it. He began to circulate them around in a very advocacy sort of way, saying, "We talked about doing this. Shouldn't we be doing this?" I think Elliott's initiative had a major effect on causing Baker very quickly soon after that to come up with this plan to begin the process of settling the debt problem that was overhanging Latin America. Well, Ecuador was one of the first countries that signed on and tried to do this. Eventually they're not going to be successful, not going to be greatly successful, in doing it, not going to live up to the promise of reform. But otherwise Ecuador was basically a fairly tranquil place. The old issues of the tuna thing had really backed off, was not a major problem. We were coming up towards the 50th anniversary of the Rio Protocol which decided the line between Peru and Ecuador. At a later date, when I would come back as deputy assistant secretary, I worked to try to stir up interest and try to anticipate a conflict, that eventually does take place, but it's very hard to get a bureaucracy to be interested in a theoretical issue. So in the early period, we got almost zero attention to it.

McLEAN: You were beginning to hear that, but it was always covered by the fact that it's an uncaring, it's not a democracy. The democracy movement was underway at that time, and I knew it was offstage that this was going on. I can remember once, one of the few things that did happen in Ecuador was the president was kidnapped by a military unit at one point, and we put together an operation. We moved up to the operations center to coordinate U.S. response to this thing, which turned out to be very little, and appropriately we didn't do very little to respond to this danger, which was worked on by Ecuadorians on the ground. But while we were up there, my immediate boss, Bob Gelbard, was using the cover of coming up to the operations center to do some very interesting work on the Chilean issue at that time.

THEODORE A. BOYD
Branch Public Affairs Officer, USIS
Guayaquil (1985-1987)

Theodore A. Boyd was born on October 9, 1941 in Terre Haute, Indiana. He joined the US Army in 1959 and served until 1964. Mr. Boyd entered the Foreign Service in 1970 and as a Foreign Service officer, he served in countries including the Congo, Kenya, Ethiopia, the Dominican Republic, Bolivia, Iran, Nigeria, Ecuador, Togo, and Cameroon. Mr. Boyd was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on November 29, 2005.

BOYD: Then I was assigned as Branch Public Affairs Officer in Guayaquil, but I was only there for 18 months. During that period, it was mandated that all government agencies needed to make budget cuts. USIA decided to close the USIS operation in Guayaquil, even though Guayaquil is Ecuador's economic capital and largest city. The consulate remained. There were a lot of people trying to get to the United States so there were six consular officers to handle the interviews. Also since Guayaquil was a seaport, it had some economic and commercial value to the U.S. as well. Lots of tourists were coming to Guayaquil so they could go to the Galapagos Islands. I was there from '85-'87 and then came back to Washington where I worked at the Operation Center in USIA from '87-'90.

ROBERT B. MORLEY
Deputy Chief of Mission
Quito (1985-1988)

Robert B. Morley was born on March 7, 1935 in Massachusetts. He attended Rutgers University, Central College in Iowa, and the University of North Carolina. He entered the Foreign Service in 1962 and as a Foreign Service officer, he served in Norway, Barbados, Poland, Venezuela, and Ecuador. Mr. Morley was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on July 1, 1997.

Q: Today is August 19, 1997. You were going off to Quito in 1985 as DCM. How long were you there?

MORLEY: I was there for three years, from 1985 to the summer of 1988.

Q: Was there any selection process in this? Did you have to get vetted by the ambassador and all that?

MORLEY: The ambassador was also a new appointment, Fernando (Fred) Rondon. He was a career Foreign Service officer. He was going down to Quito at the same time I was. I met with him and was interviewed by him early in the spring of 1985. I was apparently the Bureau's candidate for the job. The personnel system had another candidate for the job. He was interviewing both to see which person he would prefer to be his DCM. When I met him, he had not yet been confirmed by the Senate. That took quite a bit of time. In fact, he expected to be at post sometime in early June. His predecessor was leaving then and, I believe, retiring from the Foreign Service. Because of delays in the confirmation process, he asked me to go down two or three months earlier than I had anticipated. So, I went down in June, was accredited as chargé d'affaires, and served in that capacity for almost 90 days.

Q: When you arrived in Ecuador in 1985, what was the situation both internally and then vis a vis the United States?

MORLEY: Ecuador was a small country that wasn't receiving a lot of attention from the Department of State. It was a country that had just elected a new president, Leon Febres Cordero. He was a businessman from Guayaquil. He believed that private investment and market-oriented economic reform was the way of the future for Ecuador. He was perceived as being a strong democrat who would take steps in the political reform area to help strengthen the democratic processes in Ecuador. Ecuador was a member of OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) at the time, but a small producer of oil.

Q: OPEC was basically a government to government attempt to create an oil cartel.

MORLEY: It was an attempt to create an oil cartel. Many of the members were Middle East countries, but OPEC also included countries like Nigeria, Ecuador, and Venezuela. In fact, Venezuela was one of the founding members of OPEC. Ecuador was a minor player in OPEC politics. When we were undertaking an initiative with respect to the OPEC group, we usually went to the Saudis, the Venezuelans, the big producers, if you will, rather than the Ecuadorians, the small producers of the group.

Ecuador was not a major narcotics producing or trafficking country, but it was surrounded completely by two countries: Peru and Colombia, both of which were and remain heavy hitters on the drug scene. We discovered some coca production up north. We estimated there was probably 2-3,000 hectares up along the Colombian border managed by Colombian cartel members. These plantations were, in essence, an adjunct of the drug production efforts in Colombia. Since the border was ill-defined and policed practically not at all, the drug lords of

Colombia had started to move into northern Ecuador to enhance their production capabilities. As far as I can remember, there was no refining taking place, just production of coca paste.

Q: Did we make any representation to the Ecuadorian government to go in there and clean that out?

MORLEY: Yes, we did. While I was there, I was in charge of our narcotics effort, which seems to be the lot of every DCM worldwide. We persuaded the Narcotics Bureau in the Department of State to appoint a narcotics coordinator, a State Department employee whose full-time job would be to look after narcotics, to coordinate activities with DEA people at post, to liaison with the government on operational matters and, in effect, to manage U.S. assistance and support for the narcotics effort in Ecuador. We got the military involved. We leased their helicopters. We used the military for eradication purposes. The army would go out in helicopters and land on the middle of plantations, secure the area, and then destroy the crop. This went on for about a year and a half.

Toward the end of that period, DEA concluded that, for all practical purposes, coca cultivation in Ecuador had been eliminated. There was no serious resistance to the government effort. From the point of view of the Colombian drug lords, Ecuador was a minor sideshow. If they lost a couple of plantations, they weren't worried about it because it represented very little of their total production. Their people apparently had instructions to just take off, leave, if helicopters came and soldiers were landing. To the best of my knowledge, they never offered any resistance. For about three months, we enjoyed a place in the sun in being the only country that had eliminated coca production within the borders of a given country. We had a fairly good stream of congressional representatives, DEA, and other politicians from Washington coming down, all of whom wanted to get their picture taken pulling up a coca plant by the roots. They all got their photos.

Q: I almost have a vision of sending your officers out at night to plant coca plants for them to pull up.

MORLEY: What we did was chop the roots so that the plant could be easily pulled out. You don't pull coca out by its roots easily because the root structure is very strong. We got their photos. It was good public relations.

In addition, because it involved the military, the army, and because it involved use of their equipment, primarily helicopters, Ecuador and army personnel were getting operational training at our expense that they would not otherwise get. They had to plan an operation, go in, secure the area, eliminate the coca, keep their people in the field for two or three days, and then take off. Their helicopter pilots got operational training at a time when the military budget permitted almost no operational helicopter flying hours for active duty pilots. We were giving them this kind of training as well as using them for our efforts.

Q: What about the perpetual thorn in the side between the United States and Ecuador, at least, previous tuna fishing? Had that been pretty well taken care of?

MORLEY: That had been pretty well taken care of by the time I got there. But there were other issues. One was the border problem with Peru. Back in 1941, Ecuador and Peru went to war because of a border dispute. Ecuador claimed territory that would have extended its border eastward until it reached Brazil. Peru actually controlled this area.

To defuse the issue at a time when war was being waged in Europe, which we were being drawn into, the United States, Brazil and Chile brokered an agreement between Peru and Ecuador. Under the 1941 treaty, we became a guarantor of the agreement. The treaty defined most of the border in favor of Peru, but one area, about 50 miles long, was not defined because of the difficulty of the terrain. The treaty identified three guarantors. They included us, the Brazilians, and the Chileans. So, whenever there was a meeting to deal with a problem, there were five participants, one from each of the two contesting countries, and the other three. During my entire two years there, there were occasional flare-ups, Peruvian and Ecuadorian border patrols meeting each other. Sometimes it was amicable. Sometimes there was shooting. There was never a major flare-up, but we worked hard to keep the lid on the problem. At the end of my tour in Ecuador, we had accomplished that. We had managed to keep the lid on the problem and thus contributed to fairly decent relations between Peru and Ecuador. We had not arrived at a permanent solution to the problem. To this day, I do not believe that that section of the border has been defined to the satisfaction of both parties. Thus, the problem continues. The Brazilians were quite active on it, but they were not successful.

Q: When you say you worked hard to keep the lid on, what do you mean?

MORLEY: What I meant was that there seemed to be a flare-up along the border every three or four months. We got engaged as an embassy and as a government in working with the Ecuadoran government to try to avoid having the incident flare into a major problem along the border, as it did later. About two years after I left, there was a major shooting incident that involved both Peruvian and Ecuadoran armed forces. It took a lot of time. You look at it at the end of my tour and you say, "Well, you put so much work in, but you didn't accomplish anything." In effect, we prevented anything from happening.

Q: I want to get to specifics. What type of work did you do? Here you are sitting in Ecuador with Ecuadoran and Peruvian troops shooting at each other. What were you doing?

MORLEY: One of the things we would do is act as liaison between the Peruvian and Ecuadoran government. We would transmit proposals back and forth between the two governments. We would use whatever leverage we had with either government to try to get them to agree to an interim solution to the immediate problem. In the case of the Ecuadorans, we had narcotics assistance to use as leverage. We had a number of things we could do for them in the military assistance area. We were providing them with spare parts, training, and so on to the military. So that was something that the military in Ecuador valued very highly and it was leverage that they would respond to.

In addition, once every year or two, the Navy engaged in a joint exercise with the Ecuadoran armed forces. In essence, we sent about six or seven U.S. Navy vessels down with a contingent of Marines and we would exercise with the Ecuadoran armed forces, improving their capability

in the military area, giving them practice on real life situations, teaching them various things. They valued this.

In the case of the Peruvian government, we were giving them a lot of development assistance and a lot of narcotics assistance. This gave us leverage. So, we did essentially two things. We acted as a moderating influence in the context of our liaison efforts and we used what leverage we had in terms of military and developmental assistance to get both sides to moderate their position with respect to any specific incident, but there was never a successful effort to get them to sit down and talk about a permanent solution. In addition, the other two guarantors were active, especially the Brazilians, whenever there was an incident.

Q: How did you find our embassy in Peru acting with you? Were you both seeing eye to eye? I am thinking about the problem that sometimes occurred that, if you're in a country, you begin to almost take on the stance of the country you're in. It's called "localitis."

MORLEY: To a certain extent, we both had localitis. We, for example, were hearing the Ecuadoran version of what happened. That initiated the problem. Our embassy in Lima was hearing the Peruvian side. But basically, we both focused on the need to dampen enthusiasm for a military solution and to use whatever leverage and whatever moderating influence we had to achieve that. That was not always easy to do. Febres Cordero was reluctant to be sidetracked by what he called "military adventurism" along the border. He wanted to use the country's resources for development, to improve the standard of living, yet he didn't always have complete control over the military. The military in Ecuador, as is the case in a number of Latin American countries, considered themselves to possess a certain degree of autonomy. They were historically the defender of the nation, the flag, the entity called "Ecuador." Civilian governments had come and gone, but the army had endured throughout the country's history. Therefore, it followed that they were responsible for the defense of the country, etc. Finally, the military had automatic access to a percentage of the country's oil revenue, so parliament didn't even control their budget.

Q: What about events in Central America? This was in the Reagan period and we were very much concerned with El Salvador and Nicaragua. In fact, much of our policy was focused on that with a lot of criticism both internally in the United States and from Europe and other places. How was that viewed from Ecuador?

MORLEY: The Ecuadoran government didn't want to get involved. They didn't believe that it was something of concern to them nor did they see a role for Ecuador. In addition they had their own problems. I have already discussed border issues and narcotics. More serious problems occurred, problems that threatened the stability of the country politically and economically.

The first was the earthquake that took place on March 7, 1987. This earthquake didn't get much international attention. It was around seven in the Richter scale. The epicenter was only about 50 miles north of Quito. It caused a lot of damage in Quito and it destroyed the pipeline that transported crude oil from the oil fields to the east to the Pacific coast. That meant that Ecuador's primary source of income was terminated at least until the pipeline could be rebuilt. The morning after the earthquake, Ambassador Rondon decided to request a helicopter from a US Army

reserve unit in the country to overfly the pipeline and try to get a handle on the extent of the damage. Using that helicopter, the Ambassador was the first to discover (not Texaco, not the government of Ecuador) that the pipeline had been ruptured in several places. All that Texaco knew was that automatic sensors had shut down the pipeline, but they had no idea the extent of the damage.

On his return, Ambassador Rondon briefed President Febres Cordero showed him videotapes of the damage. He was stunned. We then talked to the Texaco people and showed them the same thing. They were beginning to get reports in that confirmed what we had seen. The Texaco people, of course, took immediate steps to begin the restoration process, but it was six to nine months before oil started to flow again over the Andes to the seaports where the tankers could pick it up.

Ecuador was very dependent on oil income. The question was how the GOE was going to respond to the catastrophic loss of income while spending vast sums on emergency humanitarian aid and reconstruction. We proposed a package that would include bilateral humanitarian disaster assistance, a major IMF or World Bank loan to bridge the gap until oil revenue started to come in again, plus an austerity program that would help keep budget outlays and imports down to reasonable levels. In fact, the government's measures were insufficient. As a result, the Ecuadoran government's debt credit rating declined. The Sucre (national currency) began to be devalued in terms of the dollar. Inflation began to become a major problem in Ecuador. The six to nine months without oil income made a major difference and had an impact for years after on the country's economic situation, its GDP growth, its per capita income, its inflation rate, its unemployment rate, and so on. Ecuador did not export anything in significant quantities other than oil.

The crisis also had the effect of making Ecuador's political institutions weaker, and eroding their authority. The GOE was perceived generally as having responded poorly to the emergency. Most humanitarian assistance came from foreign governments and NGOs. Uncharacteristically, the President seemed depressed and uncertain about what to do. The situation worsened considerably as time went on. Popular faith in democracy eroded. And the military were impatient with the President's inaction. There were a number of serious incidents. The President was kidnapped during a visit to an air force base and he was held for about two days by the military high command. The base was located near Guayaquil. The Ambassador sent me down to Guayaquil. The American Consul General and I decided that we needed to talk directly with the kidnapped President, if that could be arranged. Since the incident had occurred within the jurisdiction of the Consulate General, the CG to the base, presented his credentials, and asked to see Febres Cordero. He was successful, and returned to report that the issues were military autonomy, the military budget, the impact of the loss of oil revenue on the military budget and the inability of the GOE to make up this loss through budgetary allocations or military assistance programs. I mentioned earlier that the military automatically got a certain percentage of oil export revenue, but this revenue was lost when the pipeline was destroyed. Most important from our point of view, the CG reported this action did not seem to be preparatory to a coup d'état. After a couple of days the President was released, but he never was the same man again.

The second incident arose over the rebellion by the commander of the Air Force, General Frank

Vargas. At the time, he was also commander of the Joint Staff, a position that rotated between the three major services. The army at this time was being very difficult and not conceding that Frank Vargas was the supreme military commander. The tensions arose until one day there was an outbreak of violence at headquarters. The army tried to arrest him. Vargas sought refuge in an air force base. The air force base happened to be the major international airport at Quito. The army sent tanks and the air force fought back. For a day or two, there was a lot of gunfire until Vargas finally surrendered and was tried and convicted. I don't think anything serious ever happened to him. He was just too popular in air force ranks for them to do anything serious to him.

The third incident resulted from increased tensions between the Congress and the President over budgetary and other issues. What happened eventually was that the Congress tried to impeach the President. There was a provision in the constitution of Ecuador that allowed congressional impeachment of the President. The Congress voted to have impeachment hearings. They called on the Minister of Interior to testify. He got up in front of the legislators, and on national television, said he was not going to cooperate because the process was unconstitutional. He then walked out. At that time, the military were siding with the President because, if anything, military-congressional relations were worse than presidential-congressional relations. The military and the President seemed to be threatening a coup similar to that which occurred in Peru. I was in charge at the time and talked to the President, the Minister of Interior, and the chief of the armed forces (who was an army general at the time) and made a number of demarches to these and other people on instructions from Washington. The military were considered key, because without military support, Febres Cordero couldn't launch a successful coup. Our leverage with the military came from our military assistance program. I told them Washington would not continue these programs in the event of a coup. I felt uneasy delivering this message to the military high command. I went alone to military headquarters in a car flying the American flag. I got out of the car, and walked up the steps and into the HQ building. Soldiers were everywhere. I delivered my message to the military chiefs, and left. I do not recall there was any conversation. Eventually, tempers cooled and people were able to come up with a reasonable solution. Febres Cordero remained in office, but his credibility was lost and he didn't accomplish very much for the remainder of his tour as President. And public trust in the government was almost destroyed.

Q: How did the presidential kidnapping come out? You mentioned that our consul went in there to act as a mediator. Did that work at all?

MORLEY: Yes. The American Consul General in Guayaquil went in and talked to the President. The CG reported the President was distraught and upset about what had happened to him. He didn't seem to be thinking very clearly, especially about the impact of this incident on him personally and on his political future, and reportedly asked the American Consul for advice and guidance. He was told we could not solve his problem for him, that while we could work in support of democracy and support him as the elected president of Ecuador, our options were limited. Basically, when people go so far as to kidnap the president, they are desperate. Their resistance to outside influences goes up considerably. The Consul General subsequently reassured him that the military did not intend to kill him. We had received assurances from the military to that effect. They were simply trying to pressure him into acceding to their demands

for more resources and for more autonomy. We were able to act as a bridge between the military and President Febres Cordero. Eventually, after two days, he was released. The threat of a military coup was reduced considerably. Whether we were a major factor in that or not, I don't know, but we certainly were a catalyst in getting the two sides to start to talk to each other again. The public response to this incident was curious. There were no major demonstrations in favor of either side. Febres Cordero's credibility was already in decline but people didn't want the military running the country either. The military were never very popular in Ecuador even during the time of the military dictatorship in the seventies.

Q: Did you have any consular problems at all during this time? I was just wondering, were there errant young Americans or problems of this nature?

MORLEY: Let me turn to that in a minute. I have one final thought on Febres Cordero and his Presidency as a result of the earthquake and subsequent events. There was a popular perception that the United States had done more in response to the earthquake than the Ecuadoran government had. For example, if you went up north closer to the epicenter and you visited the Indian villages that had been destroyed, you would see signs of U.S. help. You would see US-provided plastic sheeting covering partially destroyed houses reflecting in the sunlight. Emergency food supplies, water purification equipment, and other supplies were being supplied by the US. There was very little tangible evidence of the Ecuadoran government's response. The military had done little. They were not civic-action minded and did not do a credible job in terms of responding to the emergency. The earthquake was a seminal event during my tour in Ecuador and really caused a lot of tensions and difficulties. On the positive side, we finally received some attention from Washington and even got a visit by then Vice President George Bush.

In terms of consular problems, there were the usual range of things. Ecuador is divided as a country by the Andean range and we had a constant stream of Americans coming down through Ecuador to climb mountains, to explore old Inca ruins, to dive into some of the mountain lakes looking for Incan treasure. People were being injured and killed. They were often ill-prepared for the adventure they embarked. The Ecuadorans were ill equipped for search and rescue. So, we had to do this, more or less, by the seat of our pants. We would organize some Marines and volunteers from the American community to go out and look for some of these people. The visitors seemed not to understand that, in spite of its tropical location, in spite of the fact that Ecuador lay astride the equator, if you climb the Andean mountains conditions could be very difficult. It's cold up there. You can die from exposure. You can die from an avalanche of snow. You can be crushed by ice flows and so on.

In terms of high profile arrest cases, I don't recall any. We had good relations on the consular side with the government of Ecuador. Usually, we could assure that our people got adequate and fair treatment and could arrange very often for their expulsion from the country, as opposed to incarceration in one of Ecuador's prisons. So, consular relations were never a problem. We had consular relations that were as good as probably any country that I served in.

One very positive aspect of our relationship with the GOE was their support for US initiatives in multilateral fora, especially on antiterrorism measures. They would vote consistently in UN and other fora (OAS and so on) for stronger measures against the terrorism. They regularly and

routinely condemned terrorist incidents, whether it was a hijacked aircraft or that incident involving a wheelchair-bound American citizen who was thrown into the sea during the seizure of the Achille Lauro. No problem. They would join us in all of these things. That was a very positive factor in our relationship. I remember when I was still Charge before the ambassador, Fred Rondon, went down there and presented his credentials, the Achille Lauro incident took place. I went into the Foreign Minister. That was my initial call on him, I believe, as charge. I brought this issue up and said, "Can we ask for your support?" He said, "Let's draft a statement right now." He went over to his conference table and we drafted a strong statement. It was published and sent up to the Department and everybody was happy. So, they were very supportive of us on most issues in the international forum.

Q: Do you think there is anything else we should cover on Ecuador?

MORLEY: At least until the earthquake, Ecuador simply wasn't on Washington's radar screen. It was unfortunate that it took a national catastrophe to get Washington's attention. Until then, in the narcotics area, people in Washington were preoccupied with Peru and Colombia. In the political arena, everybody was preoccupied with Central America. I think that about wraps up what I have to contribute on Ecuador.

Q: In 1988, where did you go?

MORLEY: In 1988, I went back to Washington. In Washington, I was assigned as director and coordinator for Cuban Affairs in the Department of State.

FERNANDO E. RONDON
Ambassador
Ecuador (1985-1988)

Ambassador Fernando E. Rondon was born in California in 1936. He received his bachelor's degree from University of California (Berkeley) in 1960. His career has included positions in Tehran, Tangier, Lima, Algiers, Tegucigalpa, and ambassadorships in Antananarivo and Quito. Ambassador Rondon was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy on June 4, 1997.

Q: You left your position as Director of the Office for Andean Affairs in 1985. You then went as US Ambassador to Ecuador until 1988. How did that appointment come about?

RONDON: I was selected by Assistant Secretary Motley. I don't know exactly how the selection was made; I assume that he discussed the possibility with the Director General and other senior officials of the Department and that eventually my name was approved and sent to the White House. I was very pleased to be selected. Ecuador is a choice assignment and therefore it came as a great surprise to me. Eventually, my name went through the vetting process and was approved by the Senate; I don't think it hit a snag anywhere along the line.

Having worked on Ecuador for two years, I was, of course, familiar with the issues in US-Ecuador relations. Ecuador had been the first South American country to return to democracy. The elected President was Jaime Roldos. He was killed in an airplane crash and succeeded by the Vice-President, Hurtado, who finished his term in 1984. President Leon Febres Cordero succeeded him. He was a man of the right--succeeding a man of the center/left. The new president was uncomfortable with the US Embassy, feeling that it preferred the center/left politicians. That was not a fair charge. It is true that the Embassy had a relationship with the previous Ecuadorian administrations, but that was its business. The Embassy wanted the same close relationship with the new government.

Nevertheless, President Febres Cordero wanted a change in our Embassy, and he welcomed me warmly. I was warned before I left Washington by Lowell Kilday that my assignment would be a difficult one because the new president knew the US and spoke English well. Kilday said, "Those are the toughest!" More prophetic words could not have been spoken! Leon Febres Cordero was in many ways a Reaganite--very much a "Marlboro man"--a cowboy! He loved horses; he was a champion marksman. He came from Guayaquil, a coastal city. That meant he had quite a temperament. He had a long, white mane of hair; his first name was quite appropriate because he sort of looked like a lion. Febres Cordero had graduated from an engineering school in New Jersey; that is how he came to know the US so well. He loved chili dogs. Never a cautious diplomat, Febres Cordero always came right to the point. I found him charming and fun, mercurial, and a challenge for me.

The most important American company in Ecuador was Texaco because of the oil concessions. Texaco was in a consortium with the Ecuadorian state oil company. I visited Texaco's Coral Gables headquarters before going to Quito.

The President was very close to his military; it supported his center/right views. It is true that the Ecuadorian military had not accepted democratic practices; in fact, I think it was biding its time. In Latin America, "turn style" politics are well known--i.e. rotation between civilian and military rule.

Ecuador had a small terrorist movement called *Alfaro Vive Carajo*, for short called the AVC. Before I got to Ecuador it had kidnaped one of the President's closest friends--a banker from Guayaquil. The President had ordered a SWAT team to break into the house where the banker was being held; in the operation the banker was killed. That traumatic experience led the President to build up Ecuador's counter-terrorist capacities. As often happens, this elevated the normal jealousies between the police and the military.

When I arrived in Ecuador, I was looking forward to the development of a strong relationship between the Ecuadorian government and ours. The US was providing considerable assistance including ESF (Economic Support Funds). Ecuador was in the process of experimenting with a free market economy, fully supported by the new President. I fully expected to see Reaganomics/Thatcheronomics in Ecuador, notwithstanding an Ecuadorian Congress that leaned to the left.

Ecuador is a small country. Its politics are described as “cannibalistic.” Politics were “cut throat”; no one would ever give a rightist President any credit; it was always assumed that the US Embassy was behind every governmental action--and particularly the US Ambassador. My predecessors and I were viewed as pro-consuls. So it was a difficult assignment. I was covered continuously by the press--I was a “hot ticket.”

I had some very difficult challenges. First of all, as I mentioned earlier, we had to be very wary of the military, which was a constant threat to the democratic form of government. Throughout my tour, I had to engage in “prevention diplomacy”. I had an excellent military attaché staff as well as a strong Military Group commander, who were close friends. We were all on the same wave length; we saw eye-to-eye on what we needed to do to keep the Ecuadorian military out of the presidency. It was clear to us that any successful effort by the Ecuadorian military to take over the government would bring an end to the close relationships between our two countries, so we kept emphasizing the risks and the unacceptability of a coup. In 1986, General Frank Vargas, the Air Force Commander, actually attempted to lead a coup. It was unsuccessful and landed him in jail. Vargas acted because he was passed over when it came time to select the Ecuadorian equivalent of US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. As was customary, an Army general, Jorge Asanza, was selected. So Vargas tried to overthrow the government. After he was thrown into jail, a group of Air Force commandos tried to rescue Vargas by attacking the President during one of his visits to an Air Force base. Commandos killed two Presidential bodyguards and took the President hostage. Under duress, the President ordered the release of Vargas; the commandos then released the President. That was my worst period in Ecuador--it lasted about 24 hours.

I don't think the President ever recovered from this experience. A man full of vigor and vitality saw death at his feet--his bodyguards. He was shaken. The Ecuadorian Congress, instead of rallying around him after this terrible ordeal, blamed the President for the events. That was another sad day; Ecuador could not rally around a President whose life had just been in serious jeopardy. The venom that characterized Ecuadorian politics was in evidence even in a moment of great peril.

After that kidnaping came a devastating earthquake. Marian and I were sound asleep when we were awakened by a very strong shake. We went back to bed. Thirty minutes later we were awakened again, this time by an even more severe shake. Usually, the first shock is the bad one; in this case, it was the second one. That spooked us; we got up and dressed. We parked the armored limousine right by the door so that if there was another serious shock, we could dive into the car and use it as a shelter. Suddenly, the Marines showed up. They had run to the residence from the chancery, which was about a mile away, to offer help. Soon after that many Embassy staff members showed up at the chancery. I remember the DCM, Bob Morley, arriving barefoot. He and his wife lived in a penthouse at the rim of a ravine. The building had swayed noticeably. Mrs Morley said she would never return to that apartment. I think about 50 or 60 Americans moved into the chancery that night. The Marines were concerned about housing families' dogs; I told them not to worry about them. I was glad that the staff had found a place where they felt safe. For two days, we suffered through after shocks. I was relieved that none of our staff was injured. Soon some Peace Corps volunteers drifted in from the countryside. Some had had narrow escapes; one found his wall had collapsed while he was sleeping, but he survived.

The earthquakes had devastated the Amazon region, cutting the country's oil pipeline and main road which led from Quito to the vicinity of the jungle--it did not quite reach the jungle. There was a need for immediate assistance. Vice President George Bush came to provide support personally; he offered hope and pledged tangible support. The US government responded very quickly with all sorts of assistance--tents, plastic sheeting, etc. Along with the immediate consequences of the earthquake were the problems of the destruction of the main road and the pipeline. Texaco, working with the Ecuadorians, undertook to get the pipeline back into operation. But the road had to be opened again; there were thousands of people in Ecuador who depended on that road for their sole contact with the rest of the country. The Ecuadorians organized an airlift to get foodstuffs to these communities, including the Texaco compound. The planes brought out goods from the Amazon.

All of this coincided with a US military training exercise scheduled to take place along the coast in Manta. The US had proposed to build a road for that exercise. Manta had been chosen for several reasons: 1) It was the third most populated region of Ecuador. 2) The road would have been useful even after the exercise. 3) The construction would have been relatively easy because the road would have followed the coastline and the construction soldiers would not have to go beyond the coast. But perhaps most importantly, the construction of such a road would have had a lot of local political support. The US would not have been criticized for building in an area which enjoyed a lot of representation in the Ecuadorian Congress.

After the earthquake there was no possibility of building the coastal road. All the Ecuadorian military efforts were completely devoted to rescue and reconstruction. So our military suggested that it assist instead with the reconstruction of the main road and also add to the airlift capacity. I gulped, because this proposal shelved the coast road plan, which had been very carefully crafted and considered. At the same time, I recognized that we could be of great assistance to a country which had just been devastated. I could not block our military's very generous offer. I agreed.

That turned out to be the most controversial decision I have ever made. I had no problems with our own Washington people; both State and Defense supported the idea of lending a hand. We offered to build a detour that would have allowed a connection between two segments of the main road that had been severed by the earthquake. We knew that we could not build the whole detour; we thought we could start at one end and the Ecuadorians at the other end and the two would meet. I thought that our efforts would be very helpful. Eventually, the Ecuadorians decided that they wanted to focus on rebuilding the main road; the detour became of marginal interest.

I soon found out that the US military had forgotten how to build a road in a tropical jungle. It had not done so since Vietnam and had lost those skills. The road that our military first tried to build sank into the mud. The natives watched with amazement until they finally they suggested that our military use their techniques for jungle road building. Their system called for first sinking logs into the mud to provide a base upon which the road could be built.

Eventually our military changed its techniques and indeed progress was made. But our assistance efforts became a political football. The left ranted against the US for building a road in the

jungle; it accused us of building a missile base or something. The area was not very populated. This meant that our efforts had little political support. Ecuador's opposition Congress had nothing to lose by criticizing the US for its work in the jungle.

The Ecuadorian President had asked for our assistance for building that road in the jungle. The Ecuadorian military were pleased that we were working out there. Our military was doing its best to rebuild the road and at the same time relearning lessons on jungle road construction. The US road building manual was actually rewritten as a result of this experience in Ecuador. So it was a very valuable training exercise for the US Army.

On the other hand, it was a political disaster. After a while, the government decided to terminate our road building efforts. That was painful because we had the best of motives--we wanted to help. The unpopularity of President Febres Cordero damaged this project as much as anything else. The US moved thousands of tons of food stuffs into the jungle area and even the Papal Nuncio gave public thanks to us for that assistance. The priests in the jungle had reported to him about our efforts; the bishop who knew what we were doing was offended by the criticism that was being levied against us for the road project. The Nuncio was then criticized for speaking out, but in fact, he told the truth and spoke from the heart.

I remember speaking to Daniel Boorstin, the Librarian of Congress, who visited Ecuador soon after the earthquake. He said that one could never be expected to be thanked for any act of charity. That is probably true, but this experience with earthquake relief was a bitter one. The US military was willing to stick with the project even if it took a few years and even though it was no longer essential to reach the oil communities because it felt an obligation to complete its work. But politically, that became impossible because, somehow, by building the road, we had violated the heartland of Ecuador. The criticism aimed at us was unfounded and unfair. Should we have been astute enough to anticipate what happened? I think perhaps we should have, but I don't think it was possible for us to deny requests for assistance in the period immediately following such a devastating earthquake. Such a refusal would have been callous.

I think it should be noted here that my personal relationships with the opposition members of Congress were excellent. I was told before I arrived that the President of Ecuador would never tolerate the American Ambassador dealing with his political enemies. But I had a heart-to-heart conversation with the President during which I told him that if I were ever to be perceived as his captive, I would be destroyed as an ambassador. I told him that my government expected me to have relationships with all democratic segments of the Ecuadorian political system. He understood and accepted my position. So I met periodically with the former president, Oswaldo Hurtado, despite the fact that he did not approve of my close relationship with his successor. I dealt with the *Izquierda Democratica* --the democratic left--which became the dominant party after Febres Cordero's term and I had a close relationship with key members of that party.

I should mention an incident that involved Abdala Bucaram, the recently ousted President of Ecuador, and myself. When I arrived in Ecuador, Bucaram was the Mayor of Guayaquil. He was a mercurial figure; I was told that I should not call on him because he was an "enemy" of the President of Ecuador. I took the same position that I had taken with the President; I would not let internal Ecuadorian politics dictate my contacts. After all, Guayaquil was the most populous city

in Ecuador and Bucaram was democratically elected. I felt that I had to call on him and establish a relationship with this important, democratically elected official. So I called on him. All was very friendly and cordial. He gave me a medal--a large coin representing his city.

After the visit, he accused me publicly of having threatened him. He said the US had killed his brother-in-law, President Roldos, who had died in an airplane crash. These accusations, of course, made the front page of Ecuadorian newspapers. I couldn't defend myself very well because I just couldn't get into a public debate in the press--it would have been a mud fight. I quietly but firmly denied the accusations and hoped that time would take care of the problem. The Mayor of Guayaquil was a cousin of the head of Texaco, who thought that the whole affair was idiotic. The Texaco representative arranged a quiet, private meeting between Bucaram and myself. That stopped the criticism of me and the US.

Eventually, Bucaram came to the Residence. I knew that Bucaram might be elected President of Ecuador. It was important that he not carry grudges against the US. In fact, the US had nothing against Bucaram or any member of his family. An ambassador has to reach out to all parts of the community and try to overcome any mistaken perceptions. As I mentioned, eventually Bucaram was elected President of Ecuador.

So I had good relationships with representatives of the whole democratic political spectrum in Ecuador, despite the fact that for them "all is fair in love and politics." Politics are a cut-throat game. The individual politicians are socially very nice people, but politics turns them into intolerant rivals.

Politics in Ecuador are complicated by the great rivalry between the industrious, populous coast and the highlands. The capital with the country's bureaucracy is in the highlands.

Ecuador waged a campaign against drug cultivation. Most of the coca plantings were eradicated while I was there. We helped fund the eradication project. Sometimes, when we flew to the Columbia-Ecuador border, you could see the cultivation on the Colombian side but there was none visible on the Ecuadorian side. I doubt that the eradication was 100% successful, but it was very significant. There were continual overflights and when cultivation was spotted, it was immediately destroyed. The President of Ecuador must be given credit for waging a winning war against coca cultivation. We were aware of trafficking and money laundering taking place, but there were no major prosecutions while I served in Ecuador. There were many minor criminal prosecutions.

One substantive area that could have been much more controversial was counter-terrorism. The President organized an elite police unit which pretty effectively rooted out whatever small terrorist activities that did exist. Much of the violence took place before I arrived, but there were some threats against me. I had pretty heavy security. I don't know how credible the threats were, but since Ecuador is Colombia's neighbor, it was not impossible for members of Colombia's M-19 or some "narcos" to cross the border and take a crack shot at me under the assumption that such action might be easier in Ecuador than in their home country.

Q: When your tour ended in 1988, you went to the UN.

RONDON: That is right; I was assigned to the US Mission as the regional advisor for Latin America. After that, George Vest, the Director General, suggested that I go work for the Inspector General. I had been interested in the IG for sometime. I think there was an assumption that I would be offered another ambassadorship and indeed, I was the Department's selectee for Costa Rica but the White House had a different candidate. In 1992 I headed the Senior Seminar and retired from there in 1994.

DEREK S. SINGER
Development Officer, USAID
Quito (1989-1991)

Derek S. Singer was born in New York City on Staten Island. He received his B.A. from New York University in 1952 and his M.A. from the School of Advanced International Studies. His career has included positions in countries such as Colombia, Bolivia, Taiwan, Costa Rica, Congo, Indonesia, Senegal, Zaire, Ecuador, and Cameroon. Mr. Singer was interviewed by W. Haven North on March 9, 1999.

Q: What was the situation in Ecuador when you were there?

SINGER: Not so bad. Today, I understand, the economy has dipped and the amenities aren't quite so nice. We were there from mid-1989 to the end of 1991. We left Kenya in 1989 and went directly to Ecuador after home leave. Anyway, I was again Chief of the General Development Office there. In Ecuador, we also had a whole potpourri of programs. Geographically, Ecuador is a small country tucked in between Colombia and Peru, two bigger countries in the Andean area and both deeply afflicted by the drug problem. Happily, Ecuador has not been badly affected by drugs. It is sort of a buffer state. The Mission did sponsor a drug program, actually a narcotics prevention and education effort which was aimed especially to stop young Ecuadorians from using drugs. We wanted to help this pretty sophisticated and developed little country improve and reinforce its anti-drug activities, both in school and out of school, through education and other prevention activities designed to turn young Ecuadorians away from drugs.

Q: Why are they more sophisticated than some of the others?

SINGER: That's hard to say. I think its education level was a good deal higher. A lot of people went for advanced educational degrees in the United States and Europe. I am contrasting this, to some extent, with Africa, especially the tropical African countries, the Sub-Sahara African countries, where the education levels were not that high. The opportunities to go for advanced degrees and training and what have you hadn't been very widespread in the African countries, and certainly not as they were in places like Ecuador, Colombia, Venezuela, Brazil, or most of them, as a matter of fact. Bolivia is an exception; just as Haiti, Paraguay, the old Guyanas, and perhaps a few other places are. But Ecuador is a relatively developed and sophisticated country compared to what I had been used to. So there the programs I was involved in included

participant training, some adult education work, small enterprise development, private sector assistance, tax reform, and as I said, narcotics prevention and education. My plate was pretty full there.

Q: What stood out among your programs in terms of your time and interest and what you thought worked?

SINGER: Probably the drug education activities and the fact that AID was beginning to get into democracy and governance work at this time. This is a field in which I had a long-term interest, given my educational background, my interest in political science, in public administration, and so forth. We began to get into improving both the courts and the legislature in Ecuador, and we were working with the national electoral commission to help Ecuador carry out free and fair national elections.

Q: What did you do there?

SINGER: Finding people to send for training was a first step, basically, to various court, legal education and legislative reform institutions and training organizations in the United States. Finally, we were reversing a policy in effect for many years and starting to surmount years of almost paranoid fears of appearing to “interfere in the domestic policies” of other countries. We were also beginning to talk about voting and elections. Today AID, as you know, has gotten into electoral reform and assistance in a fairly big way in many countries, and is monitoring many overseas elections and what have you through various groups like NDI and IRI, the Carter Center, IFES, and so forth. But, at the start of this decade, this was pretty radical stuff. We were just beginning to look into whether and how we could find an effective and useful role to play in the electoral process, to help it become more transparent, honest, effective and efficient. So, while we were just starting to explore this area while I was there, much more was done after I left. I sort of began gathering data in the field. I found that to be especially interesting.

Q: What was your strategy for the drug reduction program?

SINGER: There was a fairly big Ecuadorian group, a nongovernmental organization, actually, through which we worked on drug prevention and education. So, it was a question of giving them grants and then trying to follow how they were using our money. Basically, this was in drug education and prevention work, seminars they were holding, materials that they produced, arranging for skits and theatrical presentations at schools around the country, teacher education programs, and general “consciousness raising” among the young people about the evils of using drugs.

Q: This was mainly focused on drug use within the country rather than the smuggling of drugs out of the country?

SINGER: Yes, absolutely. Fortunately, they don't produce drugs in Ecuador, or if they do, it's very small scale, indeed, and they don't export it. It is a drug “pass through” country, if you will, - stuff comes out of Bolivia and Peru, goes up through there and then is refined in Colombia. In most cases, it then, in most cases, goes north from Colombia up through the Caribbean or Central

America to the United States. But, Ecuador is not directly involved in the drug trade. Just about everybody wanted to keep it that way.

Q: We weren't trying to interdict the traffic?

SINGER: Well, we had a DEA office at the Quito Embassy, but its job seemed to be largely to keep an eye on things, and help out to see to that things didn't change for the worse. So, anyway, there was drug prevention and education, and also a tax reform program - we actually had IRS people come on secondment to us who worked with the Ministry of Finance's Tax Division on their tax collection procedures. That is one of the big pains, of course, of many Latin American countries; they are simply unable to collect the taxes that they budget for. Therefore, they have many budgetary shortfalls. Just as, ironically as we speak, Ecuador is at this very moment, having a terrible fiscal time because it has an enormous shortfall in its projected budget.

Anyway, I stayed there in Quito just about two and a half years, from mid-1989 to the end of 1991, and then they did away with my job in a Washington-ordered cutback. At that point, I was given the choice of exploring a new job in Eastern Europe (which would have been a "first" for me), or of going back to Africa. The job in Eastern Europe was to open up the AID program in Slovakia. Slovakia was then still part of Czechoslovakia, but everyone knew it would soon become an independent country again. So the writing was on the wall, and AID decided to open an office in Bratislava, even before independence, which would later become USAID/Slovakia. So, they sent me over there to see whether or not I would like to take that job, which was offered me (subject to AID/W concurrence) while I was there. It was tempting, but the big problem I foresaw, of course, was that I didn't speak any Czech or Slovak (they are separate languages.) I would have had to work through an interpreter, at least for six months, probably closer to a year, year and a half, if not the whole time I was there. I had never had to do this before, and I didn't really want to start now. Even more important, "Time's winged chariot" was hovering in the background, and I was going to have to retire at age 65. That is to say, I was going to have to get out of AID and the foreign service, mandatory retirement in mid-1994. Now, that meant I had maybe two and a half years to go from the time we were beginning to think about the transfer out of Ecuador. I thought Ecuador would probably be my last post, but as it turned out, rather unexpectedly, they did away with my job. I decided I really didn't want to spend my last tour working through an interpreter in an Eastern European country about which I knew almost nothing. Also, I wasn't all that sure, because the emphasis was going to be almost all on privatization and economic reform, banking reforms, and the like that my skills were particularly suitable for what they needed there, in terms of somebody to run that office. So, I thought about it long and hard, and I turned down my chance to be an AID Rep.

Our alternative, not the most desirable in the world but still quite acceptable and a very interesting one, turned out to be Yaounde, Cameroon. So, I went to Yaounde as my last tour, from end of 1991 to middle of 1994.

SCOTT E. SMITH
Deputy Director, USAID

Quito (1989-1996)

Scott E. Smith was born in Indiana but graduated from high school in Brazil. He spent three years at Johns Hopkins University in Maryland and then transferred to the School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) in Washington, DC, earning a B.A. and an M.A. Mr. Smith joined USAID in 1974 and served in Bolivia, Haiti, Swaziland, Zimbabwe, Ecuador, and Washington, DC. He retired in May 1996 and was interviewed by W. Haven North on January 14, 1997.

SMITH: That was the plan. But in the meantime there were a couple of earthquakes, one literal and one figurative, in Ecuador. The literal one was an earthquake which occurred in February, 1987 or early March, which caused extensive damage. It ruptured the main oil pipeline from the eastern part of the country over the mountains to the ocean and thus cut off a significant portion of Ecuador's foreign exchange earnings for what turned out to be about six months time. That put them in tremendous economic hardship as well as causing considerable damage to several communities in eastern Ecuador. So, there was a lot of new assistance being programmed for Ecuador, to provide both immediate and longer term relief from the consequences of the earthquake.

Coinciding with that was a management or personnel "earthquake" in the Ecuador mission. When Frank Almaguer went to Quito in August, 1986 as the new mission director, he discovered a number of activities and practices that had occurred in the mission which caused him great concern. As a result, he requested a number of investigations and audits by the inspector general's office and the net effect of that was that several people, including my predecessor as deputy director, had their tours shortened and were asked to leave on extremely short notice. Five separate audit reports were written with a total of twenty or thirty recommendations for improved internal management operations, ranging from finance to contracting to administration of local currency programs.

Q: What was the core of the issue?

SMITH: The core of the issue was some very questionable practices having to do with local currency management and having to do with financial management and the Controller's office operations.

Q: Subsidizing a couple of salaries?

SMITH: Yes, among other things, it involved salary supplements. It involved literally how the funds were accounted for. There were cases of bank accounts into which local currency was deposited on which AID employees were signatories. There were alleged cases of cash in brown paper bags. There were alleged cases of improper and just no accounting of funds. There were cases of contracting irregularities with personal services contractors given responsibilities not appropriate for contractors. A range of things.

But, as I said, several key people, including the deputy director, left quickly and under a cloud. As a result, and particularly with the real earthquake coming on top of that, I got a call in March

to ask whether we could possibly come to Quito sooner, before the summer, get established and then take home leave, and not wait until August to get there. We did that, and literally left Zimbabwe on about three weeks notice.

So, we went back to Latin America. That hadn't been my game plan. But, we went and Ecuador rounded out my trio of favorite places. Ecuador proved to be the high mark of my career. It wasn't the place that we enjoyed living most, although it was close. It wasn't my favorite country. The program was good but it wasn't like the Zimbabwe program. But, all around and in terms of my career, in terms of the mission and the things we were able to do, the relationship I had with Frank as his deputy, it is the high water mark. There is no question about that in my mind.

The initial two or three months we were there were spent on damage control of both kinds. The week I arrived was when the IG gave their briefing on their draft reports. The assistant administrator for Latin America, Dwight Ink, who had worked very closely with Frank on this, had sent his own special representative, Fred Fischer, down to look into the situation. He left a report that had something like 43 or 44 recommended steps to deal with the management problems in the mission. Most of what I did for the first two or three months, actually for the first year I was there, was to oversee the implementation of the steps we took to respond to the IG reports and Fred Fischer's list of 44 recommendations. That was what really consumed the first year that I was there.

Ecuador is an extremely fascinating country. I don't have any problems with Bolivia or Haiti -- we have enjoyed all of the places we have lived -- but Swaziland, Zimbabwe and Ecuador were an excellent run of countries. Ecuador continued to be a place that we really enjoyed working in, as was true of Africa as well. Our children were of an age where we could get out and travel some. I think all of us had really been bitten by the wildlife and environmental bug in southern Africa, and Ecuador was a perfect place in which to travel because of the tremendous biological, and geological diversity that exists in Ecuador -- from the Amazon basin in the east to the Galapagos Islands out in the Pacific, to the highest active volcano in the world, and everything in between. It was just a fantastic setting to work in.

Despite my earlier comments about the size of the staff, which was about three times the staff I had left in Harare for a program that was about the same, it was an excellent staff, one of those Latin America staffs with a lot of very good local talent.

During my first year in Ecuador, in addition to dealing with the management recommendations, I also spent a lot of time with some heavy duty recruiting for U.S. direct-hire staff, replacing people who had left and filling vacant positions. Of course, the AID system being what it was and even with the attention of the assistant administrator, we didn't always get high priority on these kinds of things. But, we were able to rebuild the mission staff over that first year and in the end had an excellent group of people. It was really a delightful environment to work in.

I did a lot of traveling, a lot of getting out into rural areas, the Amazon and the mountains. One of the reasons I went back to Latin America was not to go back to Latin America per se, but to go to Ecuador. Ecuador was, I felt -- and I proved to be correct, I think -- one of the few

countries in Latin America where there really wasn't a big US foreign policy agenda. There wasn't an overriding interest beyond the development program that would skew or adversely influence it.

Q: Well, why were we there?

SMITH: Because of development. What I mean by that is the countries to the south, Peru and Bolivia, had the drug problem, and Colombia had the drug problem as well. Central America in 1987 was still an area of major conflict, and there were other issues in the Caribbean. Haiti by that time had eclipsed and gone into night. Ecuador, I think, was the only place in Latin America that had a program of significant size and yet really wasn't dominated by one of those political interests. Now, what accounted for its significant size, in addition to its development needs, was the fact that the president of Ecuador from 1984-88 was Leon Febres Cordero, who was a populist but conservative leader from the coastal Guayaquil area who was a great fan of Ronald Reagan. Ecuador returned to a democratic government in 1979 and the first president was Jaime Roldos, who died in a plane crash while he was president. He was then succeeded by his vice president, Oswaldo Hurtado. Both of them were of somewhat leftist leaning and clashed philosophically with the Reagan administration. But Febres Cordero came in after that representing a pendulum swing in Ecuadorian politics.

Q: Through a fair election process?

SMITH: Yes. He was very much a fan of Reagan and the free market rhetoric, if not practice.

Q: Did he have a personal relationship with Reagan?

SMITH: I think there was one, but not a significant one. There were a couple of visits during that period by Vice President Bush. There was a real cozy relationship. Ecuador was viewed as a kind of ideological soul mate of the Reagan administration in South America, which embraced the private sector and began to carry out an export-oriented structural adjustment program. That, then resulted in a real increase in the amount of assistance that Ecuador got.

Q: What scale are we talking about now?

SMITH: \$50-70 million dollars a year, compared to \$20-30 million which had been the level before then, and the level we returned to not too long after. There wasn't a US foreign policy interest other than supporting Febres Cordero and the kind of policies he stood for. There wasn't a drug issue, there wasn't a civil war. There was enough interest to give a significant level of resources, but with little interference, so we were basically able to carry out a program that made sense on the ground without others putting on strings or overruling what we wanted to do. In that respect, for me it was an ideal situation of which there are not very many in the world, then or now.

We enjoyed that situation most of the time I was there. Not that there weren't some potholes in the road. In fact, Febres Cordero turned out not to live up so well to his rhetoric and to spend most of the last year of his administration under a cloud of corruption. If you look at a chart of

the assistance levels to Ecuador during the '80s there would be fairly low levels in the early '80s, a jump up to a height of \$60-70 million a year in the mid '80s and then back down again to \$20-30 by the end of the decade. That fast increase in resource levels in the mid-'80s, by the way, and the imperatives to do something with it quickly, I think is not unrelated to the management problems that I mentioned before. In the hurry to get things done, the hurry to be responsive and the sort of free-wheeling kind of environment that that sort of foreign policy blessing and all those additional resources gave, I think made people a little more susceptible to cutting corners or to abuses in the interest of trying to get things done more quickly and in a fairly short term and short sighted kind of way.

Q: Was a large portion of that related to the earthquake?

SMITH: No. That was all afterwards. The earthquake was in 1987. Febres Cordero came in in 1984, so it was the 1984-86 period when all of this was built up.

Another factor was that during that period, Ecuador had a political appointee as mission director. This was very rare in those days. But, Ecuador in the early '80s had been kind of a sleepy place, and this was frankly true of some of the American staff that were there too. It wasn't on the cutting edge and it wasn't typically first drawer people who were there. The Reagan administration had this retired Air Force General from Puerto Rico that they wanted to put someplace and Ecuador seemed the most harmless place to do that. Well, circumstances changed, but the staffing wasn't changed to reflect that. So, from all reports, you had a very detached, arms length political mission director who wasn't of AID, didn't know the procedures, had much more of a business mentality and got caught up in a lot of the relationships with Febres Cordero and his cronies.

Anyway, we had tremendous resources, ESF funds, PL 480 Title I funds, Section 416 food program funds, so there was a whole diversity of local currency and dollar funds. We had housing guarantees. It was a broad and diverse program. We had a very active policy dialogue, particularly in the Borja government after 1988, on some of the economic policy changes that we were working with the government on through the ESF and PL 480 Title I programs.

There are a lot of things that stand out for me in Ecuador. I have hinted at one and will mention it again very quickly -- the excellent relationship I had with the director, Frank Almaguer. As the deputy, one of the things that is always kind of a question mark is what your role is going to be and how well you get along with the director. I had an extremely positive, complementary, mutually reinforcing relationship and Frank was and remains on the top of my "heroes list" in AID and a mentor and a person I highly respect and look up to. We worked well together instantly. I didn't know Frank when I went there. I had met him a couple of times in the hallways, but our career paths were different up to that point. I knew a lot of people who were directors in Latin America in those days, but Frank was not one of them, so there was a bit of a question mark there. But, it instantly worked and probably was the best work relationship that I have had in my career.

Q: Apart from having to implement the inspector general and other recommendations, what was your role in the program?

SMITH: My roles in the program were several. Over the course of the time we were there, we went through a gradual, but in the end fairly radical, refocusing of our programs. The programs from the mid-'80s had been sort of a let-a-thousand-blossoms-bloom kind of approach, so there were a variety of small grants, many with very institutionally immature private voluntary organizations. A lot of them were private business associations, chambers of commerce or private enterprise association of XYZ, and the grants were to carry out little programs in training or promotion or a similar activity. This created a portfolio that had horrendous management implications. One of the responsibilities I had was to oversee the internal operations of the program. As part of that, I played a fairly significant role in a series of what we called at that time "strategic planning" activities. They were not quite what has come to be known in the agency as strategic planning, although I think they were pretty much the precursors of what happened in AID later. In fact, Ecuador was a model for AID's performance monitoring system that evolved in the early '90s, and some of the concepts that formed the basis for AID's reengineering built on the foundation that we created there in the late eighties. We undertook a process of looking closely to see what was working and what wasn't and what our role was in the process. Again, part of that mid-'80s period was characterized by an approach that maximized AID's involvement and control of things. So, for example, we would have projects where the technical assistance team was a series of PSCs, instead of a contract team that had its own internal structure, which from one standpoint gave AID more control of what those people did, since they all reported to the mission, but got us involved in all the contracting process and having to amend contracts frequently, and supervising a lot of people, so that our ability to have a substantive engagement with the Ecuadorians was less because we were spending all of our time dealing with PSCs and contract amendments, and all that kind of thing.

Q: Administrative minutiae.

SMITH: Yes. So, we gave a lot of thought to how we could shift out of that mode of operation to one where we could spend quality time with the Ecuadorians on the program and not spend all our time with all the internal paperwork. This is where the Zimbabwe experience came in handy. It gave me a point of reference for how we could consciously design our programs to minimize the paperwork, and with that maybe give up a little control, but in exchange free up our time for the substantive engagement which was our comparative advantage. The reason we were there in the country was not to write PIO/Ts, but to be there and engage people, to provide that policy dialogue, that persuasion, that interactive process that would make the program successful, not to perform administrative functions. So, there was that whole set of things that I was involved in.

Part of this was a series of management skills training programs. I lobbied to get the regional management skills training course held in Quito. By doing that we were able to have ten people from the mission in the course itself, and then we got the trainers to stay a week or two extra to do additional training specific to the mission. Nine months or so later, we had the trainers come back and do a couple of weeks more of internal training and team building and that kind of activity. These training programs were, in part, aimed at rebuilding the mission after the disastrous events of the mid-'80s. But in addition, we used training to focus on how to build and give substantive roles to local staff, how to define your strategic direction, how to build team work and work across division and office structure lines. I personally feel that many of the

concepts that inform and are embraced by the re-engineered AID we were trying and working with in Ecuador in the late '80s. Again, there is nothing in AID that one person solely is responsible for, but I think everyone there would say that I was a principal stimulus for that sort of approach we took and that whole process throughout the three years that we were there.

Q: How did the program evolve from all that?

SMITH: I'm going to get to that. There was one area of the program that I took particular interest in and I will come back to that in a bit.

I am going to use the example of the agriculture program as illustrative of the kind of thing that we were trying to do in the program. And, again, these ideas really were not much mine at all, although they were ones that fit very nicely into the overall approach. As I said earlier, in my view successful development programs need to be based on the commitment and the dedication of the people you are working with. That doesn't come from conditionality and project agreements. It comes from them being persuaded that a different course of action is an appropriate course of action to take. It is in their interest, they see the reasons for doing it, they support it for very clear reasons. Where that doesn't exist, and it didn't in many areas in Ecuador, I think the appropriate approach is to engage people in a process of analysis and discussion until they are convinced, and then follow that with the funds for carrying out activities. That is basically what happened in Ecuador.

We had the ability to create, with all the local currency resources we had there, a couple of private foundations in the agricultural area, one of which became kind of a think tank and was the institutional home for a large three-year sector assessment of agriculture that we funded and carried out.

Q: You created a foundation?

SMITH: Yes. It was created through the AID programs. It was an Ecuadorian organization with Ecuadorian staff, but the initial funding and eventually an endowment for the foundation was through an AID program.

Q: Was AID part of the management?

SMITH: Not officially, but we were unofficially engaged and had some influence on the direction of things, but it really was an Ecuadorian initiative. The funding for that, the impetus for that, grew out of our agriculture sector program.

That private foundation, particularly linking it up with the institutional home for the agricultural sector assessment, provided a forum that was not AID, not the US government nor the Ecuadorian government, for bringing together different thoughtful people and different viewpoints in Ecuador around a policy and other reform agenda. It was a very successful forum for trying to institutionalize, trying to build awareness. To a large degree, this created local ownership of a lot of the initiatives that then followed, some of which was funded through the agricultural sector program.

The program in Ecuador, largely out of frustration with dealing with the government, particularly in agriculture but in other sectors as well, emphasized very strongly private organizations. This foundation that I mentioned was one example of a new private organization that was created. A new foundation for agricultural research and education was also created and was a major new initiative and the recipient of major grants that we made at that time.

Q: These were bypassing the government because the government....

SMITH: They weren't literally bypassing the government because the funds were channeled through the government in many cases, certainly all the local currencies going to them were government local currencies. But, in the case of the larger agricultural research foundation, in the end the grant was made directly to the foundation, not to the government. The origins were really from the Febres Cordero period, which was very pro private sector, so there was a lot of openness to consider private sector alternatives. In fact, a lot of business people that came in with Febres Cordero to the ministry of agriculture and other places were frustrated themselves with the entrenched bureaucracy and thought the only solution was creating parallel structures outside the government to carry on these initiatives. Well, that creates its own problem and dynamics, and a lot of what we worked on was how to bring those two together. You would never really get to the point in Ecuador where the ministry of agriculture as an institution was agreeing that funds should be channeled through a private foundation. But it was possible to develop at least some understanding of the role that a private foundation could have, some view of a constructive relationship that they could have with them, that, in fact, the foundation could allow them to do some things that they were unable to do on their own.

The other aspect of the agriculture program was the promotion of non-traditional exports. We had a couple of old, traditional rediscount lines in the banking system with a not particularly effective technical assistance effort through a producers association. But, over time that got re-energized and redirected and refocused and became a fairly successful program promoting the export from Ecuador products like roses and certain fruits and vegetables off season in the US. The growth in non-traditional exports from Ecuador was tremendous, in part because of the program that we had there. So, we had a twin focus in our agricultural program of non-traditional exports and of policy dialogue, policy analysis, policy reform, coupled with the creation of and support for a number of significant private foundations who could bring a certain capacity and perspective to the sector and help to move it more towards an outward oriented economic and policy framework.

The health program there was also probably as comprehensive as any in Latin America. We had a major maternal and child health program that was quite successful. We had a major family planning program, which worked with the government but primarily was through a couple of private organizations. We had a major malaria control program. Malaria was a problem in the lowlands of the country. It was a major and rather traditional malaria eradication program.

We had a rural water and sanitation program that mainly financed installing small systems in rural communities. If I was to be philosophical about it and say what did it all add up to, it would not be a lot in terms of confronting the problems at a national level. But it was one of those

grants that actually financed the construction of small village, small community rural water systems. Throughout my time in Ecuador, it was one of my favorite projects and one of my favorite things to do was to go to the inauguration of the water systems. It gave me a real opportunity to literally get far off the beaten track and back up some mountain valley into an isolated community and to get a little sense of what it is like there and how people lived there. It would obviously be somewhat artificial with the inauguration and festivities, but it was kind of the fly-on-the-wall or dropping-out-of-space kind of phenomenon into some of these places, and it helped to get a much better sense of peoples' lives and living conditions.

Q: How were these water systems kept and maintained? Often these are started off very nicely but deteriorate very rapidly for one reason or another.

SMITH: Well, that is an issue that was being addressed by the program but not something that was a major focus of what we were doing because it was still pretty much the construction phase. But, organizationally and institutionally, the program was set up to build in an effective and ongoing maintenance and fund-raising capability. There was a local committee tasked with collecting water fees to help pay for the cost of operating and maintaining the system. The systems usually had a pump, although a lot of them were gravity-fed. In any event, we minimized the high technology side of things and focused on more appropriate technologies. So it involved a combination of building, promoting, strengthening a local water committee, of having fees that were generated to help cover maintenance costs and looking at the construction of the systems from an appropriate technology standpoint. I don't know how things actually worked in practice. How many of the systems would still be functioning if you went back to those places five or ten years later, I don't know, but conceptually there was attention given to maintenance in those programs.

The Ecuador program also had a variety of little programs that were managed by the human resources and general development office, a little administration of justice program, a drug education program, various attempts, all magnificently unsuccessful, at civil service reform and public administration training.

Q: Why were they unsuccessful?

SMITH: There was just no real commitment to follow through on them. Occasionally you would get a motivated and dynamic new assistant secretary for this or that who would come in with lots of ideas and within three or six months would get worn down by the bureaucracy.

Q: The bureaucracy was pretty difficult there.

SMITH: Yes. Those programs really went nowhere. Part of the program from the mid '80s was an improved tax administration program, a big technical assistance contract.

Q: Why was the bureaucracy so difficult?

SMITH: Well, Ecuador is kind of that way. Ecuador has a difficult, entrenched, public sector mentality, all of the bad things that are often said about the US government but then magnified

about ten times. There were a lot of people who had their job security and were protective of their turf and not particularly interested in any changes in the way things had been done for the last twenty years. Subsidies and incentive structures in Ecuador, with the oil money from the '70s and '80s, were very much focused on urban middle class, most of whom were government employees. People had their lifetime jobs and didn't want to do anything that they thought would threaten that. They were pretty much opposed to reduction in subsidies that, for example, would increase gasoline prices.

We focused our efforts to strengthen government organizations by working with ministries that were either more open to change or essential for provision of services, for example, the ministry of health and the primary health care programs. But where the government bureaucracy was more of an obstacle than not, we tried to look for alternatives, both as channels for getting things done and also as a way of kind of stimulating those within the civil service, within the public sector, who wanted to do some things differently and look for ways of partnering between private organizations and them. So, we did not turn our back on the government and go off and put all our eggs in the private sector organization basket, but we kept trying to bring the public sector people in. Trying to keep working on the reform agendas in those areas where we had a significant involvement. That was true in agriculture and in health. It was not really true in the part of the ministry of finance that dealt with tax collection. It was not true with the Ecuadorian equivalent of the civil service commission. Our involvement there was pretty anecdotal and we weren't in a position to make a major effort there, so those things were eventually phased out and the program focused more on the key areas.

Q: Were the ones in agriculture and health what you would call integrated strategies with clearly defined goals or were they a collection of activities?

SMITH: In health it was a collection of activities with a fairly integrated strategy. The approach was through three or four major projects but the management of those projects was informed by a vision of sector development and our involvement in the sector. So, they weren't isolated as separate units but they were integrated both in terms of our own management as well as the counterparts that we had. So, they were informed by a sector strategy, but the tactics, the instruments, the tools, were individual projects.

To some extent that was true in agriculture as well. There was an agricultural sector program that was the vehicle for our funding to the private foundations I described, as well as other things. Throughout that program we gradually focused more on policy issues and agricultural research. In the latter, our emphasis was on involving the private sector, while trying to involve at the field level and at the ministry level the relevant people in the government. That approach was informed by a vision. I don't know how articulate it was at the beginning, but certainly the product of the agricultural sector assessment was a strategic focus on policy issues and ways to involve the private sector. The way the assessment was done helped it become an Ecuadorian agricultural sector assessment, not just something we did as a basis for justifying AID programming in the country. The overall assessment was followed by a companion assessment in the natural resource area, which just got started as I was leaving Ecuador.

Our assistance in non-traditional exports were channeled through a couple of projects, but also

drew on and was reinforced by the policy agenda and policy analysis work. This typically involved a series of actors, not just the government.

The area that I got involved in most, personally, was environment and natural resources. We had had a forestry project which was more a village woodlots and public sector forest management efforts, not an environment program per se. It had been on the books for a while by the time we arrived in Ecuador. The mission had also funded a couple of smallish programs that helped the Nature Foundation (Fundacion Natura) carry out a number of programs, primarily on environmental education. But, in the late '80s, environmental issues were coming very much to the forefront. The whole question of biological diversity was capturing a lot of attention, the cutting down of the rain forests and all that sort of thing. Ecuador is at the intersection of all kinds of neat things from a biological diversity standpoint. In fact, in an analysis of the world's "hot spots" where there is the most biological diversity and where it is under the greatest threat, I think three of the eight or ten areas in the world are in Ecuador. Ecuador has the Andes mountains in the middle of the country, and to the east are the head waters of the Amazon. On the western slope, the mountains come down to a broad coastal plain. On both sides there is a drop from peaks of 20,000 feet down to close to sea level in very little distance, which creates a wide variety of micro climates that support tremendous biological diversity. In addition, Ecuador has rich coastal resources and, of course, the Galapagos Islands. It is a tremendous place for biological diversity and is a country of great environmental richness and importance.

We got into this actually to some extent because part of the reconstruction effort after the earthquake in 1987 was in the eastern part of the country, the Amazon area. We helped finance the opening of a new road to replace an old road that had been cut off by landslides resulting from the earthquake. One of the issues that came up there was colonization and opening up the rain forest for spontaneous colonization for people who could now get in to previously inaccessible areas. So, we began to get involved in some of those issues. There were also big issues involving oil exploration in the Amazon region. Most of Ecuador's oil is on the eastern side of the Andes. Conoco was doing some oil exploration out in the middle of a huge national park in the tropical forest in eastern Ecuador. They were trying to be conscientious about environmental issues. We had a number of discussions with them about some of their ideas for programs and how we might help with some of the infrastructure to both protect the area and maybe create more of a viable national park out of that area. One of the Ecuadorian officers on our agricultural and natural resources staff was one of the premiere environmental people in Ecuador, so he was personally both experienced and very motivated in this area. I was fascinated by natural resources conservation and wildlife for a long time, especially after our experiences in Africa.

It all came together in a program that we began to develop in 1988 or 1989 that would try to address the environmental issues, the biological diversity issues that existed in several areas that were under pressure, but would also recognize the needs of people who lived in or around those areas. We were looking at a combination of conservation and development programs. I think this was one of the earlier examples of this kind of approach to recognizing the interrelationships between biological diversity, conservation and development concerns and sustainable use of resources which have a vast amount of diversity.

Another thing that I didn't mention, but it is a theme that runs through here, is the debt crisis of the 1980s and the beginnings of the idea of swapping some of this debt for nature. Ecuador, like all Latin American countries, had a tremendous backlog of foreign debt and so there were some opportunities for doing that there. I think we really pioneered some new activities in this area and the debt-swap program was one of the initiatives that I personally took. The program we financed was a natural resources management project involving farming on steep hillsides that CARE was carrying out. But by becoming interested in the idea of a debt-swap, that whole effort got us involved with a variety of other organizations and innovative financial approaches in the environment and natural resources area. So, with a number of folks inside and outside the mission, we began to think creatively about how to put together a program that would combine development and biodiversity conservation approaches.

Q: This was what year?

SMITH: This was 1988-89. The other twist that we put on this was the one I said we would come back to later on, and that is my whole approach and growing conviction about the right way to do project designs. What we did in this process is, and again, Washington intervened to make our life difficult, to try to get the approval of the project at the PID (product identification document) stage. On the basis of that approval, we would then proceed with contracting the implementors for the program, and have as the first task for the "implementation" contract the final design of the project. This would include the selection of the areas where the project would work. The idea was that the contractor would work jointly with the counterpart organizations on development of the detailed plan, with the view that once that stage was done there would be a kind of "punctuation mark" when we would review the final design and approve the project in the field. We felt this could be a much accelerated process, handled in country with the people who would then carry on to implement the project. There might be a gap of two or three months between design and implementation, but we would try to bridge that with some overlap between the two phases of this process.

Q: The designers would be the ones who implemented it.

SMITH: Right. It took a little doing. Actually, AID had a mechanism called "collaborative assistance" that was designed to encourage university involvement in development programs, but did foresee this kind of program where the design organization could be a private voluntary organization (PVO) or a private contractor. In the collaborative assistance concept, it would be a university that would presumably carry on the implementation of a program once it was approved. We used that collaborative assistance concept, but with the idea of involving PVOs instead of universities to do that. We planned that the PID we put together would identify that process, and would identify the broad objective that we were trying to achieve and the parameters within which we planned to work. It would ask for the authority to contract following PID approval for the technical assistance provider, with the view that they would also continue during implementation of the project. And the PID would request authority to approve the final project paper in the field, without having to come back to Washington.

Well, that was a little bit ahead of its time. I was pretty much behind this whole idea, but I did not go to Washington to make the case for that approach, but rather the people in the agriculture

office did. It worked out that they were going to be in Washington anyway. Theoretically, we were going to economize on the staff, and I don't know if it would have made any difference anyway. But, like the Swaziland health project case, Washington wasn't ready for our vision and maybe we were moving too quickly, maybe we were being a little bit too flexible on this. What the bureau asked for before allowing us to proceed was basically for us to document our strategy in the environment and natural resources area. To be honest, we probably didn't have the strategy well articulated and it certainly didn't exist on paper, and we may have been going a little bit too ad hoc and sort of looking at this as a target of opportunity without a particularly well thought out strategy.

But the net effect of that was to set the whole process back by a year. We had gotten to the point of writing the PID presenting these ideas and getting ready to go with that approach, when everything was sort of put on the shelf and we were told that before Washington was ready to talk about a project, they needed to know what our strategy was going to be for working in the environment and natural resources area. And, of course, we hadn't planned on that and there was nobody to do the strategy and it took a year, maybe more, until we went through that thought process and writing process to send Washington the strategy document. In the end it didn't really change materially the project itself, but did set us back a significant period of time.

So when I left Ecuador, we were only really just getting started with the project. The PID was finally approved in 1990 and we were just getting started on the request for applications for the implementors who would carry out the final design and then eventually implement the project. The project became known as the SUBIR project, the sustainable use of biological resources project, and eventually was awarded to a consortium of the Nature Conservancy and CARE and one other environmental organization. I hear it has done reasonably well. That is the project of all the ones that I have been associated with, even though it is not one I actually physically wrote as a project design officer, that I would consider to be "mine" more than any others in my career. But, it wasn't consummated successfully during my time there.

Q: What were some of the things that you were trying to promote?

SMITH: The idea was to take several areas of high biological diversity in the country, most of which actually had, at least on paper, a formal park or reserve status or core of one. To look at ways both to manage those parks or reserves that would involve local people, would make the park or reserve a meaningful concept, not just a piece of land with a fence around it trying to keep everybody out, and to look also at buffer zone areas in the immediate vicinity as a way to carry out agriculture and other economic activities that were compatible with those forest areas (most the areas were forest although there were some high mountain areas as well), and look at kind of an integrated, sustainable sort of development-with-conservation approach to some key physical areas in the country that would encompass some significant locations for high biological diversity.

Q: It would harmonize the people's welfare with the environmental effort.

SMITH: The World Wildlife Fund then had a program called "Wildlands and Human Needs", sort of a "parks-and-people" kind of notion. And the Biodiversity Support Program that AID still

finances through a consortium which includes WWF was actually one of the vehicles for some of the early design work there. This whole notion of combining conservation with the recognition of the development needs and the behaviors and cultural attitudes of communities -- looking at this very much as a community based conservation approach -- this probably wasn't the first time that this ever happened, but it was not as widespread and as accepted as it is now. This was intended to be among the early efforts in this area and was one reason why it was all the more frustrating that we got hung up on this semi-bureaucratic requirement to do a strategy, which cost us a year in actually getting into the field with something like this. And, on a personal level, it cost me the opportunity to see that effort, to nurture it, into its implementation. But, the program has done okay.

I guess the consortium members had a falling out along the way and had some difficulties of that nature, but I hear they are working on a new program. In fact, I just learned last week that the mission in Ecuador is very much involved in and looking at the next generation of its strategy and program in this area, building on the experience of that project. Even though the program in Ecuador is fast disappearing, this is one of the areas that they are preserving and really focusing on as one of their last remaining activities. So, the legacy of that kind of lives on.

One of the things that I was most pleased with was pioneering a new look at things, a new way of doing things, and consciously not taking the conventional approach to things but saying, "Here is a problem, let's see if we can fix it." Both the SUBIR project, where we applied the collaborative approach, as well as pioneering a number of things involving debt swaps -- these were two things that I did in Ecuador and were largely things that I could say would not have happened, certainly not the way they happened, without my involvement. They were fun.

Q: Was there something particular about the debt swap?

SMITH: The opportunity existed to use a small amount of money to leverage a large program because of the discounts that were being given on Ecuadorian debt. Ecuadorian debt was sold on the secondary market for eleven cents on the dollar in those days. So, you could buy a dollar's worth of Ecuadorian debt for eleven cents. The government, partly through our working with them, developed an approach for exchanging debt purchased in that way, swapping that debt for local currency at fifty cents on the dollar. So, they got their debt retired in effect for half price. But since the price of that was eleven cents you also got a multiplier 4 or 5 times yourself. We worked at two levels on this.

One, we worked closely with CARE, which had had a grant from us for a natural resource management project which involved on-farm terracing and irrigation activities, sustainable agricultural activities on steep hillside farming. We worked with them to extend that program through the vehicle of a debt swap. CARE was very interested in doing that in those days. We basically were able to make a \$250,000 grant to CARE, which was leveraged into, by the time everything was said and done, a \$1.2 million program to carry on their sustainable agriculture hillside farming activities there.

In the process of doing that we then got into some very active discussions with the government of Ecuador about their general policy and the general use of this device as a tool for

development, both in natural resources and other things. There was a group called the Debt for Development Coalition which had a couple of people working on these issues worldwide and they came down and worked with the Vice President's office. The Vice President of Ecuador was very interested in this whole area, took a personal interest in it and was very much behind the development of the government of Ecuador's policies and procedures for using debt swaps for development purposes in natural resources, education and other kinds of things. So, because of our interest in this specific program we were able to work more generally with them.

Q: This was AID debt?

SMITH: No. It was our money in this case. The \$250,000 was a grant to CARE, which then used that money, and I think some of its own as well, to purchase commercial debt of Ecuador on the secondary market and at eleven or thirteen cents or whatever it was. In the final analysis, they were able to buy that multiple, 8 times that, so \$2 million worth of Ecuadorian debt face value, then exchange that in Ecuador for a million dollars worth of local currency and then program the local currency for the cost of its programs. So, it wasn't AID debt, but a small grant from us to CARE which allowed them to purchase commercial debt on the market and use the proceeds for their programs.

So, all around that is why I would say that Ecuador is the high water mark of my career. I had an excellent working relationship with the director. The role I played was one very much the internal mission management role and in that role made some significant progress or did some significant things. But more importantly, I had an opportunity to develop some skills and experience in management training, team work, working together on a strategic planning effort to guide the focus of the program. We had a very interesting program, and a lot of implementation problems, but over time we dealt with those problems, pared the portfolio of the bad apples and focused it on the things that were crucial to our objectives, reflected a significant private sector role along with government, and a couple of initiatives in which I was able to play personally a key role that involved some very innovative programming and were in an area I was very much interested in.

JAMES F. MACK
Deputy Chief of Mission
Quito (1991-1994)

Ambassador 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 American 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 2004.

Q: And then went where?

MACK: Well after '91 I went to Ecuador as the Deputy Chief of Mission.

Q: It probably would be a good place to stop here and pick it up then.

Okay, today is the 16th of February 2006. Jim you are in Ecuador from when to when?

MACK: I was in Ecuador from 1991 to 1994.

Q: And who was the Ambassador?

MACK: His name was Paul Lambert. He was a good friend and Yale classmate of George Bush the first. I think they both played on the Yale baseball team. And Lambert was a prominent estate lawyer in New York City and I think an excellent fundraiser for the Republican Party in New York City. Very decent guy, a very, very decent guy. He was nominated for his ambassadorship I guess about a year before I got there, roughly. I had met him when he came through Andean Affairs for his briefing before he was confirmed. I was then the Director of Andean Affairs at the Department of State. When the position of DCM became available as it did shortly after he got there, he asked me if I would like to go down there and I said that I would. I arrived in the early fall of '91, in about September.

Two weeks before I got on the plane in September, 1991, he called me on the phone from Ecuador. He had already been at post for six months. He said, "Jim I wanted you to know that I have just submitted my resignation to the President effective January, 1992. In other words, he said. I have given the President five months to find a replacement." I said, "Well, thanks for telling me; I haven't really signed up to be Charge," but he explained why he was leaving and I understood.

Prior to taking his ambassadorship, he had been at a major firm in New York for years. At that point he was 62. He had a large stable of clients who used his services, and when he was tapped to be ambassador he left his clients under the charge of a young lawyer who they had brought into the firm. When the clients who had been working with Paul Lambert for years realized that he was going to be gone for a long time, and recognized that they would need his services in the interim, said, "Paul, your protégé has just informed us that he is leaving the firm. Unless you tell us that you are coming back shortly, we are going to go with him to his new firm."

So he really had to make a choice. As I said, he was 62 and to try to rebuild a client base at that age is not a simple thing. So he elected to terminate his ambassadorship and go back to his profession and his clients. He is probably still working as far as I know. In any event, I got to post recognizing that he would be leaving in four months later. And he did. He left in January, 2002.

President Bush, the father, immediately named a friend of his from Texas, an oil man, to replace Lambert. I understand he actually could speak Spanish. I never met him. Can't even remember his name. Now as you may recall, the Democrats thought 1992 would be their year, as it was, and they already did have control of the Senate if I recall correctly. And the Senate never even

gave this gentleman a hearing. Which meant that I remained as Charge through the end of the Bush Administration. Then Clinton came in in January 1992 Ecuador was not at the top of his agenda. So by the time he did and a new ambassador was confirmed it was already November 2003. I had been Charge for twenty-two months. It was a very interesting time. Pete Romero was the new ambassador.

Q: Okay well lets talk about when you went out there you had been dealing with the bureau and all of the situations there. What was the situation in Ecuador and well, politically; economically and all at that time?

MACK: Well, Ecuador as you know has a substantial amount of natural wealth. It is an oil exporter, is a major banana producer; shrimp producer, gets a lot of tourism and has a fairly balanced economy, but it is largely an extraction and farming economy. Parts of the economy did very well. When the price of oil was high in the boon times in the 70's, the country really developed very, very quickly under a benign military dictatorship. When the price of oil dropped, the government did not have the income it had before and the development of the infrastructure slowed down. And the government in power when I got there was of the democratic left, not totally committed to private enterprise and certainly not supportive of foreign investment in a big way.

There also were some impediments to export. Ecuador was then getting into the cut flower business. Colombia had the market but Ecuador was getting in big time. But there were many bureaucratic steps to export each flower shipment, which was perishable and had to be processed quickly. I remember that one of the first speeches I made dealt with the kind of things the government should do to cut bureaucratic impediments to exports. There also were also oil issues. Texaco had been there for sometime. It had discovered the oil in Ecuador in the late '60's. But under their contract they were fazing out and turning their wells over to the state owned oil company. Petroecuador I think it is called now. There was a major lawsuit against Texaco brought by some environmental groups in the United States using some indigenous groups in Ecuador as their pretext, suing Texaco for billions of dollars for destruction of the environment.

And there was another small U.S. company that discovered oil in an area inhabited by some indigenous people on the Amazon side. Almost all the oil was on the Amazon side of the country. This particular group, the Wai Wai, had been contacted back in the '50's by some North American evangelical missionaries. There was a very famous story about that. Five young male missionaries were murdered by the Wai Wai in the initial contact attempt, they had landed in a sandbar in a river that flowed through Wai Wai territory. After that the sister of one of missionaries who was killed made it her life's work to live among them. In any event, the US company did a pretty good job of protecting the environment where it was working. They built no bridges over the major rivers in the area to keep out squatters. The roads they built were made with a special textile base minimize disturbing the environment and were built as narrow as possible. Still the environmentalist movement in the US remained still pretty much opposed to any further oil development in the Amazon. Later the company was bought out by an Argentine firm. I have not followed it since then, but the initial development was done pretty well in my view.

I traveled twice to the area to see for myself. The second time was for a ceremonial signing agreement between the oil company and the various semi-nomadic clans that made up the tribe of then about 1500. We flew in in single engine missionary planes and landed at a tiny grass strip built by the missionaries years before. The president of Ecuador, Sixto Durán-Ballén followed in a huge Sikorsky helicopter. As the chopper taxied toward the meeting site, where hundreds of Wai Wai were gathered, the strip on both sides of the strip were lined by an honor guard of dozens of stone age tribesman dressed in their typical Amazonian splendor, which means virtually nothing, with their 8 foot long spears raised in the air. I'll show you one in my kitchen. It was quite a scene!!!.

Cocaine trafficking was also a big issue in Ecuador. It was coming out from southern Colombia through Ecuador. Early in my tenure, a major Ecuadorian Drug Cartel was taken down by an elite Ecuadorian police unit trained by us. It was a rather large operation. In addition, we were able to persuade the Ecuadorian Government to agree allow us mount a radar for them on a volcano on the Amazonian side to detect drug flights coming up from Peru to Colombia through Ecuadorian airspace. That proved quite successful. So the drug issue was very important.

Another big challenge for us internally was funding. At that time all at the embassies were suffering through budget cuts. I am talking about cuts in embassy operating expenses so we had to find ways to save money to meet our lower budget target. And we did meet our new targets. And since the Ambassador's residence was unoccupied, one of the ways we saved money was to put up TDYers and newly arrived staff there, as opposed to a hotel, as long as they didn't have any children. This also kept the residence staff, whose salaries we had to pay anyway, on their toes. We did this for a year and a half and probably saved 60 or 80 thousand dollars in TDY expenses in that period. There were those who probably were not too delighted with the idea, but we did not have any major problems and we were able to save ourselves a lot of money from funds that came out of the embassy budget.

Q: While you were did that border problem that has been going on since the 1940's between Peru and Ecuador raise its head?

MACK: That issue did not raise its head in the fullest extent until after I transferred from Ecuador to Peru. I was in Peru at the time the war broke out. But having been in Ecuador before certainly gave me insights into both sides of the issue.

Q: I have finished long interviews with Wes Alexander who talks about his time in Ecuador towards the ends of that war. Well let's talk about economics. Were these obstacles to business just socialist mindlessness or was this a case of people looking to extort. What was happening?

MACK: I think you are describing in an interesting way two facets of the Ecuadorian mind. One was I think that was embedded in the DNA of the political culture in Ecuador, an particularly that of the highlands, was a huge distrust of foreign investment. The party in power at the time I got there was a left-leaning and they were certainly very, very suspicious of business. You will recall this was 1991. I had arrived just after the Soviet Union collapsed. And so Ecuadorian government realized that, I think, that things were going to change.

On the other hand we are talking about leaders of one of the major parties who had grown up basically on Marxian rhetoric. The universities, the national universities, were basically run politically leftists. So the idea of an open free-market approach to development was not one that was embraced by many, many people in the middle class in the highlands. Interestingly enough, these leftist views were more strongly held in the highlands where the government, but not the natural resources, was located, than on the coast where their half of the population lives and a strong tradition of an export economy existed – bananas, fish, shrimp and other tropical products. A very small portion of the population lived in the Amazon where the oil was. There was also a very strong entrepreneurial class on the coast. But regarding the other point you made, there was a lot of extortion of business, both local business and foreign business.

The courts were corrupt by and large and the result was that a local business partner with a foreign partner could avail himself of the courts to win a dispute or to blackmail a foreign investor. I will give you an example. Not infrequently, American investor, who had a partner in Ecuador, would come down to settle the problem and find himself under arrest on a Friday evening. This is how that would happen. The local partner would have bribed a judge to issue an order of arrest of the foreigner just before COB on Friday so the individual would have to spend the weekend in jail. Since many Americans would not want to endure a weekend in an Ecuadorian jail, they would settle up right away on terms favorable to the Ecuadorian partner.

A very, very unfortunate case involved a naturalized American from Colombia, a civil engineer on a Quito water project, who had suspended his project because his company was not getting paid. He was arrested and thrown into jail for the weekend. It turned out he was a diabetic and had no insulin with him. He started going into insulin shock and would have died if he hadn't prevailed on a sympathetic guard to slip a note to the American Embassy, which is how we found out. And he was going into a coma when we got to him and secured his release. If we had not, he would have died. So Ecuador really was a difficult place for investors to do business.

Now obviously big firms like Bell South and the oil companies could fend for themselves, mostly. But they had problems too. Ecuador, potentially, could be a very, very prosperous country. But it definitely did not achieve a tenth of what it is capable of doing. For the last ten years or so there has been a huge exodus of its young people going to the U.S. and Europe because of the lack of opportunity at home.

Q: How did you deal with the two Ecuadorian governments you worked with during your time when American businesses were having problems?

MACK: Well, both governments would hear us out, but clearly the second government I had to deal with, that of Sixto Durán-Ballén, was much more market-oriented. We had good access to him personally and to his ministers. But even in the Durán-Ballén administration, the government would find funny ways to make investment difficult, for their own people as well as foreigners.

Q: Did the economy work fairly well with this type of attitude?

MACK: Well, it worked fairly well because of the abundance of natural resources, which could

be mined. Oil provided one-half of the government's budget. So that was a tremendous cushion for the Ecuadorian Government. When you have billion dollars a year coming in, which at today's prices would be three billion something, it pardons a lot of administrative sins. So yes, there was economic activity there. Certainly life in Quito was for people who had middle-class income or above was very, very good. Quito was a delightful place to live. It was a clean city 9,300 feet above sea level. The climate was cool and the setting spectacular, It awesomely beautiful. From where I lived you could see five glacier covered volcanoes and a forest across the city. Quito was located in a valley, a long narrow valley. We lived on one side and could look at the other which was a volcano that was occasionally snow-covered. It was just a delightful place to live.

Q: Sticking to the business-side, were there Americans involved in the flower business, the cut-flower business?

MACK: Yes. But I think at the time most of them were either Colombian or Ecuadorian.

Q: The reason I asked is because there is a real problem in the cut-flower business, in that usually these young women have to work in an environment that is heavily chemicalized. This is not good for people.

MACK: Well! That is certainly one side of it. The other side is that tens of thousands of women found work and regular cash income outside their home for the first time in their lives. I don't know whether your concerns regarding chemicals are completely justified. But yes! Of course you have to spray the flowers to keep the wee beasties away. Everything is done scientifically. They apply exactly what the rose needs by drip irrigation. I don't know what the long term impact is.

Were you referring to the insecticides and fungicides?

Q: Yes I remember seeing some reports about this maybe about twenty or thirty years ago in Columbia

MACK: If there was some truth to this concern at that time, I would imagine that more benign types of Herbicides and Fungicides are being used today. And keep in mind as I just said, the flower industry brought about significant social change in some of the rural areas in the highlands where the cut flower industry is located.

It empowered women, because about 80 percent of the workers in the flower industry were, and I suppose still are, women. The men did the heavy lifting kind of stuff and the women did the fine motor work like pruning, cutting and packing. The flower industry provided work outside the home to large numbers of rural women in the highlands for the first time. And they tended to spend it on things the family really needed. So instead of the husband pissing it away on liquor or something, women tended to save it and spend it on family necessities. Of course, when women started working outside the home, that produced some social tension for obvious reasons. I don't know how it all turned out. I have been away for twelve or fifteen years now. I would be interested in reading a report about how that all came out.

Oh! I forgot one of the major industries in Ecuador is tourism. Ecuador, I would say, square mile for square mile is the most fascinating country that I have ever seen. Absolutely phenomenal! Whether you are interested in the Galapagos Islands, the Coastal Forest, the Indian highlands, the Volcanoes, the Glacier-covered volcanoes, the Amazonian jungle, its all there. My family did all this by the way. We did a lot of backpacking. It is just phenomenal. There are lots and lots of things of interest for tourists. It was just a great place. I wrote a tour guide based on our adventures.

Q: Did you have any problems of lost Americans or Americans getting in trouble as tourists?

MACK: Yes! The problem was mostly along the Colombian border on the Amazonian side where the FARC Colombian guerilla group then, and even now, was very strong. While I was posted to Ecuador, several Americans were kidnapped for ransom either by the FARC or by bandits, perhaps some of them ex-FARC. Some victims worked for the oil companies and had a reason to be there. Others were just adventurers that insisted on going to the area against Embassy warnings about how dangerous the area could be. So yes, there was a problem.

Q: Did you get involved in any of the cases, trying to deal with them?

MACK: Yes but not directly. Obviously, I did not do any negotiations directly. If the victims worked for the oil companies, the companies would bring in their own security people in, or hire expert negotiators to try to establish contact with the kidnappers and negotiate the ransom. The companies did not want the Ecuadorian government, or the US government for that matter, involved because they did not trust its competence to deal with this type of situation, and of course because the companies were prepared to pay the ransom, which is something, by the way, the U. S. does not support.

Q: What role did the military play in Ecuador at this time?

MACK: Well! The Ecuadorian military was quite well regarded by the populace because it had controlled the government during the period of the greatest economic growth probably in the history of Ecuador, which were the seventies and eighties. The growth was stimulated by Texaco's discovery and exploitation of large deposits of oil in the Ecuadorian Amazon. While it was in control, the military tended not to apply harsh measures against the population. In fact, in contrast to, for example, the Chilean and Argentine situations, the military dictatorship was referred to as a "dictablanda" or soft dictatorship. In addition, the Ecuadorian Army was very active in civic action type activities. They were seen as agents of national development, and they saw themselves as ultimate bastion of protection of the state and the welfare of the people. And they were quite popular.

In fact, the military was often more popular than the politicians. I mentioned the oil boom that coincided with the military rule. The military considered, and still does, oil as a strategic asset, and it certainly is for Ecuador. As a consequence, the military deployed large numbers of troops to the oil producing region to make sure there would be no interruption of the movement of oil through the pipeline across the Andes over a 16,000 foot pass to the Pacific ports.

Q. Were interruptions of the pipeline.

MACK: Not very often when I was there although the oil workers unions would stage occasional strikes that shut things down temporarily. However, the companies kept a supply of oil in holding tanks at the port so they could to load the oil tankers even if there were a short shut down. Historically, the most serious interruptions were caused by earthquakes. The Ecuadorian Andes are a very earthquake prone zone. Prior to my coming and subsequent to my leaving there were some major earthquakes that severely damaged the pipeline and interrupted oil exports for a long time. These were devastating for the economy and national treasury since oil was the source of half of the government's revenue at the time.

Q: Did arms sales or potential arm sales occupy you at all?

MACK: Not arms per se, but military supplies yes. A major U.S. electronics manufacturer, Harris Corporation out of Rochester, NY, if I recall correctly, was bidding on a multi-million contract to sell a field radio communication system to the Ecuadorian Army.

There were field trials. The main competition was a between Harris and an Israeli company, whose name I cannot recall. Harris alleged that the Israelis paid someone off to sabotage their equipment just before the field trial and that as a result, Harris did badly and lost the contract to the Israelis. The Harris people were furious. And it fell to me as Charge to meet with the Commander of the Ecuadorian Army to express my concern about what had happened. I cannot recall how that finally came out. I don't think the Americans won the contract, but they did get a hearing.

Q: What about the drug business, while you were there?

MACK: Well I told you that cocaine was coming out of Columbia through Ecuadorian ports for transport by boat to the U.S. Also precursor chemicals used to produce cocaine came through Ecuador en route to Southern Columbia, as contraband. So drugs were a big issue. Then there was the case of a retired Admiral in the Ecuadorian Navy who had founded a bank in Ecuador and an off shore bank in the Caribbean that we were fairly certain was laundering drug money. The Admiral expressed outrage to me, alleging he had been falsely accused and was always trying to clear his name. And a major Ecuadorian drug smuggling cartel was taken down while I was there with significant help from DEA and another US agency. The Reyes Torres cartel. That was a little touchy because a daughter of one of the Reyes Torres clan was in my son's seventh grade class at Colegio Cotopaxi. In fact, she had attended a class party at my house.

So, yes, drugs were a big issue. Not as big an issue as Columbia but nonetheless a serious issue.

Q: Did you see then that drug money was beginning to corrupt the legal system and all of that?

MACK: Well, I can't say that drugs were the only source of corruption in the legal system. However, following Reyes Torres' arrest, it appeared to us that his associates were trying to move the courts to spring him on a technicality. President Borja's Minister of Government at the

time showed a lot of courage in trying to keep Reyes Torres behind bars, and also putting him there. Beyond drugs, there was certainly a lot of corruption in the legal system, and that preceded the drug problem. I am not suggesting that every judge was corrupt; I don't believe that is the case. But, there was corruption. And it impacted on US businessmen trying to work in Ecuador. So corruption in the legal system was a great area of concern for us.

Q: Were there elections while you were there?

MACK: Yes!

Q: Did they change anything?

MACK: Well through the elections, the government changed from Center Left under Rodrigo Borja to Center Right under Sixto Durán-Ballén. Ecuador was definitely developing even before Sixto. There was no question about it. Investment was going in because there was so much potential there. The early 90s were a period of the high tech boom. Cell phones were coming into their time. Ecuador was and still is a significant oil exporter, not in the league of Venezuela, but it certainly had the potential to export a lot more oil than it is exporting right now. It probably could export about as much as a million barrels a day if it developed its oil fields to the maximum, but is probably exporting half of that.

Q: What about the church, was the church an important influence at that time, or not?

MACK: I don't recall that it had any greater influence in Ecuador than other Latin American Countries and I don't recall a major situation occurring that showed the role of the Catholic Church to be essentially different than that of other Latin American Countries.

Q: Were there a lot of American Pentecostal type missionaries wandering around the place?

MACK: Yes, there were lots of Evangelical missionaries there. The powerful evangelical radio station, called "la Voz de los Andes" or "Voice of the Andes" was located in Quito. Unfortunately, one group that had been working with the Amazonian tribes for decades had been forced out three weeks before my arrival. They were accused of being CIA front, which was an absurd charge. And I think that the Amazonian Indian tribes lost a very strong source of support when this missionary group was forced out. Missionary schools were training the Indian kids who became teachers and went back to their communities. Missionary hospitals and clinics provide health care, that sort of thing.

Q: Did they cause any particular problems?

MACK: Not at all, not that I was really aware of.

Q. Did you know any Catholic priests?

MACK: I knew many of them. One of our best friends, Padre Pacho Eguez, happened to be a Jesuit Priest. He was a serious hiker, in his 60s at that point. He really knew the mountains of

Ecuador. Every month he would take my family and me somewhere to go hiking. Sometimes just for the day, sometimes for one or two nights. I came to know much of Ecuador thanks to him. He taught at the Catholic University right across the street from the Embassy. Through Padre Pacho, my family and I were able to spend with several days with some Italian Salesian priests working in the Southern Amazonian jungle with the Azuar Indians, formerly known as head shrinkers. We also were close to a US missionary priest who runs a school in Quito to train boys from dysfunctional families in vocational skills. So in a way, both the evangelical missionaries and the Catholic priests and missionaries really helped shape my understanding of Ecuador.

Q: What about the Peace Corps, did we have a Peace Corps there?

MACK: We had a very, very active Peace Corps. Ecuador was a great Peace Corps country. Volunteers were all over the place. I am a former Peace Corps volunteer. So we enjoyed visiting the volunteers.

Q: What kind of work were they doing?

MACK: Oh! They were doing community development work. They were working with the small businesses. They were teaching forestry. There over two hundred of them.

Q: How about relations between the Embassy and the Consulate General in Guayaquil? I know the world view of the Guayaquilenos, with their business focus, and the Quitenos, with their government focus are worlds apart.

MACK: During my stay, our relations with the American Consulate General in Guayaquil were excellent. I made it my business to go down at least once a month. And when there I would have an active schedule of meeting people and giving speeches to business groups etc. I would also bring the consul general up to Quito. Her name was Gwen Clare. Later she became US Ambassador to Ecuador. Our relationship was fine. You are right about the different world view of the people on the coast from the people in Quito. They were almost two different countries.

Q: Thomas Nast died in Guayaquil.

MACK: The cartoonist?

Q: In Guayaquil!

MACK: I had no idea.

Q: From Yellow Fever.

MACK: Well! That is the way he would die in Guayaquil. Yellow Fever! Right! It was not a very healthy place.

Q: Did you get a new Ambassador while you were there?

MACK: Yes, Peter Romero came in at the end of November of 2003. I finished out my tour and left in roughly May or June of 2004.

Q: How was he?

MACK: Pete was a take charge type of guy. So even though I had been Charge for almost two years, when Pete came in there was no question about who was the Ambassador, and that was Pete. He was a very energetic type of guy and he got around a lot. He put his stamp on Embassy. Obviously I had to step back, which I did. In a situation like this, some former Charges simply leave post, but I had kids in school and I did not want to leave. Pete and I had known each other. We both worked to make it work. .

Q: Did you have any high level visits while you were there like a President or Vice , President?

MACK: Not at that level. We did have Sen. Boren from Oklahoma.

Q: Was there a major Ecuadorian community in the United States?

MACK: Yes!

Q: Did it have any weight in Congress?

MACK: Not at that point. Also the social-economic level of the people coming was quite low. Many were illegal so they did not have a huge congressional access that some immigrant groups now have in Congress.

LESLIE M. ALEXANDER
Ambassador
Ecuador (1996-1999)

Ambassador Leslie Alexander was born in Germany of American parents and grew up primarily in Europe. He was educated at the Munich campus of American University, after which he came to the United States and, in 1970, entered the Foreign Service. Speaking several foreign languages, including German, French, Spanish and Portuguese and some Polish, he served in Guyana, Norway, Poland, Spain, Portugal, Italy and Haiti, where he twice served, first as Chargé, and later as Special Envoy.. From 1993 to 1996 he served as Ambassador to Mauritius and from 1996 to 1999 as Ambassador to Ecuador. Ambassador Alexander was interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy in 2005.

Q: Well then, '96, whither?

ALEXANDER: '96 I went back to ARA, to Western Hemisphere as it's called now, WHA. I went to Ecuador as ambassador; back into the frying pan. It wasn't violent like Haiti, but it was

certainly volatile.

Q: You were there, this would be '96 to '99?

ALEXANDER: To the end of '99. During my three years there I had five presidents or maybe six; I'll have to do the count. One of whom, Ecuadorian folklore would have you believe, I was responsible for having ousted. Ecuador was a very different kettle of fish because we did have some significant interests there, economic and political.

Q: Let's talk about '96 when you went out there. What was our interest there and what was the situation sort of political/economic in Ecuador before you went out?

ALEXANDER: Economically, I think our major investment in Ecuador was in the oil sector.

Q: In what?

ALEXANDER: In the oil sector, in the petroleum sector. Ecuador has petroleum. It doesn't have what Venezuela has, but it has... it's a successful oil exporter. American oil companies spent a lot and invested a lot in that sector. We're also, not surprisingly, Ecuador's largest trading partner. The trade back and forth, when I was there, was over a billion bucks a year. There was money there.

Politically, just before I arrived in '95, Ecuador went to war with Peru over a border dispute.

Q: Not that border that we were a guarantor for?

ALEXANDER: Exactly, exactly.

Q: Brazil and who was the other one?

ALEXANDER: Chile. But this was a continuation of a dispute that went back 200 years and which had led, counting that war in '95, to four wars with Peru. The one in '95 was of some concern to Washington because it had all the makings of a modern war: jet aircraft and guided missiles and all. This wasn't some little dispute as you see in other parts of the world with AK-47s and a lot of people get killed and there's a lot of misery. This was warfare as it's understood in the United States. Not on the scale of the kind of conflict we might have, but it was a reminder to Washington that we do have countries in South America, like Argentina and Brazil and Chile and Peru, that are armed to the teeth and capable of projecting power, causing misery and conflicts in the region, which is something that just did not suit our interests. This shot of MiGs, which is what the Peruvians and we had (the Ecuadorians had Israeli jet aircraft, Kfirs), these clashes and shooting down airplanes with guided missiles. It made us realize that this is not some little dispute between two mini states out in the middle of the Indian Ocean.

Tensions were high. Tensions were really high when I arrived because the fighting had stopped, but the dispute had not been resolved. The four guarantor states actually had military troops stationed in the disputed region, and a lot of people don't know but we had U.S. forces stationed

in the jungle between Peru and Ecuador. So when I arrived we had troops in the area.

Q: Who were these troops and how did they get there?

ALEXANDER: We sent them. We, the other three guarantors, the Chileans, the Argentines and the Brazilians; the U.S. contingent was the largest one. We had troops and helicopters.

Q: They were part of a peacekeeping, of the guarantors?

ALEXANDER: They were part of a guarantor peacekeeping operation, but they were in the line of fire. We didn't want to keep U.S. forces in that area indefinitely; it was costing money and we just didn't want to do it. So it was in our interest to try to resolve this dispute, preferably once and for all, before it became an even larger problem for the region. While Peru had this ongoing conflict with the Ecuadorians, they were also having a border dispute with Chile; the Chileans were having a border dispute with the Bolivians and, of course, the Argentines had never forgiven us, or the Brits, for the Malvinas – the Falklands. So this touched a very raw nerve in a lot of places and it was in the interest of a lot of people to try to get this border dispute fixed. So this was the dynamic when I arrived in '96.

Q: What sort of government did Ecuador have when you arrived there?

ALEXANDER: It had a democratically elected government. It had a president and a congress. No prime minister, which might have been part of the reason why they've changed presidents every few months. At least it seemed that they were changed every few months. I presented my credentials to the outgoing president who left office a week later. The incoming government had already been elected and they took over and they were in office from August until January when they were-

Q: I take it this is the type of government that if you didn't have a vote of confidence you're out?

ALEXANDER: No, no, it was a system much more like ours. They had a congress, but it was a unicameral; one house, not two. The ruling party had nothing to do with the election of the president, just like here in the U.S. You might have a majority in the congress and the president might be from the other party— the same in Ecuador.

So when the president took office, he represented a large party; but not the majority party. The president, who took office right after I arrived, was in power until January, when he was ousted in a bloodless coup, essentially led by the congress, but it was a coup. It wasn't done on a vote of no confidence; the congress convened and ruled that the president was mentally unfit and the military forced him from office. He went into exile in Panama. The president of the congress, ignoring the constitution, said, "I'm the president now," despite the fact that there was a democratically elected vice president. The vice president's problem was that she was a woman, and nobody wanted a woman president, so the president of the congress connived and manipulated and had himself appointed as president. He stayed in office until '98 when they had a presidential election.

Q: Well, what did you see as your task when you got there?

ALEXANDER: My principle political goal was to lend our efforts to those of the guarantor states in resolving the border dispute with Peru. This was our number one political objective. We had, equally as important, other missions including keeping Ecuador from becoming a haven for drug traffickers or a producing country. It was bordered by two major producing countries, Columbia and Peru. It had been spared that nightmare, but the pressures were always there. Economically, again, to protect and defend substantial U.S. investments in the country, which wound up being one of my biggest headaches because the government was so corrupt. They were always extorting U.S. firms and that was a chronic nightmare for me. Headache, I should say, not nightmare. I was very, very busy there.

Q: Let's talk first about dealing with the government. The United States was very happy that we could point to Latin America as being a place no longer with coups and dictators and this sort of thing, and all of a sudden you have a congressional coup shortly after you arrive. What did we do about that? Did we just sit back and say well, gee, that's your problem, or what?

ALEXANDER: We did the usual: we condemned the congressional coup; we didn't quite describe it as that. I should perhaps provide a little bit more detail to help understand Washington's reaction. I arrived in August. The new government, the government of Abdala Bucaram, took office in August of 1996. Bucaram was a very colorful man. He had been the mayor of Guayaquil; he'd been forced out of the country once before and exiled, accused of being corrupt while he ran Guayaquil, which is Ecuador's richest, largest city. The job is not unlike being the mayor of New York, but maybe five times more important than being the mayor of New York, because there are only two major cities in Ecuador: Quito and New York. So if there were two major cities in the U.S., New York and Washington, this is like being the mayor of New York.

He was a very controversial, very clever, very charismatic man, but he had a big mouth and provoked a lot of people. He came from a prominent family, his sister had been married to a former president of Ecuador, and both of them had died in a plane accident in the early '80s. It was alleged at one time that the CIA was responsible, but this is the typical Latin American thing, to accuse the gringos and the CIA. Bucaram came into office as a populist, but his cronies immediately set about doing what all the governments before him had done: stealing everything that wasn't nailed down. They began extorting money from U.S. companies and making life difficult for U.S. companies, particularly in the oil sector.

Bucaram had appointed as his minister of energy a man who was at times almost psychotic: threatening people, physically assaulting people. It was alleged he had even killed one or two people. Whether that's true or not, I don't know, but he was an extremely aggressive, confrontational man. In late September or early October, within a few weeks of my arrival, he had summoned to his office at the ministry of energy a couple of local representatives from one of the U.S. oil companies, and I really don't remember which company it was; I want to say Texaco but I'm not sure, I just don't remember because we had several. It's alleged that he physically assaulted them, struck them with his fists. They came to the embassy and said, "We were assaulted by the minister of energy. He's screaming, yelling at us." To make a long story

short, “what’s his problem?” “We don’t know.” So I said “this is totally unacceptable,” and I went to see him. He was somewhat aggressive with me as well.

He gave me somewhat of a different version, but left me with a very distinct impression that indeed he’d roughed these guys up. I made it absolutely clear to him that on my watch this was not going to happen again and if it did there would be very harsh consequences. He said, “Well what are you going to do, beat me up?” I looked at him and I said, “Would you consider that to be a harsh consequence?” He said, “You’re beating me up?” And I said, “Me personally beating you up? Yes.” I looked at him and I started laughing. I said, “Why are you speaking this way? You’re a minister, I’m an ambassador. I’m not coming over here to personally threaten you. You should be in a different point in your life, we’re the same age, you know.” He says, “Well, I’m that kind of guy. I mean, if you’re personally threatening me.” I looked at him and I started laughing, because I didn’t know what to say. I thought psychologically this is not a bad approach this guy is taking, because it’s the last thing I expected. I was also laughing because unbeknownst to him the last thing I was concerned about, even though he was a fairly well built guy, the last thing I was afraid of was him physically. It just never crossed my mind. I think in part because I’d had the good fortune of having done karate for ten years and even though I hadn’t kept it up, I was 46 years old, still physically in decent shape, and the last thing I was concerned about was mixing it up with this man. It just seemed so absurd I didn’t know what to say. I don’t think in the last 20 years that someone actually raised the suggestion of physical combat, so I started laughing, which was probably the best thing to do, because he started laughing. I don’t think he was laughing for the same reason. It kind of broke the ice in a way. If it comes to that, yes, we could trade punches, and even have a duel or something, which seemed to amuse him. I said, “Really, I don’t want to talk about consequences; I just don’t want this to happen because it’s unnecessary. If these people are doing something to you that so angers you that feel the need to strike them, call me. Strike me.” He says, “I can’t strike you, you have diplomatic immunity.” I said, “I’ll waive the immunity.” What I was trying to do was make him laugh and lighten it up a bit. But I said, “if you have a beef that drives you to that point that you want to physically assault somebody then obviously that’s a pretty strong beef and we should talk about it, but whatever beef it is you’re not going to solve your problem by physically assaulting executives of U.S. oil companies because then you will force me to do drastic things.” Then we get back to, “Like what?” I said, “You don’t want to know like what. It doesn’t matter.” He said, “But like what?” And I said, “Alright.” Again, he’s kind of laughing, so I’m laughing. I said, “Do you have an apartment in Miami?” He says, “as a matter of fact, I do.” “Alright, we won’t let you go to your apartment.” He says, “My wife wouldn’t be too happy about that.” I said “okay.” He says, “I have to think that. That would be pretty drastic. Would you really do that?” I said, “yes, absolutely. Absolutely I’d do that, take away your visa.” He says, “Alright, okay, alright. Well the next time I have a problem, I’ll call you.” So that resolved that problem.

The reason why I went through this little story was that I left thinking, “is it my imagination or is this guy off?” The DCM says, “No, this guy’s clearly got some kind of a problem.” I said, “Why would they make a guy like this a minister of energy?” “He’s a childhood friend, best friend, close friend of the president.” There were a couple of other crazies like this, maybe not as violent as this guy, but we were constantly having problems like this with the government. Yet they weren’t anti-American. It wasn’t that they disliked us and they weren’t seeking to provoke us. This was the kind of government they had; it was a bunch of bully boys, coupled with the

president's very often aggressive, provocative speech insulting people and, you know, daring his opposition to take him on and stuff. It caused a lot of concern.

By November, by the end of November, I went to him, actually he came to me.

Q: This is the president?

ALEXANDER: The president came to the house for drinks because I was getting increasingly fed up with this, so he came to my house one afternoon. He said, "I know you're unhappy." I said, "I'm really unhappy, but let me tell you something. If you keep at it the way you are, they're going to toss you out on your ear. I wanted to have this talk with you. Thank you for coming to the house. I'm flattered; a president never comes to an ambassador's place." He said, "Oh, you know me, I don't stand on protocol." I said, "Fine, I'm not going to stand on protocol either. I'm going to tell you as I see it. You don't want to pick a fight with the U.S. government. You've got enough going on here internally. Your opposition is going to bring you down and you're giving them every excuse. You're going to look to us to help prop you up because you are a democratically elected government and you know that's our mantra, you don't bring down democratically elected governments, but I can't help you if you can't help yourself. And if you're sitting there antagonizing American businesses here – particularly these oil companies, because they have a lot of clout in Washington – there's not going to be much sympathy if someone decides to bring you down. There's not going to be much sympathy for you in Washington. Yes, we'll mutter the right words, but without conviction. And, you don't want that. You want us in there saying the right things. If you want me to help you, you have to help yourself." And he said, "I hear you, I hear you. What is it that you want me to do?" So I actually gave him a written list, with about 10 things on there that I felt that he had to do; his unwillingness to sign intellectual property agreement, bribery, corruption— things that could have been done and should have been done. Nothing was done.

I called him mid-December and said, "I'm still getting the same complaints, I've seen no movement on these things." Finally around the beginning of December, I was in Ecuador's third largest city, Cuenca, speaking to the American-Ecuadorian Chamber of Commerce in Cuenca, and I made a speech in which I essentially went after the government. I never mentioned the president, I never mentioned anyone, but I spoke of corruption and I cited specific cases. Well, this hit the news that evening. I thought it might, but I wasn't quite sure. I remember saying to the staff before I delivered the speech, "this speech might even get me thrown out of the country because it's provocative. I don't want to change the government, I don't want to go after the government; I want to change their behavior. So let's keep that in mind, let's look at this speech again, because it is provocative. It is certainly the most provocative speech I've ever given and it sounds like an attack on the government. I don't want to attack the government," so we removed all references to the government. But people read between the lines, and it hit the news that night. Every TV station ran it and it started this ball rolling. The opposition said, "This is a national disgrace, the American ambassador is right, these are corrupt bastards." Of course, they were hypocrites because every government they had was corrupt. The government responded and said, "He makes all these allegations but he doesn't go into great detail." So then the press started calling for actual names. I said, "No, I'm not going to do that." "How do you expect the government to?" And I said, "I don't think I'm talking about anything which is news to anyone

in Ecuador. You've been subject to this kind of predatory corrupt behavior on the part of government officials since God knows when. It's not important that I go into. Moreover, it's not my job to tell anyone in Ecuador how to run their government. I made reference to certain things that had happened to U.S. companies and I want to leave it at that."

This went on and on and the government's response more or less, "he's full of you know what and this didn't really happen" and the press came back, "if this really happened why can't you tell us?" I said, "Because I get my information from different ways. Some of those ways, frankly, would reveal certain sources and information which I'm not at liberty to do, so I can't do this with you." They dropped that, but they kept after the government and they kept citing me. Then it went around in the opposition circles that what I was really saying was that we have lost faith and we want a change of government and that's what they used as a justification to start this congressional coup. They threw the guy out. My masters in Washington, namely the assistant secretary, were furious with me.

Q: Who was that?

ALEXANDER: It was Jeff Davidow. In fact, he called me up the day that the president was tossed out, fled into exile and said, "What have you done?" Those were his very words. I said, "I've done nothing, Jeff, but my job." And he repeated, "What have you done?" And I said, "I've done my job." "What do you think your job is?" I said, "My job is to defend and protect American interests in this country, including commercial interests. These people were predatory, extortionists and I denounced them. Now, what the congress has done, that's a different issue." "Yes, but you made it possible." I said, "Listen, if you're telling me I'm responsible for this man's behavior and for his being in exile, I'm sorry, I reject that notion." Jeff was a very, very decent man, one of the most intelligent FSOs I had ever met, and I was really kind of surprised because he was clearly angry. I'd never seen him angry, when I knew him before, my time there. He was clearly upset. There was something here I just didn't understand. So I called the principle desk, who just happened to be my predecessor. I got a rather funny reaction from him. Again, I'm only guessing; I can't accuse him of anything, because I don't know that, and I have no reason. We were friends more or less, served together.

Q: Who was it?

ALEXANDER: Pete Romero. We had served together and we were personal friends. After I hung up the phone I wondered if Pete, who was my immediate predecessor, if he put some bee in Jeff's bonnet and somehow convinced Jeff— but why would he do that? As best as I can figure, and this is from thinking about it over the years, that Pete got phone calls from people in Ecuador who were unhappy with the change in status quo and maybe it was felt that I had been injudicious. Maybe I was injudicious in my going after the government because I didn't clear my speech with Washington. But as I told them later I said, "I'm sorry, but I'm the ambassador. You pay me to make these kinds of judgments and I'm not in the habit of clearing my speeches, unless I am talking about U.S. policy." "Well, didn't you have a sense that this might be controversial?" I said, "yes and it's one of the reasons why I decided not to clear it with you. Had I asked for clearance I would have never gotten it, because it goes through 50,000 people." I said, "I'm sorry, but I have the authority, I'm also willing to accept the responsibility. I take

responsibility for what I did, but you have plausible denial and, if that's what you're looking for, you had nothing to do with this, you didn't. I'll take my lumps," and my lumps I did take because Jeff didn't talk to me for the next year. I was made to feel persona non grata. Had I had it to do all over again I would have done it.

Q: Were you sort of reputed to be the person who pushed this revolt?

ALEXANDER: Oh, yes, responsible for this man's ouster. I'm not going to be naïve. Had I not denounced him as obliquely as I did, I think he had a good chance of surviving. At least, if not his full term, certainly many more months if not another year or two. He was such a volatile, aggressive man, I cannot predict with certainty that he would have survived his entire term, but at the same time I have little doubts that it was my action more than any other that brought him down. His opponents were gunning for him anyway and they seized on this catalyst as the excuse or the pretext. I had a sense that it might be used that way. I didn't really think that it would go that far, but I would be a liar to say that the thought hadn't crossed my mind before delivering the speech. But again, we were dealing with people who were causing U.S. businesses absolute nightmarish scenarios with their outrageous claims.

If you're an oil company, or any company for that matter, and you've got \$100 million business going in a country and a minister comes to you and says give me a million dollars or I'm going to shut you down, you say well wait a minute, let's do the math. We've got \$100 million invested and they're asking for a million. However, if I give them the million, the U.S. government's going to send me to jail, because this breaks all kinds of laws. This was the position that our companies were finding themselves in. Not only the oil industry; we had Proctor & Gamble, Colgate; these are household names in the United States who had factories making toothpaste or whatever. They were being extorted in various ways by the government and by allies of the government; sometimes people in the private sector closely aligned with the government. They were being extorted; they were being sued under something called the Dealer's Act for tens of millions of dollars. There were 12 U.S. companies who were being sued from anywhere from \$20 million to \$100 million each and under Ecuadorian law they were clearly going to lose. But these were the most egregious kinds of lawsuits.

Q: These were shakedowns?

ALEXANDER: They were shakedowns, exactly. This was all going on when I was there and Washington was breathing all over me. I was getting frequent calls: you've got to do something, you've got to do something. This was the responsibility part which Washington loves to do. When they've got a problem, Washington always wants to tell its embassies what to do and that's what Washington does. Washington, in a very practical sense, is usually some FS-2 or some GS-15 who comes up with an idea that somehow becomes a policy and some senior level, DAS or somebody, signs off on it without giving it much thought and so this is Washington telling you what to do. To make a long story short, I didn't really have anyone giving me any advice on how to resolve these problems, but everyone was looking for solutions— again, Management 101. If I have the responsibility, I have the authority. And my authority is equal to my responsibility, I will exercise that authority and I will act in a way that I think I should.

I would like to say, in my defense, that we destroyed those cases, sent the lawyers packing. Some of the cases were settled, literally, for pennies on the dollar because I terrorized everybody and I used everything at my disposal. I will take away your visas; I'll send you to jail the moment you get off the plane in Miami for shaking down businesses. I'll do this. It was all nonsense, a bluff. Well, some of it wasn't a bluff, some of that stuff we were legally authorized to do, or could have done or could have sought authority to do. But we solved the problem. Part of it was solved by getting rid of the government which was, again, not my intention. But we were dealing with a very troublesome government. On top of that, I was concerned that, to the extent that the government radicalized the political scene, we were raising the stakes in this dispute with Peru. While President Bucaram went to Peru, Fujimori seemed to like him; I was so afraid that the opposition was cynically going to seize on what seemed to be an emerging friendship between him and the Peruvian president, and say this man's a traitor and he's selling us down the river to Fujimori and we have to act and that they might use this to go at it again with the Peruvians. There were a lot of vested interests, on both sides of the border, in a conflict. Conflicts require airplanes and a lot of people made a lot of money on both sides of the border selling airplanes and munitions and rockets and everything else to the armed forces. There were an awful lot of folks who wanted them to go at it again and they were doing everything in their power. That's a story that maybe we can pick up on in the next session on what happened with the government that succeeded him. My biggest headache with them was to keep them from going out and buying arms for personal gain, but clearly that would have provoked another war and an even bigger one than before.

Q: Okay, we'll pick it up then. By the way, I have to add that I have an interview with Maurice Bernbaum, who was there from '60 to '65 as ambassador. And the president at one point was Arosemena?

ALEXANDER: Yes. Who supposedly peed in his flower pot.

Q: Well, not only that but apparently some-

ALEXANDER: In the ambassador's flower pot.

Q: Yes and he was a drunk.

ALEXANDER: He was a drunk. He just died last year.

Q: Yes. At one point there, he got drunk at a banquet with all the high officials, either at the American ...

ALEXANDER: At the American ambassador's residence.

Q: ... and he started castigating the ambassador and everyone else. And Bernbaum said, "He's drunk, let's not take offense." So, such is life in Ecuador.

ALEXANDER: He, the president, actually, asked if it was true that he actually peed in the plants, the flower pot at the then-ambassador's residence. He said, "I peed but I peed in the rose

bushes.” I said, “You really did?” He said, “Yeah, I did. I’m an old man, I had to pee.” He was quite a character. He was thrown out. He was thrown out of office by the military for disgracing the country or something.

I’m glad you mention this because maybe this is a good point to finish. The military and others were very, very quick to seize on affronts to the national honor as pretexts for doing things that they wanted to do anyway. Bucaram was kind of wild; he wasn’t a drunk, quite to the contrary. I don’t think he drank any alcohol. He was actually a very physically impressive man, a very athletic guy. But his behavior, the things he would say, I was concerned that the military or others were going to seize on his remarks and, as they did with President Arosemena, use that as a pretext to throw him out of office, to do a coup, and eventually it happened anyway, ironically, based on my remarks, not on the presidents remarks.

Q: Well, we’ll pick this up the next time. We’ve talked about the departure of President-

ALEXANDER: Bucaram.

Q: Bucaram. But we haven’t talked about sort of the consequences thereafter. You were saying that you were at odds with the assistant secretary over this, but you said that the corruption had gone down. The shakedowns had pretty well stopped. Then we’re going to talk about the problem of the border dispute and how so many people had financial stakes in this border dispute. And we’ll pick that up.

Alright. Today is the 21st of November, 2005. Les, what was the border dispute all about?

ALEXANDER: Some time in 18th century, 17, pick a day, 1790, 1780, I don’t know, Peru and Ecuador’s border was demarcated by someone, the Spaniards. From the best of my recollection it was done, according to the Ecuadorians, arbitrarily.

Q: It was sort of administratively.

ALEXANDER: Exactly.

Q: You know, I mean, the governor of this and the governor of that.

ALEXANDER: Got together and said.

Q: Yes.

ALEXANDER: It probably would have ended there except, as time went by, the Ecuadorians were increasingly peeved by their not having physical access to the Amazon. Again for reasons I don’t quite understand, this really bothered them. Some argued that it was because they suspected that there was oil somewhere in the region where they claimed that the border should have been. There may have been some kind of mineral wealth. Whether it was as benign as offended honor as something as pragmatic or as mercenary as oil reserves, God only knows. Ecuadorians weren’t talking. To make a long story short, they didn’t like where the line was

drawn. Now, I do understand the sentiment, because I heard it repeated so much, what really bothered the Ecuadorians the most was their believing firmly, it was part of their creed and credo, that they were an Amazonian nation, just like most nations in South America. If you look at a map of South America, Ecuador is one of three that doesn't have access to or doesn't touch on that Amazonian region. This seemed to really bother them. The Peruvians, if I might speak for them, were perfectly satisfied with where the line was drawn. This is where the border was established and the Ecuadorians have to live with it, that's just the way it goes.

Over the next 200 years, the two countries periodically went at it, and ostensibly over this border. The last time they did was in 1995, just before I arrived, and, as I think I mentioned already, this shook up a lot of people, including Washington, because the clash had all the earmarks, all the appearances of modern warfare, with missiles and jet planes and all this, and this was a little worrisome. We generally don't think of Latin American countries as having those kinds of belligerencies.

Q: Suited up militarily-wise.

ALEXANDER: And heaven forbid they were able to buy jet fighters from countries other than the United States. They were able to, in our view, misbehave.

So when I arrived in 1996, the following year, this was a matter of some concern to Washington and I don't think I'm being hyperbolic when I suggest that this was probably my biggest political objective— was contributing to, once and for all, a final resolution of this longstanding dispute between the two countries. To that end we combined our efforts with those of my colleagues in the Brazilian embassy, the Chilean embassy and the Argentinean embassy. The four nations, we were the guarantors, the real guarantors-

Q: This goes back to the 1940s?

ALEXANDER: Yes, we were the guarantors back to the early 1940s to an agreement that was drawn up at that time that those four nations, Brazil, Argentina, Chile and the U.S., would work to guarantee what had been thought of in the early 1940s as being the final resolution. It wasn't the final resolution, because again they went at it most recently in 1995. So we worked very closely with those embassies as well as with Luigi Einaudi, the now deputy secretary general of the OAS (Organization of American States). I don't remember Luigi's official title, but he was appointed by the State Department to be Washington's man to work with all of this. He was well liked and respected by the Peruvians and the Ecuadorians, most important, and by the guarantor nations. He spoke fluent Spanish; well, he spoke a half a dozen languages fluently. Luigi was the consummate diplomat and worked like a dog to help bring this thing to resolution and the four nations working with Luigi were able to eventually prevail upon the Ecuadorians and the Peruvians to settle this dispute once and for all. I would have to credit Luigi with coming up with, or at least initiating, the idea that the Ecuadorians could save face in all of this and the Peruvians could go along with the face saving measure without giving up any territory by agreeing to let the Ecuadorians have some kind of, slightly more than symbolic, access to the Amazon. Without going into all the details, a rather creative formula was agreed upon by which the Ecuadorians would have access to the Amazon and the Peruvians would have the border as

they saw it, the integrity of that border undiminished and the Ecuadorians would be given a tiny – I believe it was one square kilometer – piece of land in the area, over which they had sovereign access. Anyway, the formula worked and both countries agreed to it and a treaty was signed, or a peace agreement— whatever we choose to call it, I don't recall what the term of art was in 1998 in October when it was signed, but it was signed. And Fujimori went, and the recently elected president of Ecuador, Jamil Mahuad, Luigi, of course, and three of the four presidents of the guarantor countries I believe were there. Washington sent the assistant secretary for Latin America. And that was the end of that.

Q: Talk a little about some of the dynamics as you saw it. Who was pushing for what? Were there other parties within either country that were trying to stir the pot or to bring out peace or something?

ALEXANDER: I think there was a combination of all those elements; it really was sort of a rotten pot of characters, some good, some bad. On the Peruvian side, and again, I'm speaking now as a former ambassador in Ecuador, so my view of things on the other side of the border obviously are colored by where I was, but my sense was that the Peruvian military wanted to have at it again. In other words, they were looking for an excuse to ignite this whole border dispute so that they could have another crack at the Ecuadorians. The reason for that was that the Ecuadorians, much to everyone's surprise, especially the Peruvians, stuck it to the Peruvians in '95. They had planned for this conflict for years; their *raison d'être*, was to defend the homeland against an attack from Peru. They gamed over a period of years, they figured out exactly what the Peruvians would do and they had it down cold. So when the Peruvians indeed attacked, the Ecuadorians were well prepared for their attack. The aircraft came over and shot down their aircraft and pretty much humiliated the Peruvians; humiliated them to the degree that Peru is considerably larger in terms of population, wealth, etcetera, etcetera. It just wasn't expected that they would be beaten as they were by the Ecuadorians. So they were itching to go back at it.

There were some in the Ecuadorian military that wanted to have another crack at them, too, figuring that they did really well in '95 and would do well the next time. I think more sober heads in Ecuador thought they got lucky. They guessed what they were going to do, the strategy, the tactics, were right on the money, but the Peruvians aren't stupid and they're not going to repeat what they did in '95. They're now doing what the Ecuadorians did as a lead up to that and they're going to be prepared this time, better prepared. So we better think twice before we get ourselves in another armed conflict with them because the sense is that this time the outcome will probably be different. What was fueling their very legitimate fears about Peru's ability to hurt them in the case of another armed military conflict, and what also vindicated their sense that the Peruvians were planning for this thing much better, was that Fujimori authorized the armed forces to go out and buy a considerable number of very sophisticated, in relative terms, aircraft—MiG 29s.

Q: Pretty impressive.

ALEXANDER: Yes, extremely competent aircraft. The only thing that, in the theatre, that could have stood up to that would have been F-16s, F-18s. In other words, this is the top of the line fighters. They picked up 25 of those and they picked up another 12, 15, 20 F-25s, some kind of a

bomber, bomber-fighter, whatever, but I do specifically remember the MiG 29s. They really elevated the arms race, so to speak. The Ecuadorians came to us and said, "You've got to sell us F-16s." I have to say, I was in favor of that proposal. I went to Washington and I said, "If we're going to maintain a balance of power or balance of terror or whatever it is, we've got to allow the Ecuadorians access to aircraft that can compete with these MiG 29s. The Peruvians are going to be emboldened enough at some point to go ahead and use those things. We may have a really big mess on our hands because I don't think the Peruvians are going to just stop at exchanging fire somewhere out in the jungle. This time they may actually go after Ecuadorian cities, particularly Guayaquil, which is the largest city, and inflict considerable economic damage, as well as killing civilians. They may go after other strategic targets as well, like dams and things of that sort. In other words, we're talking about a rather nasty situation here." Jeff Davidow, the assistant secretary, wasn't convinced, and now that I have the advantage of hindsight, Jeff called it right. He said, "listen, I understand your argument and it's one that's shared by others here, myself included, that we not do anything to either by commission or omission to encourage either side to do anything precipitous. But what you're talking about here goes to a larger policy of arms sales to Latin America. We sold F-16 to Venezuelans, but right now, it's our policy not to sell any arms of that sort anywhere in Latin America. We're just not going to get involved in that kind of thing." I thought, okay, he has to look at the bigger picture and I think he was right. It forced me to go back to the Ecuadorian military and say there's no easy out here, but you're not going to get F-16s. What we've got to do is find a way to get the Peruvians not to use the MiGs they've purchased.

While this was going on, I find out that the then-interim president and some of his henchmen are secretly planning on buying MiG-29s as well to the tune of some \$500 million U.S. dollars. I went to the defense minister, who was a friend of mine, and I say, "Listen, I need to know. I'm not asking you to be a traitor or to give up national secrets, but if you guys are planning on buying these things, there are a whole bunch of issues here that you ought to think about, not least among them is: I'm hearing from other sources that this is just some pretext to make a bunch of money on the side through the so-called commissions." Well, he hems and haws and he gets back to me in a few days and he says, "all I can say is that decisions are being made that don't seem to have military considerations as part of the overall equation and I have reason to believe that maybe your suppositions, your concerns, your fears about other motivations may be at play." In other words, what he was saying in so many words was that they have a lot of people who are encouraging the president to go ahead and get these things. Not for military reasons, but because they want to make money.

I went to the president, who denied it. I went to one of his very, very close confidantes, another gentleman in the palace with whom I played tennis and I said, "I know you guys are planning on doing this and I know you're doing this because you're going to make some money. And I figure based on other arms sales that have happened here, you're looking at about 50 million bucks in commissions, maybe 10 of you are going to split. That's a lot of money, five million bucks each. If you do this, I guarantee you, I promise you, none of you will ever get to spend a penny of it, because by the time I'm through with you, you'll either be dead or in jail." I was bluffing because I couldn't make that happen, but I was totally earnest when I said it. I felt so strongly about this, I was so concerned, so disgusted. There was no doubt in my mind that had they acquired these aircraft, the Peruvians then would have had the excuse that they needed to go at it

again. They could say the Ecuadorians are now arming; we've got to have a preemptive strike because it takes time to get these things in. You get them in the pipeline, but by the time they're delivered and the pilots are trained and all this other stuff, you're talking a year or two at least, which is more than enough time for the Peruvians to find out about it and to get a jump on them. So I had no doubt, absolutely none, that Ecuador's acquisition of these sophisticated aircraft would have led to another conflict.

Number two; I had no doubt that the reason why the Ecuadorian civilian leadership and some military were looking at the acquisition of more sophisticated aircraft was for money, money in their own pockets. Number three – and this may sound strange given that I was the U.S. ambassador, not the Ecuadorian one – I still felt that this decision was morally wrong for economic reasons. Ecuador did not have the wherewithal to spend a half a billion dollars on military aircraft that it didn't need. For those reasons principally, I started calling up the senior military leadership. I called five generals and, frankly, I threatened them. I had no authorization from Washington because, again, as I had learned years before, if you ask permission to do something, number one, you'll never get it, and number two, you get a bunch of, with all due respect, FS-2s making decisions that senior management ought to be making and I just said I'm not going to go through that. And if, to use a somewhat vulgar expression, when the shit hits the fan, then the finger would point to me anyway. So I figured, I'm going to be an ambassador and do what I'm supposed to do and use my good offices to try to do good.

So anyway, I called these people and threatened them. I'm taking away your visas and those of your wives. One thing I did know about Latin Americans: if you've got two shekels to rub together, if you're a prosperous businessman or a senior government official, having access to the U.S., particularly in Miami, is terribly important.

Q: Particularly for the wives.

ALEXANDER: I was just going to say that. And if you have a wife it's absolutely essential that you be able to go to Miami, to go shopping. That was something I had used effectively on other occasions. If you want to really get somebody go through, calling the wife up and saying we'd like you to bring your passport by. We want to look at your visa or the visas of your kids, I guarantee you, every one of those guys – in every instance we're talking about wives and not husbands being the spouses of policymakers because they were too macho to have women in those kinds of positions. In every single case we got what we wanted because they just didn't want the grief. I had one of the consular officers call the spouse and say, "please bring your passport by, we need to look at your visa," to make the point. And all of a sudden I found a bunch of rather surly, uncooperative, and in one instance rather belligerent, general officers calling up and very sweetly saying, "Oh, I absolutely agree with you, that I'm sure there's some way we can handle this without going out and busting the bank and buying these fancy toys."

I never did tell Washington what I did. When I look back on my Foreign Service career, I don't think I did much of anything, which is probably true of 99 percent of us. One moment that I will forever remember as I look back on my career, I take great pleasure and pride in, is when the then-acting foreign minister, who happens to be now the foreign minister of Ecuador, said to me, "no one in this country will ever really know what you did for us, but I do. I was there the night,

until 5:30 in the morning, in your residence with the general staff as you convinced them not to go to war. I'm also aware that you put the fear of God into them on the acquisition of those MiGs, which never got in the public, but there are those of us who had some knowledge of that who were just terrified and happened to agree with you that that would have been the worst thing. But I know what you did and want to thank you on behalf of my country.

Q: Did you have any contact with whoever was our ambassador in Peru?

ALEXANDER: Absolutely. Our ambassador in Peru was Dennis Jett, a very good friend of mine. Dennis and I had served together immediately prior to taking up our new posts in Lima and Quito. We would bring our country teams together. And because one of the problems, as we were told with our predecessors, was that the embassies, understandably so, the embassy in Lima represented the Peruvian government's point of view and the embassy in Quito did the same for the Ecuadorian government's point of view during that 1995 conflict. It got to the point where our leadership in Washington didn't know really what's going on. You work for us; you don't work for your host government. We need a somewhat more objective assessment. Whether they were giving objective assessments or not is not for me to say; I wasn't there. I read the stuff, but I didn't know. As I was reading, I wasn't in a position to judge whether it was objective or subject. This was the observation made to the two of us, to Dennis and myself before we went to post. So I said to him, "why don't we do this? When we get to post, why don't you bring your country team up to Quito, your core guys and the DAT, the defense attaché, the political counselor, people who are involved with this border dispute, bring them up to Quito, you stay with me and the political counselor stays with my political counselor, the DAT. We'll work that out and then we'll come down and see you or we'll go down first and then you come, it really doesn't really matter the order." We both agreed that one way to keep the two embassies from going at it, from representing Peru and Ecuador and representing the U.S. government was to get the two country teams together and for the two of us to emphasize the fact that we all work for the same government. We don't work for the Ecuadorians, we don't work for the Peruvians—we work for the U.S. It worked. By working with their counterparts, we began communicating, Dennis and I, which apparently wasn't done before. We wouldn't send cables, even first person cables, without clearing with the other. I would call him up and say, "I'm going to send this to you in draft before I send it up to Washington. Let me know if this causes you any heartburn." Sometimes I would put him down on my cable, cleared embassy Peru, Ambassador Jett or vice versa. The point is, we trusted each other and we acted like we were part of the same team. We worked together, as did our staffs. I think we were able to give Washington a better, broader and less parochial sense of how we saw things on the grounds. I think it helped, I really do.

I think it was easier for me and my country team, to analyze what the Ecuadorians were up to because we had better access. Dennis was dealing with a very difficult man in the form of Alberto Fujimori. The chemistry between the two was not good. Fujimori didn't like Dennis' predecessor either. Fujimori was Fujimori.

Q: He's still a factor right now as we talk. He's where?

ALEXANDER: He's in Chile, he's in Chile.

Q: More or less in house arrest or something?

ALEXANDER: Yes, I guess so. The Chileans refused an extradition request from the Peruvians. In addition to Fujimori, of course, we had his henchman, the famous-

Q: Nogales?

ALEXANDER: Montesinos.

Q: Vladimiro Montesinos, yes.

ALEXANDER: He was the Rasputin of that regime. That guy had a finger in every pie and if half of what they say about him is true, he was a rotten, corrupt bastard who profited in every sense of the word from this border dispute. So Dennis had to deal with a situation that was intrinsically much more complicated than what I had to deal with.

I did find Fujimori a strange, strange man. He has a reputation for being a very dictatorial, rigid man, the guy who went after the shining path and killed the guerillas and all that stuff. When I first met Fujimori, it was during one of the periodic conferences we had out in the jungle at the joint military command of the four guarantor nations, MOMEPE (Military Observer Mission Ecuador Peru). I introduced myself to Fujimori and I can't remember exactly what I said to him, but it was something light, it wasn't too serious and he came back with a quip of his own and I went back at him again and then he said to me, he says, "how'd you get here?" I said, "I came by helicopter, presumably the same as you." He says, "But we're on the Peruvian side of the line." I said, "Yes, we are." He says, "You have a visa?" And I said, "Do I have a visa? For Peru?" And he says, "Yeah." "I said no." He said, "Well?" I said, "Do I need one? What do you mean? Are you sure that I'm in Peru?" And he started laughing. I knew that he knew we were in Peru but, according to Ecuadorians, it was a little uncertain since this area was in dispute, but for some reason that amused him. From then on every time he saw me at one of these get togethers he'd say, "Do you have a visa?" The point is, the reason why I bring this up is, he had a strange sense of humor. I think with him you could establish a rapport if you teased. For some reason he seemed to like that.

The president of Ecuador, the one who was sent into exile in Panama, Bucaram, did this very, very well. I think that's one of the reasons why Fujimori liked him and one of the reasons why a lot of people say that the Ecuadorian military did not like Bucaram. They felt he was too friendly with Fujimori and cynically, some people suggested that this was one of the reasons why Bucaram was thrown out of office. Why the military was so happy to see him go and why they colluded in his being ousted after only six months was expressly out of concern that he might sell Ecuador short because he was charmed by Fujimori. I kind of think it was the other way around; Fujimori was charmed by Bucaram.

Q: When you arrived there again, I think you explained it before but, when you were dealing with this potential war, renewal of the war, what was happening on the ground?

ALEXANDER: And the Chileans.

Q: The Chileans had troops on the ground there, what was the general feeling? What were they going to do if fighting started?

ALEXANDER: They served two or three roles or purposes. One, again, they were called MOMEP, they were an observation mission. They were there to observe. Their presence was intended to dissuade either side from doing something untoward. Their presence there was also to be witnesses to any egregious behavior. Both sides complained bitterly. There were well over 1,000 complaints, official complaints from the Peruvians, from the Ecuadorians, about each other. The MOMEP had to go through and log all this and run it down and find out who did what. Sometimes it took on characteristics that were just absurd, funny. Sergeant So and So's dog crossed some line and pooped in somebody's trench or something and they did it on purpose, things of that nature. Many of them were more serious than that. I think a lot of the so-called provocations were not deliberate. Some of them were, clearly, but I think many of them were just flying a helicopter over a jungle which makes it hard to tell exactly where you are at all times. You might stray 100 yards on one side or the other side, and this was generally the kind of thing they complained about. But anyway, the troops from the four guarantor countries were there in part to witness this kind of behavior, to document it, to find fault, which they never did, and rightfully so. There was a somewhat more pragmatic and possibly cynical reason for having them there. If you've got troops from the four guarantor nations parked in between two belligerent parties and they start going at it well, it's going to be hard to be, hard to start shooting without killing some of these people. The idea was: even though it was never, ever articulated, it was sort of understood and spoken about in hushed whispers, that, before the Ecuadorians start shooting across the border or the Peruvians start shooting across the border, they've got to stop and think about what happens if we kill, you know, 10 Chileans or 10 Argentineans or 100 Americans or something? Whether or not MOMEP mission actually stopped that kind of activity or not, I don't know.

Q: This has always been the basic idea. You put these people in between.

ALEXANDER: Yes.

Q: There were Brazilian troops there too, weren't there?

ALEXANDER: Brazilian. In fact, the commander of MOMEP was a Brazilian general. I have to say I was very proud of the U.S. military because our doctrine is usually, we have to be in charge. I think very wise men in the SOUTHCOM (Southern Command) in the Pentagon and elsewhere said, we'll have a colonel there. He'll head our thing and he will report to the general. I think it went a long way towards creating a very, very good relationship among all four militaries. And again, when you talk about the Chileans and the Argentineans and the Brazilians, you're not talking about nations, you're not talking about NATO. These guys were sort of, I won't say natural enemies, but they all have their histories.

Q: Well, they all kind of have their own problems.

ALEXANDER: Their own problems, their own axes to grind with one another. It was a great

exercise in American diplomacy because it made the Brazilians feel good, and why not have a Brazilian general head the thing? Brazil had the largest force in South America. It's the largest country by far in South America and this dispute was taking place in South America, so the Brazilians were happy. The Argentineans and the Chileans didn't have any great beef about Brazil being in charge. And what could they say? If an American officer and his men were going to report to the Brazilian. They got along really, really well. They had great respect for one another. I won't say they had a lot of fun; it wasn't much fun being parked out in the middle of the jungle somewhere. But, they got along very, very well, amazingly so.

Q: Well, you were saying that you got involved later on where there was a possibility of a war. What was that all about?

ALEXANDER: August of 1998, after two very intense years of negotiations trying to bring this thing to resolution, people were getting tired. The guarantor nations were getting tired of an expensive undertaking, especially for the U.S. All these helicopters and flying in and out and having men on the ground; it was costing us some bucks, it was beginning to add up. The four guarantor states were getting a little tired of Peru and Ecuador and said we've got to bring this thing to closure, it's not doing you guys any good, it's not doing us any good. In that period of time, the Peruvians went off and they really upped the ante by buying these MiGs and all that, which didn't endear them to anyone in the guarantor capitals and we knew that the Ecuadorians were really struggling with this. It was hard to keep them from going out and doing the same. We prevailed upon them not to do it, but this thing had to be brought to closure sooner rather than later.

In August of 1998 there were some incidences in the disputed area and it really doesn't matter who provoked whom, but both sides were within minutes of shooting again. It started with a very small scale patrol stumbling across another patrol, a few shots were fired, nobody was killed, but the tension started going up very, very quickly. Almost immediately, within a matter of minutes, hours if not minutes, both sides started amassing men right in the disputed area, moving everyone up to forward positions, to such a degree that they were within yards of one another. They could yell over to one another, sort of akin to what the trench warfare in World War I where they sometimes yell over to one another, it was that close. The situation was that tense. I don't remember the day, I can't tell you, it was the 28th of August or the 16th, but the defense minister and the general staff came to my residence about 10:00 at night and they said, "We think that tonight all hell's going to break loose. We're of the mind to go ahead. We have to defend ourselves. We know we're outgunned, we're outnumbered. We can't wait until they attack us. We may have to start even though we know we're going to take it in the neck." And I said, "No, no, no, you don't want to do that; that's what they want you to do. Don't give them any excuse." The whole evening we were at my house going through this and they were getting reports saying the Peruvians have just gone across our lines. I said, "Check again, it may not be true." To make a long story short, by 6:00 in the morning no war had started. I think the Ecuadorians were beginning to calm down and their reports and their concerns and their fears that the Peruvians were coming across the border had not been realized. But it was so tense, and I understand that the Peruvians were going through some of the same dynamics on their side, the Ecuadorians were going to blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. They didn't go at it. That was probably the closest they had come since '95 and I'm happy to say, a few weeks later they did sign the

agreement. That was sort of the last, the last possible moment to go ahead and blow up the work of the preceding two years and have another war if someone wanted it badly enough. Neither side had the clear provocation that they would have needed to explain why they started this conflict. So we were able to avoid it and in October the peace accord was signed.

Q: Were you able to pull troops out then, our troops?

ALEXANDER: Yes, yes. We pulled them out shortly thereafter. Everyone packed up their tents, literally, and went home.

Q: I would have thought there certainly would have been the equivalent to a war party in Ecuador. There almost always is, taking advantage politically to show their opponents they're weaklings and all that.

ALEXANDER: We avoided some of that. There were certainly prominent politicians who were constantly stirring the pot, calling the Peruvians names and talking about defending the honor of the homeland and all that. Yes, that existed. A war party per se? No. I think one of the reasons was because of the internal political turmoil in Ecuador, the change of governments they went through. We're talking from '95 to '98; four presidents, five presidents by the time they signed. Between the president, who was in office when they first went at it in '95, and the guy who actually signed the agreement in '98, they had five presidents. So you're talking about in the space of three years, three-and-a-half years having five presidents, this was not a stable country. Now, granted, one of the presidents was only in office for a week and that was a woman, Rosalia Arteaga, but the point is, she was still president for a week. This kind of political instability did not give any particular party in Ecuador a chance to get on that kind of footing, to identify themselves, wrap themselves in a flag and say we're the war party and those dirty bastards south of the border have to pay. The volatile, very fluid political situation in Ecuador just really didn't permit that type of activity.

That being said, there were still prominent politicians who accused the government of betraying Ecuador and selling out and all this. There were those who tried to make hay of this issue, but they didn't succeed. Part of the reason was because of pressure from the U.S.— to a lesser extent the other guarantor states, but principally from us. Certain phone calls, certain conversations and certain politicians saying, “we don't appreciate this and we've spent a lot of money and a lot of time trying to help you out of your mess and we expect some cooperation, if not some outright gratitude, for helping you out of your mess because we have no doubts that if the Peruvians come across the border, they're going to kick your butt. And while we're on the subject, your butt's not going to be able to flee to Miami while all this is happening because we're going to take away your visa and that of your wife.” So fortunately, we didn't have too much of that dynamic to deal with.

Q: Did you feel that there was pressure on the Ecuadorian government from neighboring countries?

ALEXANDER: No, no. In fact I think, with the exception of the guarantors who were actually involved, the only country that would have really been in position to comment was Colombia,

and the Colombians weren't talking. They had their own problems with the FARC and everything else and heaven forbid that they start lecturing people about peace when they had a civil war that had been going on – it's still going on – for 30 some odd years. The other neighbors were Peru, Brazil, and Venezuela. They were going through their trauma with Chavez coming, and all that, so no. The Latins sort of have this gentlemen's understanding that they don't seem to be too prone to criticize one another openly because they might be in position tomorrow.

Q: Talk just a little about the officer corps of Ecuador, where they come from and how do you see them at this time?

ALEXANDER: The senior officers were from the middle class, a mixture of white and lighter cholos— people of mixed heritage. The sergeants and enlisted men tended to have more indigenous blood. The military was widely respected in Ecuador among all the classes and I think in part because they reflected to a large degree the people of Ecuador. You could look at the army and you saw Ecuador reflected in that army at most of the ranks. They were very professional, very well trained, very serious. After having taken over the country, as virtually every military did in Latin America at one point or another, they gave up power and subordinated themselves to civilian rule, with some conviction. I think they prided themselves on that, even though they continued to dabble in politics and try to influence politics. Their relationship with the people of Ecuador, I think, was very, very good.

One thing I couldn't help but notice in Ecuador that really impressed me – this wasn't the case in most other places I'd been to in Latin America – if you saw a soldier or two walking down the sidewalk, if you were in Guatemala, particularly if you were an indigenous person, you stepped off the sidewalk into the street and let the soldiers pass. Not in Ecuador; it was the other way around. The soldiers would step into the street and let you pass. They had a good rapport, a good relationship with their own people; they didn't abuse their own people. The Ecuadorian military didn't make people disappear to the extent that you saw in some of the other places in Latin America.

Q: What was the connection between the Ecuadorian officer corps and the troops?

ALEXANDER: My sense was that they had a well disciplined army with a very well developed esprit de corps. The officer class took care of their men. They made sure they were well garrisoned and that included their families. They were taken care of. You didn't find people saying, "I'm an officer so I'm entitled to all this and you're just a lowly enlisted man, so whether you and your family eat is not my business." It was something that I think most Americans could relate to when you look at our own military. Our military's generally widely admired and respected by the American people and I think the Ecuadorians felt the same way. They looked at their military much as we look at ours. This is our army, they belong to us.

Q: Is there anything else we should cover in Ecuador?

ALEXANDER: It was a frustrating assignment because, again, they couldn't keep a president in office. During my three years there I had to deal with five different presidents. It's kind of hard

to do your job when you don't know who's going to be in charge. But all in all, it was a good assignment.

Q: What made you feel that this peace accord between Ecuador and Peru was going to last?

ALEXANDER: I can't speak for the Peruvian side, but on the Ecuadorian side I think it was a great maturity on the part of the political leadership and consummate realism on the part of their military. The politicians had every reason to see this dispute resolved because they knew that the alternative was unacceptable. It's one thing to go and shoot up a bunch of jungle real estate where nobody lives or few people live. It's another thing to have to contemplate a city of almost two million people with high rises and all the trappings of a modern city, such as Guayaquil, is bombed, reduced to rubble. That just was something, or Quito, the capital, or any of the large Ecuadorian cities... it was just something that I don't think any politician wanted on his or her head.

The other thing that the politicians realized was as long as there was a dispute with Peru, a dispute that could and probably would lead to a conflict like the one they had in '95, Ecuador would have to have a fairly large standing army. A large standing army creates another set of headaches for you if you're a civilian politician and that is, well, you've got a powerful modern army sitting here and if they don't like what I say, what's stopping them from moving against me? This was always the threat of something like that, was always there in the air. I think they were getting tired of that. It's expensive, too; it's a drain on their budget.

The military, for their part, had done really, really well in '95. They'd upheld their honor, their training. They'd vindicated years and years of maneuvers, but they knew that it was just a matter of time before the Peruvians would come and do them in. Not because they were better warriors or better people or anything, or smarter or more courageous, simply because of the mathematics. The logic of the situation was such that the Peruvians, being bigger, having more money, having more troops— it was a matter of time before they would stick it to the Ecuadorians. So the Ecuadorian military knew that if we make peace, we still have our honor. The last conflict we had with these people, we beat them, we can take that to our graves and no one can take that away from us. I think they were also getting tired because, living in a state of constant belligerency, there were always things going on down there on the border. I can't think of a comparable situation; it was tenser than what we went through in the Cold War. I mean, there were moments in the Cuban Missile Crisis, but that kind of thing was not an every day situation. Imagine something akin to a Cuban Missile Crisis that goes on for eight years, for 10 years, for 20 years. I think it was that kind of pressure that the Ecuadorian military was feeling, and it was wearing; they were getting tired of it.

Q: Was oil bubbling up in the disputed area or anything like that?

ALEXANDER: No, no. No, they never did find oil out there. To this day they still haven't found any oil there. There's been no discovery of diamond fields or anything of that sort. Again, I think that may be one of those myths. There may be truths to it, too, that there is great mineral wealth out there, but no one has found it, which would suggest to me that it was always a rumor, a possibility but it wasn't that one of the two or both governments knew for sure.

Q: You left there when?

ALEXANDER: I left there in July of 1999.

Q: When you got back, did anybody sort of debrief you on what you'd done or not? I'm sort of exploring the historical sense of the State Department when you passed the baton on and all that.

ALEXANDER: No, not really. I think in part because my predecessor had become the acting assistant secretary. When he left Quito he went to Washington to be the principal deputy assistant secretary and became the acting assistant secretary when Jeff Davidow left and he became very briefly the assistant secretary. He got a recess appointment in January of 2000, or 2001, I think it was.

Q: Who is this now?

ALEXANDER: Peter Romero. So Pete had been my predecessor, he'd kept up on things Ecuadorian, knew the issues since he'd been there and so we didn't have much of a brief or debrief. My successor had served in Brazil a few years before; she was a consul general in Guayaquil when Pete was ambassador. I tried to speak to her but all she wanted to do was talk so I gave up after 15 minutes and thought maybe she knows it all.

Q: There is something in the Foreign Service culture in a way, but people don't want to know too much from the person whom they're succeeding because they want to get out there and feel they've done it all themselves.

ALEXANDER: I think you're absolutely right. I think almost all, I would say 95 percent, of us are guilty of that. I've done it myself, I've absolutely done it myself, and I should have known better because I worked for a man who was not that way, Al Adams, my ambassador in Haiti, my first tour there. Al would speak to anyone and did speak to anyone, from the most junior to the most senior, and he used to always tell me, you get the best information from the strangest places. He said often you'll find that the junior officers know more about what's going on than the mid-level officers do, and they know more than the senior officers do. Al was very, very good about that. As a result, he really was knowledgeable about Haiti. I don't know whether he did this when he went to Peru. He left Peru about the time I was arriving in Ecuador. But I tried to talk to my successor.

Q: Who was that?

ALEXANDER: Gwen Clare. In fact, she called from Brazil where she was a consul general, I think in Sao Paulo, when she had been nominated. In all due respect to Clare, she just yapped a mile a minute. I was trying to explain and eventually I thought well, I wasn't really interested in what she thought about Ecuador because I was there and she was talking about her time five or six years before that. I thought well, maybe you have kept up with everything and that's what you're trying to demonstrate. She was very pleasant, but maybe that was what she was politely trying to tell me, I don't need to hear because I know. My sense is from what she did after she

arrived was that she didn't know as much as she thought she did, but that's for someone else to decide.

End of reader